

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

Flanagan (1954) created a critical incident technique which has been successfully used by researchers to identify essential areas of successful practice within a profession and identifying issues to overcome. These help show how behavioural factors combine to create a critical incident. Tripp (2012) states critical incidents have the ability to have two major uses as they give the educator a chance to develop understanding of controlling a classroom environment, increasing knowledge over professional development helping to provide a focus for the classroom and the needs that may be needed. Tripp describes a critical incident as an event or situation which in history could be a significant turning point. However, Tripp discusses how in a teacher's life this could be a regular occurrence which can impact the student. Nevertheless, highlighting how the incident can be both positive and negative.

This essay will be a critical reflection upon an incident that occurred in a classroom regarding pupil voice and promotion of positive health and well-being. Huppert and Johnson (2010) define well-being as a combination of functioning well and feeling good. Student voice, as stated by Pekrul and Leven (2007), is a process which is able to give students a credible voice within the classroom and across the school as a whole. This can impact on student well-being as children are being listened to which is an essential part of student development and holistic development of the child (Anderson and Graham, 2015).

The role of critical reflection

Reflection is a process allowing to reevaluate existing experiences in complex or new situations (Brookfield, 1995). This process includes how an individual feels and thinks about the scenario that occurred, however, the term critical reflection can be defined in multiple ways. Mezirow (1991) stated critical reflection has the ability to be examined and changed due to assumptions that are being made. Opposed to this, Brookfield (1995) stated that for a reflection to be critical there must be an emphasis upon power and the power to change a situation. Dewey (1993) was one of the first to identify reflection as a special form of thinking as he identified how reflection could result from doubt due to an experience. Dewey used this as a prompt for inquiring and resolving situations and ideas (Sinclair, 2010). There are different reflective models used for critical reflection. Schon's (1991) reflective model expanded upon Dewey's work focussing on reflection in action, and reflection on action. Schon's theory differed from others theorists as does not consider teaching in scientific

thinking as Dewey theories does. The theoretical perspective is able to be empowering for teachers in particular as it is able to recognise the intelligence of the practitioner to be able to reflect during practice and after (Edwards, 2017). A key feature of Schon's reflective model is the difference he draws upon between the reflection which occurs during the event compared to the reflection which occurs after (Schon, 1991). However, Schon's reflective model doesn't give a step by step guide on how to carry it out, which is compared to Gibbs' (1988) reflective model. Gibbs' reflective model was developed in order to be able to give form for learning caused by experiences. It is able to give structure for inspecting experiences allowing an individual to learn from the experience (Markkanen *et al.*, 2020). Gibbs' reflective cycle incorporates six stages based upon Kolb's 1984 cycle which was highly influenced by Dewey (Husebø *et al.*, 2015). The first component within the reflective cycle is a recall of the experience. The second step is in which emotions are considered and evaluating the feelings towards the incident this will move on to the third step which evaluates the experience expressing upon the strengths and weaknesses of the activity which will then allow the fourth step to occur which is the analysis which will allow the individual to make sense of the situation applying theory and literature to gain a deeper understanding. This leads to the fifth step which is the conclusion looking in detail at what you have learnt through reflecting which leads on to the last step looking at the limitations and strengths are reflected on as an action plan is created for future practice. Gibbs ensured that the steps allowed the reflections to be integrated in future reflections as well as practice (Kember *et al.*, 2008). Gibbs' reflective cycle allows a teacher to meet professional standards as the teacher will be learning from previous experiences. This can help to develop different teaching strategies. This can be used with the professional standard of pedagogy as a teacher is constantly reflecting upon practice in order to refine teaching styles in order to positively influence learners (Welsh Government, 2019). The teacher is also using reflective practices for innovation as a result of the teacher developing techniques and approaches. In order to improve pedagogic outcomes for their students as they reflect upon the challenges faced as well as reflecting upon their own leadership skills in the meantime. Reflective practice allows sufficient time to collaborate ideas with others and from others, enabling pedagogy to spread within the classroom and further afield. The reflection allows teachers to share the positives and negatives of certain experiences within the school environment. This in turn will help all teachers improve their personal professional learning which is vital (Welsh Government, 2019). Within Wales there has been curriculum reform which will be put in place in 2022. This new curriculum uses teaching standards to highlight the importance of reflection in practice ensuring teaching standards are met and kept up. If a teacher is unable to reflect this can limit the guidance that is available to pupils and in the

meantime create barriers as they may need to change techniques to ensure all students are benefitting from the teaching styles in place.

Observation

In order to comply with BERA guidelines, anonymity of the pupils and staff are compliant throughout, as within guidelines it states that researchers must recognise the importance of confidentiality and anonymity regarding pupils and staff (BERA, 2019).

The observation of the critical incident took place in a primary school on the outskirts of Llanelli. The school is mixed gender with 208 pupils aged between 3 and 11 years old, with eight classes which are all classes of single ages (Estyn, 2014). Within the school, 15% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals this is below the national average in Wales. The Estyn report stated 22% of pupils which have additional learning needs this is similar to the average within Wales. The observation specifically took place within a Year 6 classroom which included 32 children aged 10 and 11 years old. Furthermore, within the school most pupils come from an English speaking home environment. The Estyn report identified that school teachers and leaders have a heightened focus upon improving the school in order to ensure pupils' wellbeing. The school is currently transitioning from the current curriculum to the new 2022 curriculum and slowly implementing changes.

Critical incident linked to four purposes

The critical incident that I observed was during the registration period. This took place when the teacher called students names, the student responded with how they were feeling in Welsh. There were no leading questions prior to this and all students participated with varied responses. During my observations I was able to witness the effectiveness of this simple activity. One morning a student responded, "drist," meaning the student was sad. The teacher quickly reassured them that they would speak to them later and ensured there was a follow up which was imperative. I witnessed how the other students comforted this student throughout the morning in a sophisticated and polite manner, showing respect. After a lunch break, I witnessed how this activity could be used as a behavioural strategy. The students entered the classroom and there was clearly animosity. After this, the teacher asked a group question on why this is and it was quickly established that an argument had taken place during lunch. After students had spoken about the situation it seemed that peace was

restored in the classroom. The area of the critical reflection I will focus upon is the response of how the student felt this shows evidence of pupil voice, as well as the promotion of wellbeing within the classroom. The new curriculum reform emphasises the importance of evergoing change in Wales and that Wales is committed to being able to provide a high standard of education which is inclusive for all students (OECD, 2019). This incident was able to show how the teacher has included Donaldson's four purposes. This is in order to ensure that the students are reaching full potential within the classroom and also, outside of this. The purposes propose that there are key characteristics that should be developed through the curriculum. The incident is able to show how the students are ambitious and capable learners as they are responding to the questions in Welsh. Showing students build up knowledge and have the skills to apply the knowledge in different contexts. In relation to this, students are able to communicate effectively using Welsh and English which was seen with the students using english to follow up with students upset. The activity also showed how students are ethically informed citizens as they exercise their human rights in order to use their voice to express how they feel. Along with this, they showed respect to the needs of others within the class in instances where this activity highlighted an issue of a student. This also ensures that the student is healthy and confident as they develop knowledge about confidence and empathy and are working upon their emotional and mental well-being (Donaldson, 2015).

Literature review

Student voice encourages pupils to become active participants within democratic society. This in turn can help the student become an ethical and informed citizen as they can form their own opinion and voice (Wearmouth and Goodwyn, 2019). The term voice in education refers to opinions, values and beliefs of pupils but also of the teachers and families within the education system (Dawes, 1850). Listening and involving the child is essential to the students' learning and is a requirement for the rights of a child according to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (DfE, 2014). Student voice is not a new concept, head teacher Harold Dent (1939), wrote how he wanted students to be active participants within the school environment and having a voice in what they are learning about will positively impact students' passion which inspired many other educators to get more input from their students. Rudduck & Fielding (2006) built upon the view of Dent (1939) describing that student voice has the ability to create deeper understanding and commitment

for teachers to engage with pupils. This results in allowing the students to express their feelings and voice will help students gain a better understanding of their perceptions. Students are positively encouraged to express their views which in turn can help students feel more integrated (Wearmouth and Goodwyn, 2019). Cook-Sather (2002) emphasised the importance of counting students among educators in decision making as helps to motivate the students to participate more frequently. However, Flutter and Rudduck (2014) highlighted that students' voice is purposeless without hearers. This emphasises the need to follow up concerns expressed by a pupil or could create barriers for the future and result in reluctantless to share information. Student voice motivates and engages students, as well as strengthening their communication and development skills during the process (Mitra, 2004). Even though it has been highlighted that student voice has a positive impact upon students, Fielding (2004) raised concerns about student voice. This focused on how some students do not believe that speaking out will make a difference, which emphasises that listening to students is vital for this tool to succeed. Teachers acknowledge that a challenge which is faced can be due to a lack of support on how to ensure student voice is tackled in the correct manner, can be a challenge for teachers to appropriately help students (Mayes *et al.*, 2019).

Furthermore, pupil voice is beneficial for both students and teachers. Student voice has enabled educators to gain better understanding of learning and teaching strategies which help to develop the way that they understand their pupils and teaching (Flutter, 2007). Student voice allows interaction between students which further develops their own way of thinking allowing them to develop ideas (Quinn and Owen, 2016). This can be seen within Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development as this theory stresses social interaction is essential for cognitive development. Vygotsky's theory shows how this helps language skills as well as independence skills. Vygotsky developed the zone of proximal development (ZPD); this zone refers to what learners can complete with assistance of a more knowledgeable other (MKO). This can be an adult or another peer. This activity is considered as scaffolding learning. Due to student voice, students are able to build off others' ideas as well as hear new concepts that can be utilised to learn new vocabulary (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygostky strongly believed that communication and social interaction play a central role in the learning process as this is vital for development (Shabani *et al.*, 2010). Vygotsky emphasised upon the importance of language or lack of language and how this can therefore impact an individual's development. The MKO within the student voice will be the teacher, as they are able to help voice the child and scaffold within the process (Wood *et al.*, 1976). Through the ZPD, the knowledgeable other extends the child's understanding of the topic at hand and through this, scaffolding the student can help the educator to learn. Enhancing a teacher's understanding of how a child interprets a question or topic and this

can help to further their practice (Wearmouth and Goodwyn, 2019) and evidently student voice is a powerful tool. However, it is important to note that an implication can be powerful in regards to student voice. Nevertheless, Cook-Sather (2002) suggests that the positives of ensuring students are listened to outweigh negatives as they provide students with confidence that is essential as Vygotsky (1978) stated. Vygotsky can help us to understand the development a child can go through with the use of the ZPD by using the MKO. However, a limitation of his research is that it is unable to explain how development occurs within this zone, which can be hard for practitioners to help a student appropriately.

Well-being is an essential part of child development and an increasing issue within the education sector as well as globally (Roffey, 2012). Well-being can be seen at the centre of many school initiatives to help create positive relationships with emotional and mental wellbeing (Anderson and Graham, 2014). Health and well-being have been largely separated within schools. In the new curriculum reform in Wales there has been an emphasis on well-being in order for students to become healthy and confident individuals which is a vital area to cover. All students learn and receive information in different ways. Some students may prefer a group approach where they can be listened to in front of their peers and use other ideas to support their learning (Carter *et al.*, 2015). Whereas other students would rather discuss wellbeing in smaller groups in a more private manner as there can be an increased fear about talking out loud to other students as anxiety can play a large contributor (Daud *et al.*, 2019). A study by Aldridge and Wood (2019) stated that children under the age of 11 years old are unable to produce emotive vocabulary. This is able to draw on the importance of talking about emotions highlighting a simple task such as stating how a child is feeling will allow a student to gain more experience in talking about well-being as some basic emotions such as being happy or sad or feeling fearful are words that many children cannot say. This in turn can create a large barrier to understanding wellbeing and expressing this (Wierbicka, 2013). Vygotsky stated that having language is vital in order for an individual to develop as if they do not have the language they will be unable to express their emotions. Vygotsky (1978) differentiated between forms of language, the first relating to well-being is social language which can be linked with vocabulary in order to discuss well-being. These types of speech are vital for development within a pupil to express their view. To continue, repetition can be a useful way to get students to gain an understanding of words and activities which can benefit the child. However, if the same words are being used constantly to describe wellbeing, the meaning of these words can become essentially pointless as the student can become used to using the same words in order to complete a task. Also, the activity can become meaningless to the student which can be called semantic satiation. This means that words and phrases become less meaningful due to the frequent

repetition and can also decrease the availability of the concept and remembering what an activity or phrase means (Black, 2003). Repetition due to a learnt behaviour can be seen through classical conditioning which is a behaviorist view. Behaviorists believe that all behaviours are learnt depending upon the environment which happens through conditioning (Leckraj and Soulakshmee, 2009). Classical conditioning involves two components which are essential, one an unconditioned stimulus for example if being asked a question you immediately think of an answer and the second being the unconditioned response which could be in this case a natural answer which is able to vary in response. However within conditioning the stimulus is constantly repeated which therefore gains a conditioned response this could result in the same response being repeated which therefore triggers a conditioned response when the stimulus is applied which can result in semantic satiation meaning this activity can become meaningless (Fani and Ghaemi, 2011). Quick *et al.* (2015) stated how the social and behavioural sciences are vital to improvement of wellbeing as it is seen so much of human behaviour and responses are learnt rather than natural behaviour, this is able to show how human behaviour can be socially constructed by the environment they are in this can differ for each student meaning their behaviour can be socially constructed by others (Rozenky *et al.*, 2004). A classroom which has a positive atmosphere can increasingly help a student's well-being within this Petegem *et al.*, (2006) stated how a positive relationship between students and educators are vital for a happy environment within a classroom. This is closely linked to the student voice which helps to promote this relationship.

Evaluation, reflection and next steps.

The reflective model that I chose to reflect upon is Gibbs reflective cycle (Gibbs, 1988), this model as previously stated involves 6 steps which I will use to reflect upon the incident.

Description

As previously mentioned, within this essay my incident took place within a Year 6 classroom during registration period. It involved the students responding to registration with how they were feeling in Welsh. I was able to observe how it worked as a wellbeing check in but also in regards to how it served the purpose of behaviour management technique when needed.

Feelings

The experience of this incident made me realise how easy a simple activity is able to be created and adapted within a classroom to suit students. I felt surprised at first as they began to answer the register with no leading question which showed me how this activity

was a normal occurrence within their day. I was also able to witness the maturity of other students when a student expressed they were upset, this filled me with happiness as it did not disrupt the lesson as you may have thought.

Evaluation

I found that this activity was effective. It allowed each student to be listened to and allowed each individual to express their feelings at least twice a day which is essential to help student wellbeing. This was also able to exercise student voice within the classroom, incorporating Donaldson's (2015) four purposes. This helped the students to become confident individuals as they expressed their views and were being respectful to others. When a student expressed they were upset this was noted immediately by the teacher and a follow up enquiry was made with the student which I found very important as a teacher could be the only main constant in a student's life so this is a vital tool. Also how this activity was used as a behaviour management tool when the students returned from break was clear emotions were running high after the register check in where students expressed they were upset or angry once a group question was asked on why they felt like this it came clear an argument had taken place after this discussion calm was once again restored in the classroom. Although this activity is useful, a limitation is how some students may not want to accurately describe what they feel in front of the class, which can be a barrier for many.

Analysis

The incident showed two vital concepts, these being; student voice and wellbeing, both of which are very important within the classroom. On face value this activity seemed to be very useful and purposeful. However, through my literature review it is clear that classical conditioning has been used within this activity as there was no prior question, which could result in a conditioned response due to being repeated daily. This could be a positive as students are getting in the habit of speaking about emotions however can also cause a limitation for students as this task can lose meaning due to repetition this can be called semantic satiation which means that this activity could lose its purpose due to this (Black, 2003). Student voice also allows the teacher to gain a deeper understanding of the concerns a student has and also of what students want to learn. Fielding found that this process was able to allow the student and educator to develop a partnership which in turn facilitates better outcomes which is vital for students to learn. However, it was also highlighted within

my literature review that educators feel that there should be a distance between staff and students in order to maintain power that is needed for educators. Flutter (2007) was also able to state that voice is powerless without a listener. This is able to emphasise that following up any concerns with a pupil is essential or this can result in lack of cooperation with the student within the future. The activity allowed other students to answer confidently which can be seen within Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. The students are able to scaffold each other with the use of the teacher who is able to give them the resources they need to succeed in expressing their wellbeing. This incident allowed me to think deeper into well-being and the need for ensuring students have the language needed to express themselves. Vygotsky (1978) stated that language is vital in order for an individual to develop as if they do not have the language they will be unable to express their emotions, which is extremely important for educators to understand. This highlights the importance of checking students understand the activity so that extra resources can be given if needed.

Conclusion

To conclude, I found this activity to be a nice activity interacting with students and allowing them to voice their feelings as well as a good technique for registration incorporating Welsh and English into the classroom and providing students with a chance for student voice. However, as a wellbeing activity I believe it could be enhanced to ensure students have the correct vocabulary to express their actual feelings and not just the conditioned response that many may have, as some students did vary answers over the week however many kept to what they knew or learnt during this conditioning period. This activity could also be used in different ways allowing students who do not feel comfortable to speak in front of the class to have an opportunity to speak in private or in smaller groups. Overall, the activity is an effective tool for a teacher to speak to each pupil individually at the beginning and middle of the day however could be enhanced further.

Action Plan

Overall, I found the incident very interesting and a very good concept. However, to ensure that the responses are accurate I would monitor how many times each student was stating the same response to ensure they have the vocabulary needed in order to express the opinion that they need to as stated by Vygotsky language is essential. Within the classroom I would provide a word bank of emotive words, in both English and Welsh for the students to be surrounded by vocabulary on a daily basis. This will give students the opportunity to discuss in English or Welsh what they felt more comfortable with. As well as having this activity, which could be a daily occurrence I would also offer a different activity which can be

considered more private such as an online website where each morning they can press how they are feeling without having to say it out loud in front of the class. The literature review highlighted that many students get anxious speaking in front of others which is not good for a student's wellbeing. Would also change activities each week to avoid classical conditioning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this essay has been able to show the importance of reflection for teachers as they are able to adapt tasks depending upon the response that they get and how students act in scenarios. Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle is able to allow the teacher to reflect upon the incident in detail. This allows them to express how they feel and also research into why a situation had turned out the way it did, whilst allowing the teacher to have vital information for future practice. On reflection, using Gibbs reflective cycle I saw how Schon's reflection in action and after action could have been useful within this incident as a student expressed they were upset. This meant the teacher had to reflect in the moment and decide how to approach this situation and the next steps needed to be taken in the moment. This incident has also shown me importance of student voice as allows the student to feel integrated within the school environment and also can use the zone of proximal development from Vygotsky (1978) in order to build upon current knowledge using resources from the teacher but also others within the class which in turn can help build more confidence to allow other students to speak out. It was clear not all practitioners are confident using student voices as they believe that the distance should be kept between students and educators. However, this can be done in an efficient way which can benefit student wellbeing as this can cause a positive environment for pupils which can help students express their well-being. To conclude this incident is extremely useful but could be adapted further to be improved with a more direct focus on well-being. This showed me the importance of reflection as at first I thought that this incident was excellent for well-being. However, it is clear that it can be good for student voice which in turn helps student wellbeing with vocabulary being expanded over time through the zone of proximal development.

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Appendix

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

Record 1

Date and time, year group: year 6
22/09/2021
Morning and afternoon

Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AOLE, general classroom context
In year 6 classroom during registration period
Health and wellbeing

What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident(the more detail the better to refer to in your later work)

The students responded to register in welsh with how they felt.
A student stated they felt sad- teacher quickly ensured follow up
Students comforted the pupil
Also after lunch there was lots of atmosphere in the classroom students stated they were angry and upset- came to realisation that there was an argument at lunch- quickly resolved with this activity
Was able to see how the students must do this every day as there was no prior question
The incident showed skills of emotive language and welsh
Allowed students to speak about their emotions at least twice a day
A good check in activity
Students helped other students- there was no fuss- done in a mature and well mannered response.
The activity began with no prior question asked
Clear it was done regularly
Students expressed different opinions- some were similar

Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be "under the hood" in these incidents?

What avenues of research could you consider?

Behaviour management

Conditioning

Wellbeing

Pupil voice

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)

Was first thing in the morning and after lunch- high emotion times within a class.

Some students been off with illness so getting used to being back in the class

Many illnesses were going around the class- sickness, coughs- a reason why the student said they were upset

Record 2

Date and time, year group: Year 6

Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AQLE, general classroom context Year 6 classroom Behaviour management 23/09/2021 Morning
What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident(the more detail the better to refer to in your later work) The teacher explained an activity to the class twice Wrote the ML and the date The teacher asked for thumbs up- to ensure all students understood what was being asked of them.- all students put their thumbs up One student sat there and did not start writing the task- and then started to irritate the peers which were sat near- by throwing pens and being distracting. The teacher then moved the student- however as the student still did not know what to do she then irritated the next group of students when the teacher spoke to student individually was quickly established that they did not understand what to do- once explained again the student efficiently worked upon the work with no issues. Could ask student straight away what is wrong instead of just assuming they are being disruptive on purpose Looking at seating plans- does student need be closer to the board/ closer to the teacher to ensure they understand what is going on.
Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be “under the hood” in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider? Behaviour management Behaviourist approach Humanistic

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)

First lesson on a Wednesday
It was raining
Many students were irritable

Record 3

Date and time, year group: year 6
22/09/2021

Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/ACLE, general classroom context

A PPA teacher was with the students every other Wednesday.

What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident(the more detail the better to refer to in your later work)

The PPA teacher explained that for good work and behaviour students will be given a post card which will mean a treat will be given at the end of the term.

Prior to this statement many students were not respecting the teacher as she was new and this was her second lesson with the class however after this statement there was a complete shift in attitudes and behaviour towards the teacher.

Many students began to listen more and students were encouraging other students to participate and helping them with their work in order for them to get a prize.

The students were praising themselves

The class ended up getting a post card each

Teacher explained that they usually do not listen to her so worked better than expected

The boys were less caring than the girls however did not want to let anyone down - a team effort used

I seen a pupil was helping another with silent reading with small doses of encouragement which helped the students confidence

Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be "under the hood" in these incidents?

What avenues of research could you consider?

Positive reinforcement

Behaviour management

Are students being well behaved because they want to or because they want or know a reward is coming

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)

Was first thing

As soon as the students understood the normal teacher wasn't teaching they instantly began to play up.