

ECAD6014 - Core Studies: The learner: who am I teaching?

Target 1 – Continue to develop a supported critical approach throughout, offering the opposing view whenever possible.

Target 2 – Proofread work carefully to avoid repetition and inclusion of unexplained information.

Target 3 – Avoid placing references in a sentence alone.

Assignment Title: Supporting your discussion with theory, research and practice, critically reflect on how you would support an individual learner whose progress is being affected by specific barriers to learning during one transition period (horizontal or vertical).

This assignment aims to critically reflect on how to best support an individual learner whose progress is affected by a specific barrier to learning during a vertical transition. This assignment will be supported by relevant theory, research and practical examples. The BERA Guidelines specify that when addressing a child, anonymity must be maintained by using a pseudonym (BERA, 2018). The child will be referred to as Idris. Idris is a seven-year-old pupil currently in Year two, who has recently relocated from Africa to Wales. This transition has caused challenges for Idris, as he navigates a new school environment. Academically, Idris shows strengths in literacy, particularly in storytelling and creative writing, where he expresses imaginative ideas and cultural themes through his drawings. However, Idris often appears shy and withdrawn during group activities, which can impact his ability to develop friendships and engage with his peers. His previous experiences may contribute to feelings of anxiety, making it difficult for him to connect with others in his new classroom. Additionally, changes in routine or exposure to unfamiliar environments can trigger his anxiety, particularly when the classroom becomes loud or over stimulating. To effectively support Idris, it could be essential to address his emotional and social needs (Welsh Government, 2021). Implementing strategies such as a whole school approach, Idris could benefit from support of an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) alongside a 'buddy system' for peer support (ELSA Network, 2017). The chosen transition represents a significant life change for Idris at a young age. By practitioners understanding the importance of fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment and acknowledging the impact of this transition could allow Idris to receive effective support, enhancing Idris' self-esteem, and promote his overall well-being (Loreman, Joanne Marie Deppeler and Harvey, 2010).

Idris's move from Africa to Wales could have introduced cultural differences, such as changes in traditions, and routines which could affect his emotional and social development. (Adams and Kirova, 2007) recognises that these differences could affect not only how Idris perceives his new environment but also how he interacts with it. Dixon points out that children who have relocated could face feelings of confusion, disconnection, and separation (Dixon and Hayden, 2008). For Idris, being in a new country where he might see fewer representations of his cultural background could heighten feelings of isolation and anxiety (Action for Children, 2023). The Welsh Curriculum emphasises the importance of diversity and creating an inclusive learning environment for all learners (Welsh Government, 2024). This may imply that recognising every child's heritage might encourage the feeling of belonging, which could be essential for Idris's emotional and social development.

According to research, children like Idris may feel less isolated and much more engaged when teachers are aware of their cultural differences, which could enable them to make use of the cultural knowledge, experiences, and viewpoints of pupils that come from a variety of backgrounds to make learning more relevant (Schwarzenthal et al., 2020). This inclusive approach could align with the Welsh Curriculum 'Four Purposes' which aim to develop ethical, informed citizens of Wales as it may help nurture a classroom environment where pupils feel valued and engaged (Dauncey, 2015). Therefore, by embedding Idris' cultural diversity into the curriculum could result in a smoother transition.

Idris' social development is one of the main barriers to learning, not wanting to participate in group activities may cause him to feel isolated and further distance himself from his friends. According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, a child's development is influenced by their social environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). He believes that there are many aspects of a child's social development, from forming close interactions (microsystems) to interactions between different microsystems (mesosystem). Microsystems include Idris' closer relationships, such as with teachers and classmates. If he avoids group activities, he could miss opportunities for direct interaction, making it challenging for him to form friendships. This lack of close interactions could lead to feelings of loneliness and low self-esteem, leading to further withdrawal. Mesosystems are the connections between different microsystems such as his home life and school environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This could imply that by the teacher recognising these macrosystem factors, they can better understand the challenges Idris faces and develop strategies to create a more supportive environment for him. If Idris continues to feel isolated, it could affect his ability to build those relationships, which the Welsh Curriculum suggests is crucial for encouraging collaboration, communication, and teamwork (Welsh Government, 2024b).

A key principle of the Curriculum for Wales is well-being, which underlines the value of promoting children's holistic development, especially for those undergoing major life transitions like migration (Welsh Government, 2019). It appears that teachers can reduce Idris' stress, lower his anxiety, and help him feel more at ease in his new school by fostering an emotionally safe, welcoming classroom that respects his cultural background (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 argues that these techniques are crucial for assisting children like Idris in overcoming the emotional impacts of moving and cultural change (Welsh Government, 2015).

Idris is currently adjusting to Welsh culture and his new classroom, which is an important phase of his new life and development. The support of his peers and teachers is crucial. His profile suggests a buddy system, which is in line with Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Daniels, 2017). According to Vygotsky, pupils may achieve more when they receive help from their social interactions such as peers or teachers (Kozulin et al., 2003). This could highlight the importance of social interaction for Idris' learning and development. For Idris, this suggests that allowing his peers in will enable him to access new ideas, skills and ways of thinking that he may have not achieved on his own. Implementing a buddy system for Idris may help him navigate his new environment more comfortably. A classmate who is empathetic and understands his challenges, could provide support, encouragement. According to inquirED (2024), peer interaction may help Idris build confidence and make social connections (inquirED, 2024). While Vygotsky argues that social interactions is essential, his theory may not consider Idris's upbringing and how it likely shapes his perspectives, values, and ways of interacting with others (McLeod, 2024). Rosa Pynes and Jeff Rimkus (2021) argue that Idris' upbringing might have an impact on how he interacts with teachers and peers, indicating that social learning alongside a more personalised approach might be more helpful for his development (Rosa Pynes and Jeff Rimkus, 2021).

While Vygotsky argues that learning is a social process that occurs through interactions with others, Jean Piaget's theory indicates that children actively construct their understanding through their experiences and interactions with their environment. He viewed learning as a process of discovery, where children engage with their environment to build knowledge. This could suggest that as Idris navigates his new environment, he will actively construct knowledge based on his experiences in Wales (McLeod, 2024). Professor Graham Donaldson, emphasis on personalised learning and the need for a curriculum that responds to the diverse needs and interests of all pupils, this reflects Piaget's belief that learning is most effective when it is relevant to the learner's context and experiences (Donaldson, 2015). Therefore, by encouraging Idris to share his cultural experiences through storytelling and drawings, he may take ownership of his learning and feel more connected to his peers.

While Piaget's theory focuses on the individual's cognitive development, it could be useful to recognise the influence of social interactions and cultural experiences on a child's learning journey (McLeod, 2024a). For Idris, adapting to a new school environment in Wales may involve navigating cultural differences, and building social connections. It could be suggested that incorporating

elements from both Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories, practitioners could create a more diverse approach to support Idris's development during this transitional phase (Blake and Pope, 2008).

Idris, a seven-year-old pupil faces several challenges during this significant life change. To help Idris feel like he belongs, the teacher includes his background into the curriculum. This aligns with the work of Darren Chetty, who emphasizes the importance of inclusivity within the curriculum, which aligns well with creating a sense of belonging for pupils like Idris. Chetty has challenged some of Piaget's and Vygotsky's conclusions, arguing that children benefit when they see their own experiences and cultures reflected in the learning environment because it supports their experiences and identities (Chetty, Maughn Rollins Gregory and Megan Jane Lavery, 2022). For Idris, incorporating elements of his African heritage and experiences into lessons has helped foster an environment in the classroom where he feels respected and understood. While Paulo Freire's principles of critical pedagogy, prioritises learning that is pupil-centred and empowers learners by student voice and engagement in topics that matter to them (Shih, 2018). For Idris, providing opportunities to express his thoughts and feelings about his transition has enhanced his sense of belonging. ESTYN emphasises how important it is for teachers to be able to adapt to the needs of every pupil (Estyn, 2022). This is particularly important to Idris, who can find it difficult to adapt to various unfamiliar environments and changes in routine. Additionally understanding Idris's transition process in the classroom can also be applied to the idea of Cynefin, which describes the setting in which people feel familiar and at home (Griffiths, 2024). By creating a familiar, supportive, and culturally responsive environment, the teacher has helped Idris feel a sense of belonging and community, ultimately enhancing his emotional and social development. This holistic approach could align with the Welsh Curriculum as their goal is to ensure that every classroom promotes equity and inclusivity, ensuring that every child can progress (Welsh Government, 2024a).

Idris's development has been greatly supported by an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA), especially as he deals with the difficulties of adjusting to a new school and environment. The ELSA framework is designed to enhance emotional literacy, which is crucial for children's overall wellbeing and academic progress (ELSA Network, 2017). ELSAs are trained to help pupils recognise, understand, and manage their emotions, which supports the curriculum's aim to promote well-being and resilience among learners (Welsh Government, 2024b). The ELSA intervention helps Idris to identify and express his emotions. Strategies including storytelling, and emotion charts have been used to support Idris. This has enabled Idris to identify his emotions and come up with coping strategies personalised for himself. However, Idris's anxiety and withdrawal has made it difficult for him to interact and express his emotions, which has made this support less effective. Idris has practiced his social skills in a safe environment by participating in small group sessions led by the ELSA. Evidence suggests that collaborative games and group discussions is among the most important factors for promoting cooperation and communication (Welsh Government, 2020). These sessions have helped Idris build confidence in working with his peers, forming friendships. By helping pupils navigate friendships and social interactions, ELSAs contribute to a positive school environment that aligns with the curriculum's focus on collaboration and community (Welsh Government, 2015). However, Idris sometimes does find it difficult to participate if the group is too loud which results in even further withdrawal. Additionally, the ELSA intervention provides strategies for managing anxiety regarding changes in routine and overstimulating environments (SSCE Cymru, 2024). This has included mindfulness exercises, breathing techniques, and the use of a visual timetable to prepare Idris for the day ahead.

McLeod (2024) argues that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a useful framework for understanding how a child's emotional and cognitive development depends on basic wants like safety and belonging (McLeod, 2024). The ELSA approach could help Idris move through Maslow's levels in a smoother way. ELSAs assist children like Idris in feeling comfortable and welcomed in their school environment by highlighting the importance of having a sense of belonging and safety (ELSA Network, 2017). His self-esteem could grow because of this sense of belonging, which will eventually allow him to move up the hierarchy and achieve higher levels of self-actualization, where he will be able to express his feelings and take part more willingly in group activities.

Similarly, The ELSA framework benefits from Bandura's ideas of self-efficacy, self-concept, and self-esteem, especially when it comes to helping Idris develop a growth mindset and confidence (Lopez-Garrido, 2023). ELSA's can help children like Idris develop self-efficacy by empowering him to recognise his strengths, like his storytelling skill, and demonstrating to him that he can progress. His self-concept could improve because of this as he starts to see himself as one of his peers, which raises his self-esteem. Idris will then be able to interact with classmates and participate in class activities more easily now that he has more self-assurance and self-belief, gradually improving his anxiety and shyness (Lopez-Garrido, 2023).

In contrast, Freud's psychoanalytic theory focuses on the unconscious mind and how early experiences shape emotions and actions (McLeod, 2024b). ELSA support, on the other hand, focusses more on assisting children in controlling their emotions during the moment (ELSA Network, 2017). This could suggest that the ELSA should go beyond providing quick support and coping strategies to address deeper, hidden problems from the past. According to Freud's method, anxiety might be caused by more serious experiences that the teacher may be unaware of. Freud suggests that to support Idris, the ELSA must be made aware of any underlying problems to effectively support his needs (McLeod, 2024b).

It is thought that, instead of understanding emotions, Skinner's behaviourist theory focusses on using rewards to change behaviour (McLeod, 2024b). Whereas ELSA's focus on assisting children in understanding and managing their emotions. It is suggested that if Idris adopts a behaviourist perspective, he may rely more on rewards to promote interaction with others. It could suggest that a combined approach of emotional support with positive reinforcement might be most effective. Therefore, combining behavioural, cognitive, and emotional skills, could help children like Idris become more competent and resilient (Cook et al., 2015).

Building a supportive learning environment could require effective stakeholder collaboration, especially for children going through major transitions like Idris (Maisey and Verity Campbell-Barr, 2021). Idris's teacher has engaged with Idris's parents during his taster day at School X which has provided insights into his cultural background, previous experiences, and specific needs. This collaboration has helped school staff understand Idris's strengths in literacy and storytelling, allowing them to plan and adapt learning experiences that incorporates his creativity while addressing his emotional and social needs. According to Nel Noddings' ethics of care model, education should focus mainly on fostering a supportive environment where pupils feel appreciated and inspired (Noddings, 2013). This method implies that the responsibility of ensuring that Idris' social and emotional needs are met, falls on a network of people including parents, school staff, and community members rather than just the teacher (Welsh Government, 2016). Regular communication with Idris's family can assist when strengthening support at home and ensure that the transition is smoother for Idris. This approach could be essential for creating a supportive environment that meets Idris's diverse needs.

In conclusion, this assignment has critically examined the challenges faced by Idris, transitioning from Africa to Wales, and the different strategies that have been put into place to support his development. By understanding the diverse needs of learners like Idris, teachers can create supportive environments that promote collaboration and personalised learning experiences (Norm O'Reilly, 2016). Vygotsky and Piaget theories could help guide practitioners in developing holistic approaches that value both social interaction and independent progress (Reynolds, 2013). A collaborative approach involving Idris, practitioners, and stakeholders is vital for creating a positive learning experience and supporting his transition to a new school in Wales. Addressing Idris's emotional needs is crucial. An Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) can help Idris to develop coping strategies for anxiety and adapt to changes in routine (ELSA Network, 2017). Educators should adopt collaborative approaches that involve working closely with colleagues, support staff, and families to develop tailored strategies for learners like Idris. Additionally, School X could provide resources and workshops to help families understand the school environment and cultural expectations, empowering them to support their children effectively (Welsh Government, 2016). The insight I have gained from this assignment will help inform my teaching practice, guiding me to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all pupils. This could be achieved by focusing on my professional

development in cultural competence, emotional and social development, and collaboration (Unlu, 2017).

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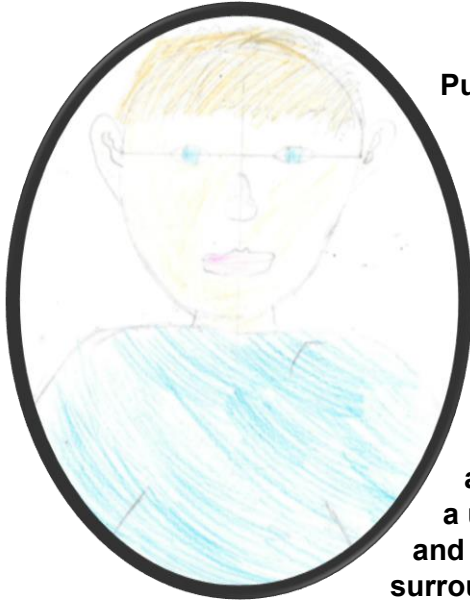
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Appendices

Appendix 1 – One Page Profile

Pupil Profile



Pupil Profile: Idris

Name: Idris
Age: 7 years old
Year Group: Year 2
School: School X

Background Information:

Idris has recently moved from Africa to Wales, which has been a significant transition for him. This change includes adapting to a new culture and school environment. He has a unique perspective shaped by his previous experiences and may feel a mix of excitement and anxiety about his new surroundings.

Academic Performance:

- **Strengths:** Idris demonstrates a keen interest in storytelling and enjoys drawing, particularly pictures related to his culture. He has shown potential in literacy through his imaginative ideas when engaging in creative writing activities.
- **Areas for Progression:** He is currently developing his understanding of mathematical concepts and may benefit from additional support in this area to build confidence.

Emotional and Social Well-being:

- **Current Challenges:** Idris struggles with emotional and social well-being, often appearing shy and withdrawn in group activities. He may find it difficult to make new friends and express his feelings. His previous experiences in Africa may contribute to feelings of isolation as he navigates through a new chapter of his life.
- **Triggers:** Changes in routine or unfamiliar situations can lead to increased anxiety. Loud environments or rapid transitions between activities may also be challenging for him.

Support Strategies:

1. Emotional Literacy Support:

- Regular check-ins with a designated staff member (e.g., class teacher or ELSA) to provide a safe space for Idris to express his feelings.

- **Implementation of a buddy system to pair him with a compassionate peer who can help him feel more included.**

2. Social Skills Development:

- **Facilitate small group activities that promote teamwork and collaboration, encouraging Idris to engage with his peers in a supportive setting.**

3. Cultural Inclusion:

- **Create opportunities for Idris to share stories and experiences from his home country with the class, fostering understanding and respect among classmates.**
- **Celebrate cultural diversity through themed days or projects, helping Idris feel valued for his unique background.**