

Teitl yr aseiniad (h.y. eich cwestiwn ymchwil)**Assignment Title (i.e. your research question)**

Gallwch ychwanegu'ch targedau o'ch aseiniad diwethaf gan ddefnyddio'r tabl isod. /

Please add your targets from the previous assignment using the table below.

	Targed/Target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn. What I have done in this assignment.
Targed/Target 1	Hand in assignment on time	I have handed it in time
Targed/Target 2	More critical engagement with a wider range of relevant research literature.	I have used more variety in my literature this time.
Targed/Target 3	More explicit links between theory and practice	I think I have made better links between the theory and practice

Word Count: 5133

Aim, Focus and Purpose of the Research

The issue that interested me was how praise and reward affected a pupil's learning. My school offers a lot of praise but not a lot of physical rewards. I will be looking into whether praise or reward systems affect pupils engagement within the classroom. We will gather information from 6 chosen students (3 from each lesson) and find out their opinions on whether the method improved their learning. Research has shown that praise and rewards can have a positive impact on pupil engagement. I will be undertaking a lesson study within two key stage 3 classrooms, with one lesson being Mathematics and the other being English, to find out if we can observe differences in pupil engagement by using more praise or reward. After this we want to find out pupil's opinions on whether they believe their engagement improved when praise or rewards were offered. We also wanted to see if body language showed us that engagement had improved. To identify what forms of praise affect pupil engagement, I will be observing a lesson and teaching a lesson. We will use at least two tasks in each lesson with one offering just praise and the other offering a reward. We will see which method produces the most engagement from the selected students. We will select 3 students from the class: one of lower ability, one of average ability and one of higher ability. We will then conduct semi-structured interviews with the 3 students from each class in order to find out their opinions about theirs and their peer's engagement during the different stages of the lesson. We will then reflect on the results and critically analyse what we have found to determine whether praise is of greater value or if rewards produce better results. We will then determine how we will use these results to improve our future teaching.

One lesson was a mathematics lesson and the other was an English lesson. The maths lesson featured approximately 12 pupils where-as the English lesson had 30+ mixed ability students.

Literature Review

I looked further into this by reading books, journal articles, government documents and other online material. What this showed me is that using praise and reward to encourage student attainment is a debate that has had people researching for many years. Elton (1989) mainly linked praise and reward with behaviour management inside the classroom and stated that behaviour management is such a difficult and complex topic that cannot be solved with easy solutions. Steer (2009) states in his report that rather

than looking for 'good' behaviour, you should aim to achieve 'successful' behaviour where the student gets the work done that is needed of them. The question is then, how can teachers achieve this successful behaviour? Praise and rewards are useful tools in implementing successful behaviour and can be used to keep students on track and keep their attainment high. Steer (2009) extends his point and insists that sanctions and praise/rewards should both be used and should be consistent for it to be successful, 'the consistent application of rewards and sanctions are essential,' (Steer, 2009, p.23). Pomeroy (1999) argues that some techniques can be used for both sanction and reward such as phone calls home. A phone call home can be made to reinforce positive behaviour by praising a student to their parent while it can also be used to alert the parent of challenging behaviour. This technique also builds strength in the relationships between the parents and the schools as it enables everyone to feel like they are part of the solution. It also means that teachers are not alone as they have the support of the parents/guardians. This literature supports our research question as it shows us that rewards will change the outcomes of pupil attainment and the quality of their work. Rather than phone calls home we offered verbal praise and then followed this up with the chance to win sweets for successful behaviour. Further tests of this study could implement the chance of gaining a phone call home but we felt that this would be extremely time consuming and felt that it was better for us to offer a physical in class reward to see the immediate effects of praise and rewards.

Skinner's (1948) work on Operant Conditioning (OC) showed that behaviour that is followed by a pleasant consequence was likely to be repeated whereas behaviour followed by unpleasanties were less likely to be repeated. Skinner came to the conclusion that behaviour needs to be reinforced otherwise it will weaken or die out altogether. Skinner proved that positive reinforcement worked and he showed this by placing a rat into his 'Skinner box'. The box had a lever on the side that would dispense food when pulled and the rat soon learnt that it could have constant access to food by pulling on the lever and the positive consequence meant that it would repeat the action over and over. This research is relevant to our study as it shows that by offering positive rewards such as praise or sweets we should see a positive effect on the student's engagement and level of work.

Trivedi (2014) and Coe et al (2014) suggests that the difficult questions are what do teachers praise and how often should praise be given and Stipek (2010) argues that too much praise can have damaging effects on pupils as they could see praise for a simple

task as condescending or they can see the teachers expectations as low. Thom (2017) states that If we want to inspire our students to believe they can achieve more, we cannot afford to praise them cheaply. This is relevant to our study as we do not want to give out praise that can be regarded as condescending or unnecessary. This has inspired us to ensure that we set tasks of a fairly difficult nature so that our praise does not seem condescending or unnecessary. Robins (2012) literature supports our study as they believe that for every 1 reprimand there should be 5 cases of praise in the classroom and Losada's (2004) research supports this as they found that the highest achieving sports teams followed this ratio with great success. This literature helped us to clarify our research as it shows that praise and reward clearly affect performance and work ethic. The National STEM Learning Centre (2010) found that the best recognition is when reinforcement is written down. Recognition that can be held, re-read, shown to others and displayed at home such as a note or a certificate can be seen as the most rewarding. For many the pride of having their work on display has a similar effect and is substantial enough for the student to continue working towards successful behaviour. This supports our literature in the sense that it shows that praise and reward are important however, it disregards our tactics of using sweets as these are rewards that cannot be kept as a keepsake. It will be interesting to see if sweets help control classroom management and attainment or if they cause more havoc.

Lesson study design

McNiff (2009) believes that action research generates knowledge and allows practitioners to discover things that were not known to them before and this is why we conducted the research in this format. For the purpose of this research, two lesson observations were conducted through the methodology of action research. Lesson study refers to the method of research which focuses on teaching and allows researchers to observe, analyse and provide feedback to raise their standards of teaching and improve their pedagogy. This is an effective way to improve professional teaching standards as well as researching past and present topics in teaching. Welsh Government (2012) state that using this observation method is highly effective for improving the quality of teaching in Wales and will benefit the pupils in schools as they will have a higher quality of education. Our research aimed at improving our level of teaching and we aimed to develop ourselves from the findings which means that this study classes as action research. Action research mainly looks into qualitative research and data and uses opinions and descriptions made from observations and non-participation observation

sheets. Mills (2003) highlights that we are able to gather information about how a school operates and how well their students learn which gains insight and allows for reflection which in turn improves student's outcome.

For our research, the engagement of learners was defined by:

1. A learner who talks to the teacher and their peers about the work
2. A learner who asks questions
3. A learner who answers questions
4. A learner who completes all of the tasks set out in the lesson.

Before the research took place we selected 3 students from each class to participate in the interviews that were conducted after the lesson. The students at my school were selected by me and the ones at my partner's school were selected by him. Learners were selected by their current level and we aimed to have 1 lower, 1 middle and 1 high achiever from each class. Cohen et al (2018) state that this is known as purposive sampling. There was a time restraint for us to complete this study so this method was the most effective for us as it was the least time consuming.

The research focused on observations of the learners within the classroom and an observation sheet was used with a tally system to make notes of how many times a student participated by means of hands up, oracy etc. which meant that we ended up collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. The reasons for using the observation sheet was to ensure that we stuck to a specific focus of student engagement and that the purpose of our study was not lost. Data was captured by the researcher immediately to ensure that our study had high validity and the interviews commenced as close to the lesson as possible so that the information was still fresh in the pupil's minds. The interviews took place as a group interview. This method works well especially when working with young people as it minimises pressure and enables them to discuss ideas in a safe space that is familiar to them. Due to confidentiality being of utmost importance it was important to ensure that all data could easily be deleted so interviews were transcribed onto A4 paper with all names omitted. If the size of the sample was larger than 3 students then it would have caused some issues as it would have made the study harder but by using 3 it meant that it was straightforward to gather the data and present it and ensured that the study had strong validity.

The final process was to reflect on the lessons as a whole, Koshy (2010) states that action research produces open ended results and gives the researcher the ability to adapt the study and make improvements. I spent time with my partner analysing the data and reflecting on what we had seen and learnt. The reflections will be looked into in more detail later on in the assignment in the discussion/conclusion section. The reflection process is highly important and is included in the professional standards of teaching practise by the Welsh Government. A reflective practitioner is key to the profession and is highlighted in Donaldson's 2015 Successful Futures report which is what the new Welsh curriculum is based around. We used Gibbs' reflection template to suss out our feelings and findings etc (Appendix 1).

Ethical Considerations

There are several ethical considerations that must be addressed due to the nature of the study being research within a school environment. Consent must be acquired from all of the students participating in the study. As all of the participants are under 18 it was imperative that I received signed consent forms (Appendix 2) from the parents as well as individual permission from the pupils. The consent letters will detail everything that will happen in the study so that they are aware of exactly what their child is partaking in. During the research process 3 students will be selected from each of the two classes to take part in interviews and because of this it is important that confidentiality is kept and the identity of the pupils will never be revealed. Students will be informed that interviews will be voice recorded only and that the data will be stored on a secure USB that only I and my partner will have access to. UNCRC (1996) and Cohen et al (2011) stress that ethical considerations are paramount to a reliable and legal study and the participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. BERA (2018) set ethical guidelines and our study adheres to the stipulations and are supported by the UWTSD Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice (2019). A full ethics form was filled in and accepted by UWTSD before any research took place.

Study 1

This was the lesson that I observed as my partner delivered. He started his class off with a starter activity with no mention of rewards or merits to see how the students responded naturally to tasks. During the process which saw his students working on the starter, he pointed out the three selected pupils to me so that I could focus on observing them and fill in the sheet using a tally system that we created in preparation for this study (appendix 4). Throughout the starter activity, my partner circulated the classroom giving verbal praise to those who were working well which initiated the first part of our study looking into how praise affects pupil engagement. The class were somewhat slow to start the work but, with the reinforcement of verbal praise, those who were on task continued to work hard throughout this stage of the observation. One thing that we noticed from this was that some pupils who were off task started to focus more on their work when they saw that their peers were receiving positive praise for their efforts. This links to the literature from Skinner and his ideas of positive reinforcement having a positive effect on students as pupils who were not as on task picked up on the praise that their peers were receiving and aimed to mimic their successful peer's behaviour. In the next part of the lesson, my partner informed his class that he would be generous with merit points during the second activity. He made sure not to tell them what they would specifically receive the merits for and he did this so that there was an element of surprise to the rewards but also to see if other students picked up on who was receiving merits and why. The tally chart results (appendix 4) showed a rise in engagement levels based on the criteria that we set such as how often students raised their hand to answer questions. There was a spike in students participating in oral work and a large portion of the class started to put their hands up to answer questions. There were also no noticeable avoidance strategies employed by any of the pupils within the class which showed that they were all willing to try and complete the tasks and this shows that praise clearly had an effect on these students. An interesting thing that we noticed was that the pupils seemed to be totally engaged both verbally and in writing and this could be due to the fact that my partner did not reveal what would earn students a merit point. If he had told them exactly how to earn a merit then the students may have focused solely on that one aspect of the task without regarding other elements such as discussions, sharing, writing etc. In the next section of my partner's lesson he introduced the reward of sweets for the students who gave correct answers and the pupils were set a task to answer questions on what they had learnt so far in the lesson. My partner instructed the pupils to raise their hands upon completion of the task so that he could check their answers

and award the sweets. From the tally shown in the appendix (Appendix 4), it was clear that the high levels of engagement that were noted in the prior activity continued through into this one as every student seemed eager to complete the task to gain the reward. However, we noticed that some pupils seemed to be distracted because of the chance for reward and some rushed their work in hope of receiving the reward as quickly as possible. This result would later be mimicked in my lesson with some students taking less care in their work to receive the sweets as quickly as possible and this has led us to believe that non-physical rewards such as the forms mentioned in The National STEM Learning Centre (2010) literature are the best kind of reward that a teacher can give to pupils. Once this lesson was completed, my partner and I discussed the positives and negatives with regard to praise and reward and I mentioned to my partner that some of the students received no praise or reward throughout the lesson. When my partner checked the work of these pupils after the lesson he noted that they had attempted the answers but were unable to gather a full understanding of the work that was set. This suggests that handing out praise and rewards can be limited to a select few students as oppose to the whole class. Giving praise just for correct answers can have an adverse effect on the lower achieving students and revising this study we would try to adopt an approach that allows praise for good attempts as well as correct answers as this could spur the lower achieving students to work even harder. Pictures of the student's work would have helped the analysis of these results and would also give my partner the ability to compare this work to past and future lessons and would also enable him to monitor the students who received less praise.

Study 2

The second observation lesson was the one where I taught my class and my partner observed. The pupils who had been selected for the study were pointed out to my partner at the start of the lesson so he knew who he was looking out for and monitoring. He then documented the pupil's engagement levels by using a tally on the observation sheet (appendix 5). The tally is used to monitor how often students engaged with the lesson by looking at things like how often they put their hand up and whether or not they were distracted at times etc. During the starter phase of the lesson the pupil engagement seemed low and the selected students were not participating to the standard that the school expects – none of the 3 students participated in oral work and student 1 and 2 showed signs of challenging behaviour as they were shouting out and getting rather excited. As the lesson progressed this challenging behaviour subsided,

especially at the point where I offered achievement points for the successful completion of the next task. From this point on the engagement levels of the class increased drastically as they wanted the rewards. The 3 selected pupils were far more active during this period and participated in oral work and were actively putting their hands up to ask questions that were directed at me and at the whole class and their challenging behaviour seemed to cease. They were also very quick to start each task without the need to check in with their peers or to check in with me to have instructions repeated. Following on from this task I then introduced the reward of sweets to the class. I told pupils before the task that during this section they could earn sweets by completing the task effectively. At this point, the engagement spiked and every student was focused on completing the task as quickly as they could to ensure that they did not miss out on the sweet reward. Every student in the class began participating in the work and in conversations with each other to help each other and they built upon answers and developed their prior knowledge. However, with this excitement came some challenging behaviour as some students, including 2 of the 3 selected students, began to show signs of hyperactivity and one student even began wondering around the class in excitement. This could arguably show that the achievement points worked better as it increased productivity but did not over excite the pupils. This also backs up the points made by the literature as it shows that physical rewards increase productivity but it is important to understand how different physical rewards affect pupil engagement. Sweets got the students over excited where-as achievement points or reward certificates increases productivity while keeping the excitement levels of the pupils down. The pupils became far more focused on the reward rather than the learning that was taking place and this can be problematic as they were rushing to finish rather than taking their time and really letting the information sink in. The challenging behaviour certainly was linked to the reward as pupils were agitated to ensure that they received the sweets and were jealous when their peers were receiving them before them. What we learnt from this experience is that rewards such as achievement points are easier to implement into a lesson and achieves good participation from the pupils whereas physical rewards like sweets can send the pupils into a frenzy that affects the quality of their work. Where my partner surprised his students with rewards, I set out specific requirements that the students needed to meet to earn their reward and this study has shown that the surprise method works best as it ensures that students are focusing on all aspects of learning and are not trying to rush their work to gain the sweets as quickly as possible. My partner and I discussed how we would improve this study and decided that filming the

lessons would produce even more reliable results and would better demonstrate the challenging behaviour better.

Interview Findings (Appendix 6 and 7)

The interviews had some success in finding out the opinions of the participating students and it came up with some interesting findings which seemed to correlate between the two different lessons.

Student 2 in my school expressed their opinion that too much praise would actually be more condescending than rewarding and highlighted that it would seem fake if it was used all of the time and would actually irritate them:

“Charles: would too much praise be condescending?”

Student 2: It would get on my nerves, too much would seem fake”

The students generally enjoyed the lessons and this is shown by pupil 2 in my school who said that they would like more lessons where praise and rewards are offered:

“Pupil 2: Can we have more lessons like this?”

The students were very happy about the sweets although we found them to be a cause of behaviour issues. This is shown when pupil 3 in my school said:

“Student 3: encouragement and sweets are the best.”

When asked about other arrangements for praise and reward the students suggested other forms such as trophies and medals to take home. This is a nice idea but could be very costly in the long run.

“Jake: Apart from sweets and us telling you you’ve done well are there any other ways that you can think of?”

Student 2: A trophy or a medal would be a good idea”

The students also expressed a desire to receive more achievement points and believed that the school did not offer this enough:

“Charles: Do you think more achievement points should be handed out?”

All: yeah.

Student 2: If we are really good we should earn some. They hardly give any out.”

Discussion of Research Findings in Relation to Related Literature and Research

From our study we have found out that praise and rewards do have a positive effect on student engagement and participation but that certain rewards such as sweets can produce negative and disruptive behaviour. Skinner's (1948) literature proves to be true as we could see clearly in both lessons that offering praise and reward made the pupils want to work harder so that they experienced the pleasant feeling of receiving praise or sweets. Losada's (2004) research also came out to be true if based on our study as she showed that the highest achieving sports teams were the ones that offered praise and reward to their players and we could see a boost in activity and the will of the pupils to succeed in their work even just from verbal praise.

We did, however, find out that incorporating sweets as a reward can lead to challenging behaviour due to the excitement that they raise in pupils. This links back to The National STEM Learning Centre (2010) who found that the best recognition is when reinforcement is written down. Recognition that can be held, re-read, shown to others and displayed at home such as a note or a certificate can be more effective than sweets as it can prevent the over excitement and can ensure that pupils still take time and put effort into their work.

Also, with the information given by the students in the interviews, we found that too much praise can be an issue as it can nullify the impact when praise is given for a simple, straightforward task. This links back to Trivedi (2004) and Coe et al (2014) who claim that the quantity of praise used needs to be limited to ensure that it has the greatest impact possible. It also links to Stipek's (2010) research where it is argued that too much praise has a damaging effect on pupils as they will inevitably find it to be condescending rather than deserving and can see the expectations of the teacher as low. It also links to Thom's (2017) literature where he states that praise should not be cheap and should be carefully considered before being awarded as to not condescend the pupil.

This means that my class needs to have praise and rewards for them to enjoy their learning and for them to be productive. However, the use of sweets as a reward needs to be revised as it created challenging behaviour alongside the hard work. Different rewards should be used in future lessons to implement the increase in work but to also cancel out the negative behaviour – one example could be stickers or a note sent home. The study had clear strengths and we were able to show clearly that pupil participation

increased with praise and reward but the limitations are that we could only use a small amount of what is a vast topic. In future it would be beneficial to try out different methods to compare the results with this study.

Conclusion

I believe that there are many strengths to carrying out research like this. The ability to reflect is highly important for teachers who want to develop their skill set and pedagogy. Working in partners was also beneficial as it enabled you to get multiple views on situations and allowed for debate to take place which in turn produced high quality results and findings. Observing a class which was not mine was also beneficial as I was able to see how my partner taught his classes and I was then able to compare his methods to mine which in turn improved my practice. I think using 3 students was good for us in terms of time but in future studies it would be interesting to focus on even more students and include more categories such as ALN students. I think the data collection sheets were vital to the study as it meant that we were able to make notes efficiently and still keep up with the lesson.

We found that praise and rewards do have an effect on student participation and that this effect is mainly positive. We did, however, find that using sweets as a reward produces hard work but it also over excites some pupils who are then showing signs of negative, hyperactive behaviour. We piloted the interview questions on our peers which was useful as it helped us to narrow down what questions we would use. However, it did not prepare us for the difficulty of getting the pupils to talk openly and in vast amounts. Now that we have experienced it though we will be able to get more detailed results the next time around.

If we were to do the study again, I would replace the sweet reward with something else such as stickers or certificates as I believe that this would produce better work from the pupils due to the over excitement of receiving sweets. We also focused on key stage 3 so it would be interesting to see how older students respond to praise and rewards and whether or not they have the same positive effects. Using sweets on older children would be interesting too to see if they became over excited about them too. Next time, I would include more schools in the study to improve the study's validity and to add more detail to the findings.

Recommendations

The recommendations I would make in light of our research is that more studies should be made to test out alternative methods of praise and reward. It would be interesting to see how pupils respond to methods such as phone calls home, certificates, stickers, written notes etc. If I did this research again I would definitely use alternative methods to sweets as it was clear that sweets were as disruptive as they were effective. I would also change the way in which we recorded data and would potentially film the lesson to give readers of the study a better insight into what happened in the classroom because as it stands they have to just take our word for it. I would also spend more time on the interview process as I felt at times we did not receive detailed answers from the pupils and this detail would have made our study far more reliable and interesting. I think I would stick to choosing 3 pupils from each school as it kept the study manageable. One change I might make would be to include more schools so that the results can be even more reliable and we would be able to see clear distinctions between schools depending on the area, size of school, number of pupils on free school meals etc.

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