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Module Code: ECAD6017

Assignment Title:

**Research Project: Case Study based on
Electives Experience**

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AI Acknowledgement

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work.

I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Research Project: Case Study based on an Electives Experience
An exploratory case study arising from practice (noticing) and investigated further through identified research tools. The assignment concludes with the identification of an intervention which can be piloted throughout Professional Teaching Experience and evidenced through reflection in the Professional Learning Standards.

Target One	There was some over-reliance on non-academic sources (e.g. websites). Moving forward, consider reading more widely and including more books and journal articles.
Target Two	Consider carefully proofreading your future academic writing to avoid any grammatical/spelling/punctuation errors. Also, please use the Harvard Referencing Handbook to enhance your referencing skills.
Target Three	Continue to develop a critical tone in future writing. Consider evaluating chosen strategies against various contrasting views. For instance, what did different authors say about the benefits or limitations of visual aids? Are there any potential challenges when you implement the strategies in future practice?

Aim, focus and purpose of the research / Research Context

The purpose of this research project is to understand how children with literacy difficulties are supported in the mainstream classroom within foundation phase. This research project will be presented in a case study, which will take an inductive approach to allow theory to emerge from the data. Furthermore, the case study will draw attention to how teachers implement an inclusive classroom by providing effective strategies to aid learning. According to Welsh Government, pupils' literacy skills has decreased and has become a concern in schools across Wales (Welsh Government, 2023). Reports have raised awareness on the impact the Covid-19 pandemic might have had on pupils' literacy (Welsh Government , 2023). This has placed literacy at the heart of the new Welsh curriculum to aid literacy progression. From this, interests were sparked on the need to understand what provisions are used in mainstream classrooms to facilitate and assist pupils' literacy development. This research was conducted in an English medium primary school in Wales. This school reported forty of their pupils currently have Additional Learning needs (ALN). This research will enhance future professional practices by exploring and later trailing the strategies observed in current teaching practices.

Overview of relevant literature

Snap Cymru (2010) reported that 'one in five' children in Wales have Additional Learning Needs (ALN). This implies that many mainstream classrooms will have at least one child that require extra support by teaching staff or specialist support (Contact, 2024) to aid their learning. Recent research has suggested that many individuals with ALN will attend a mainstream classroom (Contact, 2024). These interventions are mostly implemented one to one or in small groups. However, studies have argued that numerous of pupils who require extra learning support are not receiving the correct amount to tailor to their needs (Gov.UK, 2021). This could impact pupils' learning development because their barriers to learning are not being recognised (Children Legal Centre Wales, 2024). This could cause individuals to struggle and potentially be more resentful when participating in activities and lessons. If accessible, a teaching assistant may conduct certain interventions or provisions to help the learner achieve targets (Hegarty, 1993), however, it is not always possible to have an extra adult in the classroom to support pupils with learning barriers. This results in the classroom teacher providing support to all pupils (Government Social Research, 2024). This has raised a concern that pupils who are allocated intervention from teaching assistants may not be provided with the 'high-quality teaching' required to allow them to thrive (Ofsted, 2021).

In contrast, Education Endowment Foundation (2024) signifies the importance of one-to-one support that teaching assistants can offer children that the classroom teacher may not be able to provide. This could imply that pupils with learning difficulties are gaining a more personalised education to cater to their arising needs. By gaining more one to one support, this might increase pupils' confidence and their willingness to ask questions because the workload may be at a slower pace to best suit their needs (University of Hull, 2023). It has also been highlighted that support from teaching assistants can close the attainment gap by allowing pupils with a further three to four months academic performance (Education Endowment Foundation, 2024). An explanation for this could be that pupils who are getting individualised support from teaching assistants are getting more time to cater their personal needs rather than a universal provision for a whole class approach.

An 'inclusive classroom' is where all learners are taught and provided with an academic education within a mainstream classroom regardless of their learning barriers (Reading Rockets, 2024). With this, all children should have the opportunity to access an enjoyable learning experience through purpose learning environments and valuable learning activities (Knowles, 2006). Many scholars hold the view of creating an inclusive classroom enables all learners to be included and not discriminated against (Gao, 2023). Pupils with ALN are entitled to gain equally learning experiences that aids them to thrive (Disabled Rights UK, 2022). Therefore, pupils' rights should be utilised by ensuring an inclusive classroom approach is being implemented (Armstrong *et al*, 2002). A common misconception of the term 'inclusive education' is aimed purely towards disabled individuals. However, Schuelka (2018), proposes that inclusive education is for any individual who has barriers to their learning. This could be a language or cognitive barrier (Schuelka, 2018).

As previously drawn upon, many pupils in Wales are suffering with literacy difficulties (Welsh Government, 2023). There is evidence to suggest that pupils' reading levels have dropped over the last few years (Williams, 2024). Other reports have expressed concerns over the number of books children are reading (School Library Association, 2024). This could potentially be an explanation as to why reading levels are decreasing drastically. According to a news report this issue might have arisen from the reading methods being taught in early years (Williams, 2024). A literacy difficulty can be defined as individuals struggling to correctly read or spell words and phrases (British Dyslexia Association, 2010). Moreover, there is evidence to imply that people with a literacy difficulty may have challenges in understanding and processing what information is being addressed to them (British Dyslexia Association, 2010). Literature suggests that not all children with a literacy difficulty struggle with the same aspects (Devon County Council, 2021). To provide the support these pupils

require, teachers should firstly identify the areas that are causing the individual difficulties before implementing any additional support.

'Cueing' (Topping, 1995) is a method used to aid pupils' literacy skills in primary schools. This approach encourages learners to use pictures and contextual prompts when they get stuck on a tricky word (Topping, 1995). However, there is a debate on whether this method is effective in aiding children to recognise words and use sounds of letters when spelling out a word (Schwartz, 2020). Others would argue that this method does not impact learners' literacy skills because they are guessing words rather than learning the letter sequences in words (APM, 2024). For example, pupils may not be able to recognise the difference between mouse and house when they see the words written but can identify the different items in the pictures (APM, 2024).

Explanation of Case Study

This educational research adopts a case study methodology. The term 'case study' has been defined in multiple different ways. According to Simons (2009), a case study is a detailed understanding of a specific topic that is explored by looking through different lenses and opinions. Similarly, Gall and Borg (2005) have implied that in a case study, the phenomenon is discussed and examined through the viewpoint of the participants. This might lead the case study to research bias (Gall and Borg, 2005). It helps create a deep analysis from a wide range of perspectives (Thomas, 2013).

Case studies are suggested to be evidence led through research-based data (Simons, 2009). It is thought that they are used to gather research from a small number of participants in which the research is carefully looked at holistically (Schutt, 2006). Each definition of a case study has a common theme of exploring the specific topics. Following on from that, the use of case studies has both strengths and limitations when carrying out research. It is a widely held view that case studies ensure that both real life context and theoretical information is gathered to provide a richer knowledge of the phenomenon (McLeod, 2024a). However, they accommodated small groups of participants to collect data (Tight, 2010). This limits the data being collected because it will only look at one area of the phenomenon rather than discussing and widening the research to look at other areas that impacts and influence the specific topic (Tight, 2010). Another possible limitation of case studies could be that they are very time consuming (Stevens, 2024a), but they are said to follow a holistic approach that allows first hand experiences from the perspectives of the contributor (Yin, 1994).

Research methods

To conduct research for the case study, a variety of research methods were used, these methods used to obtain data were literature, pupil observation and semi – structured interviews with teachers. By using these mixed methods, it enables both qualitative and quantitative data to be gathered. This potentially allows more in-depth findings of the specific research (Gov.UK, 2020). In addition, Wasti *et al.* (2022) states that a mixed method approach enhances a holistic understanding of the research by allowing opportunities for answers to be deepened if clarification is needed. This may provide a wider viewpoint and richer understanding of the research topic (Wasti *et al.*, 2022). However, Dawadi, Shrestha and Giri (2021) argue that by using a mixed method approach, can potentially result in inconsistent data sets. This may result in unfound challenges when concluding the findings if the data sets are contradicting themselves (Dawadi, Shrestha and Giri, 2021).

As previously mentioned, the use of literature was used to gain background knowledge on the phenomenon by engaging in the work of academic professionals. The literature obtained supported the findings by enabling a wider and clear understanding of the research topic (University of Illinois, 2022). On the other hand, Haddaway *et al.* (2020) debates that the literature acquired might be bias, resulting in the information being one sided or potentially incorrect. To mitigate bias in literature, a range of academic sources were used, because they are likely to be credible due preforming a peer review process (The Open University, 2024). However, this does not mean that they are not bias, throughout the research, all findings will be cautiously evaluated (Manchester Academic Phrasebook, 2024). Haddaway *et al* (2020) suggests that academic literature issues a wider range of information from different specialists and professionals. Nevertheless, professionals may still provide opinionated and bias views (Galdas, 2017), but the research provided by the professionals are more likely to be trustworthy and honest because they have experience and a great depth of knowledge in the field (Stevenson University, 2024).

Another research tool used to gather data was, semi - structured face to face interviews. The purpose of conducting interviews was to obtain viewpoints and opinions from teachers. McLeod (2024b) holds the view that semi- structured interviews can be very time consuming to plan and conduct. Similarly, Alamari (2019) would suggest that although they are time consuming, they can be audio recorded, and this could reduce the time taken to transcribe. On the other hand, Luff and Sturgis (2015) implies that interviews that are audio recorded may impact the honesty and credibility of the responses given due to interviewees not feeling confident to discuss their honest opinion or sensitive topics because they are concerned that it might get traced back to them (Kaiser, 2010). Another issue that raised concerns was, the safety of audio recording of the interviews. To prevent any data being disclosed, it is suggested that recording should be completed on a secure device and

transcribed in a private room (The University of Manchester, 2024). Additionally, due to the interviews being face to face, anonymity could not be met (Saunders, Kitzinger and Kitzinger, 2015). Anonymity was utilised throughout the case study using pseudonyms to prevent any confidential data being exposed (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2024). To aid this challenge, interviews were undertaken in an appropriate private room within the school (Imperial, 2024). This mitigated the risk of anyone hearing the raw data and potentially enhancing the quality of each response (Bolderston, 2012). However, audio recordings help to ensure that important data is recognised and kept word for word (Holmes, 2020). It also prevents misinterpretation when analysing the data (Tessier, 2012). Whereas if it was not recorded, the interviewers may not be fully engaged in what responses are being issued because they may be concentrating more on writing notes (Schuh, 1978). From reading different literature it was decided to undertake only two semi- structure interviews, which were scheduled to take up to thirty minutes (Rowley, 2012). This was to reduce the amount of time required to transcribe the audio recordings. Each interview was audio recorded on a secure university OneDrive system that was password protected. All audio-recordings were securely disposed of once successfully transcribed.

Many scholars hold the view that semi- structured interviews enable interviews to be more flexible (Denscombe, 2014). Furthermore, this may allow each interview to be different even with addressing the same issue (Denscombe, 2014). Likewise, according to Fox (2006), they provide opportunities for the interviewer to encourage the participant to further elaborate and delve deeper into their response if the initial response is brief. In contrast to this, Stevens (2024b) argues that this can potentially cause difficulty when analysis the data set because it is not structured, and response may be not comparable. An advantage of conducting semi structured interviews is that a variety of open and closed questions can be used (Jamshed, 2014). It also allows question to be revisited or developed further and provide in depth information (Jamshed, 2014). As shown in (appendix four), open and closed questions were asked to the participant. Limited questions were asked to provide time for rich quality of answers to be issued (Onwuegbuzie and Hwang, 2014). By limiting the questions within the interviews aided time to be flexible and disclose any other questions that occurred (Denscombe, 2014).

Observations were used to collect research to obtain a clear understanding of how to aid children with a literacy difficulty. Two observations were conducted in the short school visit. Two children were chosen to be observed by the classroom teacher, to mitigate any unconscious bias from observer. This was decided by the classroom teacher to prevent bias from the observer. The observation consisted of observing one child with a literacy difficulty and one without. Additionally, each child was observed in five-minute intervals, to see the if

there was a change in engagement throughout the lesson (Mashburn *et al*, 2014). Planning was completed prior to the observation to ensure that each the observation could be as effective as possible (West Sussex County Council, 2021). Following Laevers' theory, the Leuven scale (See Appendix Five) was used to measure a child's engagement with a specific intervention or support provision (MacRae and Jones, 2023). Kawulich (2015) implies that observations provide a visual understanding of strategies that cannot be clearly explained by describing. Observations can sometimes be difficult to stay focused as distractions can arise from other activities being utilised (CCMIT, 2014)., and this might impact the amount of useful data collect during the observation. Also, the Hawthorne effect (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018) may have an impact on the results of an observation and can potentially lead to data sets that are not trustworthy.

In contrast, an argument can be made that observation can be particularly biased because they are based off the observers' own judgements (Association Montessori Internationale, 2024). According to Kawulich (2015), it is not possible to conduct any observation without any bias opinions playing a part. However, you can mitigate this by initiating a random sample and ensuring that the observer is aware of their own biases when analysing the data set (Kawulich, 2015).

Data Presentation and Analysis Method(s)

Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process were used on qualitative data to identify and explore themes that have occurred in the data. According to researchers, this process allows flexibility by not restricting certain knowledge to a specific study (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). On the other hand, some literature would argue that this flexibility may potentially cause inconsistency when creating themes based on the data (Nowell *et al*., 2017). This may further lead to the data becoming unreliable because if not consistent throughout. To comply with the thematic analysis process, six step were followed (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Firstly, qualitative data was gathered through using a semi-structured interviews and observation. Once all research had been conducted, the data set was brought together to be thoroughly analysed to uncover what presented in the findings. The data was then further reviewed to identify and code potential themes, and to group similar information that commonly occurred throughout the findings (Williams and Moser, 2019). This was completed to produce a thematical map of the analysis (Shribe, 2024). This aided the information to be organised into manageable groups to evaluate relevance and transparency of the data (Nfer, 2013). Bazeley (2009) argues that identifying themes can sometimes cause a misinterpretation and due to this, it might lead researchers to reflect and evaluate on themes that are not relevant to the findings (Braun and Clarke, 2019). To ensure

validity and reliability with data, a reflective approach was conducted by being attentive to certain areas that might impact the participants data (Berger, 2015). Byrne (2021) would argue that researcher using a reflexive approach will not present the same findings as another researcher conducting the same research. Alongside this, it was highlighted that the data collected was both valid and reliable to the case study. This was shown through data being consistent and containing similar representations of viewpoints (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2013). It has been shown that not all information given will be credible because many individuals can be biased or form assumptions in their opinions (Derous *et al.*, 2016). The data was then revisited for the final time to conclude the main themes that formed in the findings.

It had been concluded that the data is a representative sample within the context of the research being investigated. However, it is not a representative sample for all primary schools across Wales. The research findings could be transferable to other studies and in aiding other researchers understanding (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2019). From this, it was clear that the generalisation of data provided opinions and useful information from teachers on the phenomenon (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2019). Ritchie and Lewis (2003) indicated that the data collected might not be generalised because it might not be as effective or work the same way in other schools. Alternatively, the findings may provide ideas for teachers of provision that might benefit pupils in their schools (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2019).

Ethical considerations

Whilst conducting research for this case study, ethical considerations must be made. Therefore, an ethics form (See appendix 1) was complete prior to any research being undertaken. Alongside this, British educational research association (BERA) guidelines (2024) were closely followed whilst conducting research. It has been highlighted that unconscious bias might have played a part within this case study, however, this issue has been recognised and mitigated as much as possible by ensuring that no questions asked are stereotyped (Thompson, 2018).

In addition, before operating any research, teachers who are engaging with the research, will need to provide informed consent by signing consent forms (David, Edwards, and Alldred, 2001). Along with dispense consent forms, contextual information should be given to all participants (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2024) to set a clear understand of what they will be will engage in. Furthermore, whilst pupils are under the legal age to give consent, parental informed consent will be necessary (NSPCC, 2024). This

enables parents to have a clear knowledge of what their child can participate in. Additionally, pupils will be able to give ongoing assent (willingness) to participate in the research (Blackburn, 2015). BERA (2024) alludes that every participant has the right to withdraw at any point throughout any engagement of the research, and if this was to occur, the data gathered from the participant will not be to be utilized within the case study. The data collected will need to be immediately disposed of appropriately (Information Commissioner's Officer, 2024).

Interviews and observations will not be able to be kept anonymous, but to ensure that anonymity is maintained, no personal information such as names will be disclosed (Hissenbaum, 2006). Throughout the case study the use of pseudonyms will be used to refer to the school and participants (Heaton, 2022). Confidentiality will be observed throughout all methodologies and all audio recordings of interviews and information obtained will be stored on a university OneDrive. This system is fire walled which requires Microsoft authentication and is password protected. This should prevent information from getting accessed by others (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2024). Once all useful data has been analysed, it will be safely disposed of after the successful completion of the assignment as declared in ethics form (See appendix one).

Results / Analysis of results / Discussion

Whilst using the Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic approach, key themes were established from the qualitative data set. A theme that was identified was the importance of inclusive education. According to Teacher A (2024), the importance of 'inclusive education' is in ensuring that all children can be part of the school community. Furthermore, all children should be provided with an inclusive education, and schools should be ensuring that all parts of school life are accessible to everyone (Teacher B, 2024). Welsh Government (2016) have stated that many pupils who require extra support can be successful in a mainstream classroom if the appropriate strategies are implemented in a way to best suit the individual's needs. However, Teacher A (2024) argues that, not all children's broad range of needs can be met and supported to ensure that they are given the best education in mainstream classrooms. Some literature would similarly suggest that specialist facility (STF) can be more beneficial due to staff being highly skilled and trained to perform advanced support with access to specialist resources (Queen Margaret University, 2022). On the other hand, Paulo Freire (Pedagogy4Change, 2021) implies that all mainstream classrooms can be adapted to meet children's needs to enable them to thrive. He critically argues that in an inclusive classroom all pupils should be taught the same. However, all children are unique and learn

in different ways (Centre for Educational Neuroscience, 2024). It is indicated that using the same pedagogy for all pupils may not be beneficial to all pupils learning progression (Centre for Educational Neuroscience, 2024). Likewise, Ginna Knowles (2006), suggests that all individuals are different, resulting in them requiring more personal learning to cater for their various needs. It is not a 'one size fits all approach' (Teacher A, 2024), whereas a child centre approach might be more effective to a child's development (Entwistle, 1970).

Another theme that developed from the data was what support strategies are being used to aid literacy. One common universal support strategy that was being implemented was the Jolly phonics program (██████████, 2024). The use of Jolly phonics was used to get pupils to recall the sounds each letter makes. This strategy was used by implementing repetition through songs, objects and actions. Teacher B (2024), implied that pupils are more likely to interact with the sessions when they are engaged and not realising, they are learning. Palmer and Bayley (2005) urge the importance that music and movement have on children's memory. These strategies aids learner to enhance their recalling skills. From this, learners can practice recalling movements and songs and they can later implement these skill when reading and writing (Palmer and Bayley, 2005). However, Callinan and Van Der Zee (2010) holds the view that, Jolly phonics is not suitable for all children as some pupils find it difficult to blend the sounds they have learnt in jolly phonics (Callinan and Van Der Zee 2010). A benefit Jolly phonics has on pupils' literacy skills, is that it teaches them letter sounds rather than the names of letters (Ariati, 2018). It could be implied that this program aids pupil's fluency in reading (Ariati, 2018), but Teacher B (2024) expressed the view that the Jolly phonics scheme stops when pupils reach key stage two, resulting in them moving on to a new scheme. It could be argued that a continuous scheme that takes pupils all the way through primary might be beneficial (Teacher B, 2024).

Another literacy provision used in mainstream classrooms is a reading dog, this is to assist learners to practise their reading skills (Teacher C, 2024). According to Teacher C (2024), a reading dog can have many benefits to help develop a child's literacy skills and confidence by the dog being seen as a non-judgment listener. It was highlighted that this strategy provides learners with a safe and comfortable environment for them to read out loud (Teacher C, 2024). A reading dog can be used for both interventions and non-interventions. It was reported that this provision is also used to spark interest with the children who are more reluctant or not wanting to read, especially older children (Teacher D, 2024). There is some evidence to suggest that a reading dog aids children in enjoying reading experiences and inspires learners to be more eager to read (The Kennel Club, 2024). An implication that could be made is not all children get the chance to see the dog regularly due to only having

the dog on the school premisses for an hour, twice a week. This then limits how many children can see the dog each week (Teacher C, 2024).

Conclusions and Recommendations

To conclude, this small school research provided numerous opportunities to gain rich qualitative and quantitative data. Research methods used in this case study, were effective by ensuring that the research question could be answered. One research method that was not efficient was observations as there were difficulties in concentrating on the focused activity. Distractions resulted in collecting rich data difficult.

In future, expectations of what needs to be observed should be highlighted prior to the observation. Furthermore, a potentially discussion with the classroom teacher prior to the observation may aid further observation to identify what interventions are being implemented. Due to the short period of time allowed, it was quite difficult to fully measure the impact of each support strategy as the support strategies and their benefits are better determined over a longer period of time. Next time, potential recommendations could be determined by limiting the research to a more measurable research question.

Overall, this research study has provided many opportunities to develop professional learning by interacting with wider reading and seeking advice from teachers in strategies that can potentially have a positive impact on learners' literacy development. To conclude by having reading dogs in schools may positively encourage more learners to show willingness to read. This opportunity may also impact the reading levels across Wales (Welsh Government, 2023). In future practices, this suggestion will be made in the schools being visited or worked in.

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