

EDAC 6007

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

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Introduction.

Tripp's (2012) 'critical incident' methodology and pedagogical theory is widely recognised as a technique for self-reflection, designed to prompt us to stop, think and pose critical questions about what is happening both within and outside the classroom. The argued benefit of this particular methodology is that everyday practices and experiences are grounded in educational theory and research and in turn, the critical analysis undertaken positively influences future practice (Ahluwalia, 2009; Farrell, 2012; Mohammed, 2016). A critical incident is in itself critical because it is understood and interpreted that way (Tripp, 2012). Whilst at first glance such incidents may appear mundane or even routine/typical, they are afforded criticality via the conscious analysis and interpretation undertaken, the meaning and significance assigned to said incident and the questions posed (Joshi, 2018; Tripp, 2012). The purpose of this assignment is to engage in a critical evaluation of academic research and theory that underpin not only effective pedagogy but also the rounded development of children and young people. Conducting the evaluation in the context of an observed 'critical incident', the overarching aim is to identify subsequent teaching and learning steps to assist my professional development. Following on from this introduction, this essay will engage with the renewed focus on critical reflection within teaching, before providing contextual information regarding the observation undertaken and a detailed account of the critical incident that forms the assignment's focus. A critical review of academic literature related to said incident will be undertaken, before outlining next steps regarding my own teaching that have been identified as a result of such critical reflection.

The role of Critical Reflection.

Undoubtedly, there is a growing level of agreement amongst academics today regarding the importance of critical reflection within the teaching profession (Bruster & Peterson, 2013; Harrison *et al.* 2005). The creation of reflective practitioners has become a fundamental focus of many Initial Teacher Education training programmes (Harrison *et al.* 2005), defined by Liu (2015) as a vital framework for transformative learning. Not only is critical reflection if performed effectively argued by Tripp (2012) to be pivotal to the development of professional judgement, Harford & MacRuairc (2008, p. 1885) argue that it captures teaching's '*complex, analytical and inquiring nature.*'

When discussing reflective teaching, Farrell (2012) refers to evidence-based practice whereby the theory-practice divide is bridged and professionals are equipped with the ability to articulate what they do, why they do it and the influence it bears on the learning experience. However, educational discussion regarding the teacher's role as a reflective practitioner originates with the work of the 'founding fathers' Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983) (Larrivee, 2008). Dewey's (1933) work famously contrasted reflective practice with mindless, routine and habitual action that is passive in nature and based on unverified assertions and beliefs, advocating for said beliefs and assertions to be grounded in evidence and a practice of critical examination if professionals are to meaningfully learn from their experiences (Farrell, 2012; Liu, 2015). Building on such work, Schön (1983) further promoted the notion of reflective practice, distinguishing between two timeframes during which there is an opportunity for experiential learning; intuitive 'reflection in action' and retrospective 'reflection on action' (Farrell, 2012). Whilst there are noteworthy differences regarding how these theorists depict the reflective practitioner (Griffiths, 2000), fundamentally, both advocate for 'reflection for action' (Farrell, 2012), with many reflective practice models having flourished since their original writings including Kolb's (1984) Learning Cycle (*Fig. 1*) (Jordan *et al.* 2008).

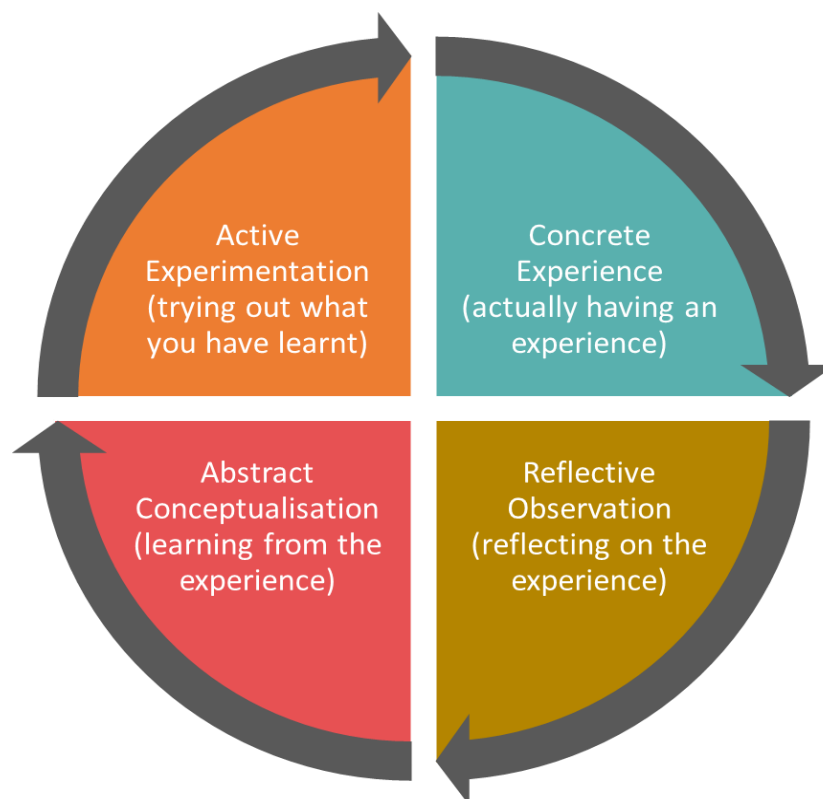


Figure 1: Kolb's (1984) Learning Cycle Source: [Kolb's Learning Cycle - Business Consultancy at INSPIRING Business Performance](#) (Accessed: 2nd November, 2022).

The growing movement in support of reflective practice is hugely important in the context of the educational reform currently underway in Wales. As evidenced in the new curriculum, the role of the teacher is evolving with significantly greater emphasis being placed not only on student-centred learning, but also professional autonomy, flexibility and agency, with many advocating for the need to equip teachers with the ability to employ active forms of pedagogy creatively, innovatively and in a critical and informed manner in order to foster positive learning experiences (Furlong *et al.* 2021; Sinnema *et al.* 2020). This view of the teaching profession contrasts significantly with the notion of the teacher as a rigid, restricted technician, submissively adhering to a prescriptive curriculum and undoubtedly requires skilled, reflective practitioners (Liu, 2015). Wales' Professional Standards for teaching similarly position teachers as professional learners who are committed to career-long progression and growth (Welsh Government, 2022). Reinforcing the importance of critical reflection, the standards detail clear expectations regarding effective, evidence-based practice that are proven to nurture positive learning experiences, providing an essential framework for teachers to meaningfully look inwards in relation to their practice (Welsh Government, 2022).

Observation School and Class Context.

BERA's (2018) guidelines regarding ethical practice emphasise the importance of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality being afforded to all individual participants and any institutions involved in the undertaking of educational research. Therefore, to ensure compliance, identifying details of any individuals and institutions linked to this piece of educational research have been removed or anonymised. The school where I employed Tripp's (2012) critical incident methodology is a mixed gender, English-medium, secondary school located within South Wales (Estyn, 2019). With 1,521 pupils on roll, the school delivers comprehensive education to those of 11–18 year of age, with a pupil to teacher ratio of 17.6 (Estyn, 2019; Welsh Government, 2019). The majority of pupils who attend this school are of a white-British background, with only 2% of the pupil population regarding English as an additional language (Estyn, 2019). Approximately 4% of their pupils reside in localities that fall within the 20% most deprived Welsh areas, and at 4% also, the percentage of children that meet the criteria for free school meals lies significantly below the national average of 16.4% (Estyn, 2019). The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs lies at approximately 1%, with 8% of their pupils having a special educational need. The critical incident being discussed for the purpose of this assignment was observed in a year seven,

science lesson. Beginning at 08:55am and of an hour duration, this was the first lesson of the day following registration period. The teacher advised that building on prior learning, the lesson objective was to further develop the pupils' understanding of the scientific investigation process. The teacher engaged the pupils in numerous learning activities, with a significant focus on collaboration, pair work and peer-interaction observed throughout the entire lesson (see *Appendix B*).

The Critical Incident.

The teacher set a consolidation exercise whereby the learners were instructed to match key terms introduced during the lesson to their associated definitions. Set as an independent task, the learners were informed that they had the remaining 5-10 minutes of the lesson to complete it. Approximately 2-3 minutes into the activity, learner A was observed raising their hand to speak with the teacher before explaining that they were stuck on several of the key terms, requesting the correct answers. However, the teacher was observed encouraging the learner to consider other means of obtaining the answers. The teacher instructed the learner to consider other resources available to them within the classroom that would assist them in completing the task before more directly instructing them to work with another pupil to distinguish the key terms and their associated definitions. The teacher directed learner A to a known peer (learner B) who at that moment in time also appeared to be experiencing some difficulties regarding the task. Whilst the two peers were initially observed engaging in off-task conversation, after a couple of minutes, they began working together to complete the exercise; discussions regarding their own understanding of each key term were observed. By working with a peer, both learners were able to identify the correct answers and in turn, completed the activity. The teacher was observed checking in with the learners upon completion of the task, praising them for their hard work before confirming their answers were correct.

What I as the observer viewed to be critical regarding the above interaction was the way in which the teacher activated learner A and B as learning resources for one another and how instructing peer-collaboration appeared to enhance their overall learning experience. Furthermore, drawing upon the four purposes of the new curriculum for Wales, I believe that the teacher's actions reflected the purpose of striving to create '*ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives*' (Donaldson, 2015, p. 31). The teacher actively encouraged the learners to take ownership of their own learning and by directing them to alternative learning resources that they had not yet explored, they actively '*set high standards*

and encouraged challenge’ whilst supporting the development of the learner’s team-working, communication and problem-solving skills (Donaldson, 2015, p. 31). The teacher’s actions also reflected the purpose of nurturing ‘*healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society*’, given that the learners were supported to more independently overcome the academic challenge at hand, fostering the development of personal learning strategies, their resilience as a learner and finally their ‘*confidence to participate in performance*’ (Donaldson, 2015, p. 31). Based on this interpretation, to support my analysis of the observed interaction, I have chosen to conduct a review of the literature not only on collaborative learning (CL) but also on the role of learner self-efficacy (SE) in fostering academic success.

Literature Review.

Collaborative Learning.

First championed as a tool of effective learning by academics such as Slavin (1980) and Lou *et al.*, (1996) (as cited in Kaendler *et al.* 2014), collaborative methods of teaching and learning have acquired what Sharan (2010) describes as ‘celebrity status.’ Often contrasted with learning environments of a competitive and/or individualistic nature (Webb, 2009), Laal *et al.* (2012, p. 169) define CL as ‘*groups of learners working together to solve a problem, complete a task or create a product.*’ Although a vast array of approaches to CL now exist, what unites them is the centrality of positive interdependence (Sharan, 2010). Further to this, Kaendler *et al.* (2014) positions the common goal of all CL approaches to be shared knowledge construction and the individual learning gains of each group member, as opposed to the end goal of the task itself. This notion of shared knowledge construction is commonly used to distinguish CL from the also widely championed approach of cooperative learning (Kaendler *et al.* 2014). However, where appropriate, research on cooperative learning has been engaged with here.

Academic research documenting the positive impacts associated with CL methods on for example the learner’s cognitive and meta-cognitive activities, academic achievement and performance and finally the social, motivational and affective elements of learning are highly numerous, existing across multiple generations of research (Duran & Miquel, 2019; Van Leeuwen & Janssen, 2019). However, as Kuhn (2015) and many others highlight, benefit-yielding collaboration does not automatically arise when learners are instructed to work with

one another, with Sharan (2010) arguing that a disjuncture exists between the argued benefits of CL in principle and their realisation in practice. Reinforcing this message, Nokes-Malach *et al.*'s (2015) research provides considerable evidence of how an individual's performance in a group-setting as opposed to working independently can sometimes be inferior, documenting an array of social and cognitive mechanisms that inhibit effective group-learning.

When discussing the optimal CL experience, the importance of planning well-designed, structured activities is largely undisputed. Sharan (2010) for example stresses the need for 'group-worthy tasks', discussing four basic guidelines for meaningful CL; the establishment of a common/shared goal, instructions that facilitate positive interdependence, directions that appropriately match to the group's collaborative competency and finally, clear success criteria that permits evaluation of and reflection upon learning. However, whilst in agreement on the importance of planning 'group-worthy tasks', many other academics place greater importance on the activity being planned in a way that Johnson's (1994) five core conditions of effective CL are met; positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, social skills, promotive interaction and group-processing (as cited in Laal *et al.* 2012). Within this body of literature, considerable attention is also given to factors such as group composition and size, the status characteristics, gender and ability of said group members and the utilisation of reward structures, all of which are predominantly accepted as important planning considerations (Gillies, 2016).

Whilst the importance of 'group-worthy tasks' has received considerable attention, when discussing the optimal CL experience, the transformative potential of the teacher during such tasks has traditionally been overlooked (Gillies, 2016). However, having emerged as a topic of deliberation in recent years, whilst some academics argue the teacher's responsibility is limited to the planning of the activity itself and the environment within which it takes place, Webb (2009) identifies a broader stock of teacher proficiencies that extend beyond planning, discussing for example the preparation of students for collaboration and the teacher's ability to directly influence the quality of learner-interactions. Similarly, Kaendler *et al.* (2014) identify five core teacher competencies that foster positive student-interaction; planning, monitoring, support, consolidation and reflection, providing empirical evidence in support of each competency whilst also identifying three key phases of CL; pre-active, inter-active and post-active, across which said competencies spans. Placing particular emphasis upon the monitoring and observation of learner-interactions, the identification of arising difficulties and direct intervention and support where needed, Kaendler *et al.* (2014) appear to draw on the

Vygotskian notion of scaffolding, arguing that benefit-yielding CL is dependent on the nature, depth and quality of student-interaction, but more importantly, how this interaction is nurtured.

Whilst Van Leeuwan and Janssen (2019) highlight deficiencies in Kaendler *et al.*'s (2014) work as a systematic literature review, within their own examination of the core dimensions of effective teacher guidance, they similarly emphasise the importance of 'diagnosing' the group in relation to their performance before intervening to provide support. Importantly however, they highlight that not all guidance is fruitful, arguing the need to find balance between being present, 'taking over' and ensuring that they transfer an appropriate amount of control over the learning experience to the learners themselves. Equally, although heavily implied throughout all the above academics' writings, Liebech-Lien and Sjolie (2021) more directly highlight the need for educators to engage with the issue of the learner's social skills being taken for granted, arguing that collaboration needs to be recognised as a learning outcome in its own right if it is to be successfully utilised within the classroom. Therefore, although Liebech-Lien and Sjolie (2021) similarly reinforce the cruciality of the teacher preparing learners for CL (Webb, 2009), they refer more specifically to the need to 'train' learners in key collaborative competencies. Although this study is not without limitations given its small-scale, highly qualitative nature, based on the experience of only 4 secondary-school teachers, both Gillies' (2014, 2016) and Kuhn's (2015) writings largely support Liebech-lien and Sjolie's (2021) view, similarly evidencing the importance of dialogic teaching and the cruciality of learners being 'taught to talk.' However, what unites all of these academics is a consensus regarding the need to move away from a transmissive and absorptionist view of teaching and learning as discussed by Duran and Miquel (2019) whereby the teacher's transformative role in creating meaningful CL experiences is nurtured through professional development (Webb, 2009).

Learner Self-Efficacy.

With its origins as a core element of Albert Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory (Artino, 2012), the concept of SE refers to the level of confidence an individual possesses regarding their ability to perform during a specific task (Lorsbach & Jinks, 1999). Intrinsically linked with Expectancy Theory, alongside other key concepts including learner helplessness and negative self-fulfilling prophecies, SE has become a central tenant of several theories of motivation and learning across an extensive range of educational contexts (Jordan *et al.* 2008),

with a significant body of research having accumulated in recent decades that evidences a strong relationship between SE and academic success.

As a result of meta-analytic studies such as that of Honicke and Broadbent's (2016), academic SE has come to be widely accepted as a predictor of numerous motivational outcomes as well as many fundamental aspects of behaviour that are positively associated with the quality of an individual's learning experience. Across decades of research, the more self-efficacious learner has been found to have a greater perception of their learning environment, higher levels of academic interest and aspiration, greater levels of academic persistence, effort and resilience whilst also experiencing greater growth with regards to their cognitive competencies, their ability to employ effective learning strategies and finally, self-regulated learning (Bassi *et al.* 2006; Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Zimmerman, 2000). Whilst their findings are specific to a secondary-school, science context, more recent studies include that of Ardura and Galan (2019) whereby they found academic SE mediated the learner's engagement with cognitively deeper learning approaches.

The importance of a learner not only possessing the necessary knowledge and skill-set to engage with learning tasks, but also the conviction that they are capable of performing is now highly apparent. However, as Artino (2012) highlights, how as educators we can positively influence or even shift entirely the perception a learner holds regarding their own capabilities remains an area in need of further exploration. Academics who have begun engaging in this conversation largely draw upon Bandura's (1997) four sources of efficacy appraisal as a foundation for effective practice (as cited in Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Such sources include enactive mastery; the establishing of a record of successes and accomplishments, vicarious experiences; the observation of others succeeding during challenging tasks as a result of sustained effort, verbal persuasion; the strengthening of our belief in our ability via praise, encouragement and performance and attribution-related feedback and finally, their physiological state; how the individual feels internally throughout their engagement with a specific activity or task (Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

Since Bandura's initial writings on such sources of efficacy appraisal, numerous studies have gone on to evidence enactive mastery to be the most fruitful source (Lorsbach & Jinks, 1999). Consequently, when providing recommendations regarding the nurturing of academic SE, many academics focus primarily upon the teacher's role in providing both complex and enjoyable educational challenges that are appropriately matched to the pupil's performance

level, discussing also the importance of gradually increasing task difficulty in accordance with their progress, coupled with an appropriate level of support via for example effective scaffolding (Bassi *et al.* 2006; Meera & Jumana, 2015). Therefore, continuously positioning tasks within the learner's 'Zone of Proximal Development' as Vygotsky (1978) first championed appears to be of considerable importance (Jordan *et al.* 2008). However, Margolis and McCabe (2006) also emphasise the importance of training learners in their ability to utilise specific learning strategies that equip them with a logical sequence of action to overcome academically-challenging situations, whilst also discussing the potential value in training learners to confront irrational thoughts that result in a questioning of their ability and in turn, provoke damaging physiological and emotional responses.

A growing consideration of CL and its potential to boost learner SE is also a feature of the literature, with Alt (2012) describing collaboration as a key opportunity for vicarious experiences, whilst also permitting opportunities for learners through interaction with others to reflect on their work and receive feedback regarding their strengths. Alt's (2012) academic work also reflects an emerging consideration regarding the mediating role that the nature of a learning environment itself has upon academic SE, highlighting how in a higher-education setting, teaching practices of a socio-constructivist nature that in turn promote meta-cognitive and deeper, more reflective elements of learning appeared to mediate learner self-confidence. Although, as acknowledged by Alt (2012) themselves, far more research is required to determine whether the employment of constructivist practices is as fruitful regarding academic SE across different educational settings. However, what is undoubtedly evident across the entire body of research is academic SE's centrality to optimal learning experiences, meaning it is crucial that we continue to develop our understanding of how it can be nurtured.

Reflection/Evaluation and Next Steps.

The critical incident being analysed for the purpose of this assignment centred upon the teacher's encouragement of collaboration and how they activated learners as a learning resource for one another when becoming 'stuck' on a specific task. The teacher's facilitation of collaboration was perceived to positively impact the learners' confidence to participate in the classroom environment and therefore, their academic SE. As a professional who is developing their ability to engage in reflective practice, Kolb's (1984) cycle of reflective learning as outlined above (*Fig. 1*) acted as an extremely useful guide, providing structure for the analysis of the above critical incident and therefore, the identification of 'next steps' for

my own teaching. Facilitating an ongoing cycle of experiential learning (Jordan *et al.* 2008), use of such models support the avoidance of stagnancy and complacency in practice and whilst a useful scaffold for teachers at any stage in their career, based on my experience, it could be argued that reflective models such as that of Kolb's are of particular benefit to those who are new to and/or looking to build their confidence in reflective practice.

Although CL's central tenets as discussed in the literature review were evident in the observed interaction, the teacher's approach to collaboration does not necessarily reflect the pre-planned, highly structured approaches to CL most commonly referenced within academic literature, arguably reflecting a more intuitive decision 'in action' as discussed by Schön (1983) to facilitate collaboration between two specific learners (as cited in Farrell, 2012). Based on what was observed, instructing the learners to work together appeared to yield the cognitive, performance and motivational-related benefits of CL now widely recognised within academic literature and with that, the learners appeared to hold a relatively high level of collaborative competency, sharing ideas with one another to support joint knowledge construction as emphasised by Kaendler *et al.* (2014) to be the goal of CL. However, as Kuhn (2015) highlights, benefit-yielding collaboration does not typically arise when learners are first instructed to work with one another, with Liebech-Lien and Sjolie's (2021) importantly highlighting that the skill of collaborating needs to be nurtured and ultimately taught through effective monitoring, guidance and support. Peer-interaction appeared to feature strongly in relation to the teacher's practice, reflected for example by use of the 'think-pair-share' strategy throughout the entirety of the lesson. Therefore, the success of the above interaction could be indicative of a significant amount of 'groundwork' having already taken place, reinforcing a key message in the literature regarding the teacher's transformative role during CL and the crucial part they play in developing the learner's collaborative competency (Duran & Miquel, 2019; Kuhn, 2015). In relation to the observer's perception regarding the positive impact of the above interaction upon the learners' SE, the above interaction appears to pertain to the creation of a 'mastery experience', as discussed to be the most fruitful source of SE (Lorbach & Jinks, 1999). Rather than simply providing the learners with the correct answers, the learners were activated as a scaffold for one another and supported via effective guidance to develop learning strategies that in turn assisted them to overcome and succeed during an academically challenging situation as advocated as an instructional practice by Margolis and McCabe (2006).

Applying all of the above to my own professional practice, the literature highlights that if implemented in an evidence-based manner, CL has the potential to significantly enhance the

experience of the learner whilst also supporting their holistic development and the acquisition of an essential 21st Century skill (Liebech-Lien & Sjolie, 2021). Therefore, I intend on further exploring strategies to meaningfully incorporate collaboration into my lessons. However, most importantly, I will now be doing so with a greater awareness of how benefit-yielding collaboration does not automatically arise and the active, transformative nature of my role as a teacher during CL (Duran & Miquel, 2019; Kuhn, 2015). To support the realisation of the intended benefits, I intend on investing time into developing the core teaching competencies that have been identified for CL success (Kaendler *et al.* 2014), whilst also giving greater consideration to ensuring more structured CL tasks/activities are ‘group-worthy’ as discussed by Sharan (2010) and planned in a way that consideration is given to not only the benefit-yielding factors identified in the literature review, but also potential collaborative inhibitors as discussed by Nokes-Malach *et al.* (2015). Drawing on Liebech-Lien and Sjolie’s (2021) work, I also intended to actively promote collaboration as a learning outcome in its own right and with that, I will take advantage of opportunities that arise within my lessons to support progression in relation to the learner’s collaborative competency. Engagement with this assignment has also enhanced my understanding of the teacher’s role in relation to promoting learner SE and therefore, I intend to work on ensuring my lessons provide regular opportunities for mastery and shared learning as evidenced in the above critical incident and will do so by exploring further how I can create challenging yet enjoyable, accessible and achievable tasks/activities that sit within each individual learner’s ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ (Jordan *et al.* 2008).

Conclusion.

My engagement with Tripp’s (2012) methodology has successfully enabled myself to develop a more nuanced understanding of a particular aspect of teaching; CL specifically and its association with SE as observed through a critical incident. As a result, my completion of the assignment largely reinforced the significant benefits of engaging in critical reflection as argued by many academics and its associated models if as professionals, our practice is to be grounded in educational theory and research regarding ‘what works’. As noted above, with the current educational reform underway in Wales, the profession is evolving. This means that an ability to reflect critically on our practice to support ongoing professional development whilst also ensuring the provision of optimal learning experiences that meet the individual needs of each learner is essential. Wales’ Professional Teaching Standards similarly reinforce the

importance of critical reflection if teachers are to effectively evolve their practice in line with the requirements of the new curriculum and Donaldson's (2015) four purposes more specifically. The process of reflection as highlighted by Kolb's (1984) cycle of reflective learning ultimately encapsulates the standard of 'professional learning', supporting professionals to ensure that they continuously innovate and work in collaboration with colleagues to improve and advance their pedagogical practice in an informed manner. However, at the heart of all of this, is ensuring as professionals we support the holistic development of children and young people (Welsh Government, 2022).

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Appendices.

Appendix A: Observation/Field Notes – Record 1.

Date and time, year group: 26/09/2022, 13.00 – 14.00 (P4), Year 10 GCSE.
Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AOLE, general classroom context • Year 10 GCSE Welsh lesson. • Area of Learning and Experience (AOLE) – Language, Literacy and Communication. • Fourth lesson of the school day, taking place immediately after lunch break. • Seating plan in place; learners were sat in rows of tables of two persons. • Lesson focus; the teacher shared a model answer of a written exam question that the learners are likely to be required to answer as part of their GCSE Welsh examination. With reference to success criteria, the teacher provided a detailed explanation as to why this was a good answer, following which the learners were asked to use marking criteria and the model displayed to create their own answer to the question. This was set by the teacher as an independent task and involved the students constructing a written blog post whereby they introduced and described themselves, including their interests, hobbies and ambitions in the medium of Welsh.
What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident(the more detail the better to refer to in your later work) Followed a detailed explanation of a model answer to a GCSE exam question, the teacher set up an independent task/exercise. Instructing the learners to use the model answer, marking criteria and their vocabulary booklets for guidance, the teacher allocated 25 minutes for the student to write their own answer to the question. When asked to begin, it was observed that three male learners sat within close proximity to one another within the classroom were not engaging with the instructed task/exercise. Collectively, said learners were observed engaging in 'off task' conversations with one another, speaking to other students on their lunch break through the classroom window, using their phones, 'messaging' with the window and blinds and hitting the table with stationary. When the teacher approached and challenged the learners regarding their behaviour, they stated that they did not understand what was being asked of them with regards to the independent task that had been set. The teacher responded to this by providing further explanation and instruction regarding what they were being asked to do, before instructing them to begin the exercise for a second time. Following further explanation and instruction the behaviour described above was observed to continue. The teacher was observed addressing each of the three learners' behaviour for a second time, informing them that their behaviour was not appropriate, that it was disrupting other learners within the class and in turn, that they needed to focus on the exercise they'd been asked to complete. The teacher then explained to the learners that if they were unable to focus on the exercise where they were currently seated, they would be separated and moved to another table within the classroom. As the behaviour continued, the situation culminated in the three learners being separated. Whilst at times after being separated the learners attempted to continue to engage in disruptive behaviour with one another across the classroom, with ongoing one-to-one support and instruction from the teacher (i.e., encouragement, praise and affirmation of positive work taking place and answering of any questions asked in relation to the exercise to keep the learners 'on task'), they were observed to have become more focused overall and in turn, were able to complete the written exercise.

Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be “under the hood” in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider?

- Evidence-based approaches to classroom management and how the strategies adopted by the teacher relate to/reflect said research (i.e., behaviourism and operant conditioning via reinforcement and punishment, the logical consequences behaviour model, Assertive Discipline model).
- What factors contribute to disruptive behaviour within the classroom and more specifically, what role does peer influence play?
- How important is learner motivation with regards to the management of disruptive behaviour?
- What impact does disruptive behaviour have on teaching and learning within the classroom environment? What impact does disruptive behaviour have on the learning process and how is it experienced by other learners within the classroom environment?

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)

Additional details of relevance:

- At the start of the lesson (prior to the above incident), the teacher responded to two of the three learners detailed above, who were stood in the hallway as opposed to coming into the classroom and setting up for the lesson ahead. The teacher instructed the learners to enter the classroom and sit at their desks, however they were observed to ignore said instruction. The teacher adopted a similar approach as noted above whereby they explained to the learners why this behaviour was not acceptable and associated consequences that would follow if they continued to disrupt the start of the lesson. The two learners entered the classroom and sat down. Therefore, the above critical incident was a continuation of earlier disruptions to the lesson that were managed by the teacher.
- Distractions present for a significant proportion of the lesson, including when the above incident took place.
- Whilst the lesson was underway, years 9, 11 and 12 were on their lunch break and were visible on the school playing fields/grounds from the classroom window. At times, pupils on their lunch break would approach the classroom window.
- A ‘treasure hunt’ taking place around the school grounds for European Language Day, which resulted in many students searching for ‘barcodes’ in the vicinity of the classroom.
- Lesson was concluded with a game of Bingo whereby the learners knowledge of key Welsh words was tested. The three learners who had caused disruption to the lesson were observed to engage fully with this activity.

Unfortunately, there was not an opportunity to ask the teacher some additional questions following the lesson’s conclusion.

Below is a list of some of the questions the observer would have liked to asked the teacher had there been an opportunity to:

- Was this behaviour typical of the learners?
- What do they view the causes and contributing factors to be in relation to this behaviour?

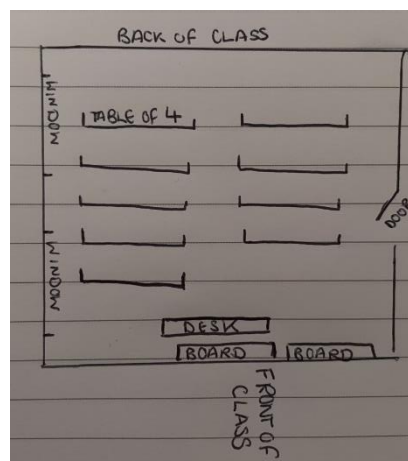
- What is the rationale behind the approach adopted to managing the behaviour of these particular learners?
- Are there any other strategies that the teacher has trialled in previous lessons that differ from the strategies displayed today to manage their behaviour within the classroom? And if so, how effective have these been?

Appendix B: Observation/Field Notes – Record 2.

Date and time, year group: 27/09/2022, 08:55 – 09:55, Year 7.

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

- Year 7 Science lesson.
- Area of Learning and Experience (AOLE) – Science and Technology.
- 1st lesson of the school day, following registration. This was the first lesson of the school day, following form period.
- At the beginning of the lesson, students were instructed to line up, single file in the corridor; the teacher addressed any breaches of school rules i.e., inappropriate dress before permitting the learners to enter the classroom.
- A seating plan was in place (see classroom layout to the right) and upon entering the classroom, students were instructed to come in quietly, take off their coats and get their books out. Students appeared to settle quickly upon entering the classroom and awaited further instruction from the teacher.
- Purpose of the lesson: to further explore the process of completing a scientific investigation, introducing the concept of variables within a scientific investigation.



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

Towards the end of the lesson, the teacher set what appeared to be a consolidation exercise whereby the learners were instructed to match the key terms introduced during today's lesson to their associated definitions. The teacher set this as an independent task, informing the learners that they had the remaining 5-10 minutes of the lesson to complete the task. Approximately 2-3 minutes into the exercise, learner A who was sat at the front of the class was observed raising their hand to speak with the teacher. When approached by the teacher, the learner explained that he was stuck on a number of the key terms, before requesting the correct answer. Observer noted that the teacher did not respond by immediately providing the learner with the correct answer and instead, encouraged the learner to think about what they could do themselves to figure it out. The teacher was observed encouraging the learner to consider the resources available to him within the classroom that could assist him in finding the answer, prompting the learner to work with another pupil to distinguish the two terms and their associated definitions. The teacher then directed Learner A to another learner (Learner B) further down the bench, encouraging them to

support one another to complete the exercise. Whilst some initial reservation was observed as well as some off-task conversation, the two learners were subsequently observed working together to complete the task. By working with a peer, both learners were able to identify the answers to the questions and in turn, completed the task. The teacher was observed checking in with the two learners regarding the piece of work they had just completed, clarifying their answers were correct before providing additional explanation and praising said learners for having completed the task without their direct support.

Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be “under the hood” in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider?

- What is the relationship between social interaction between peers and learning? (Social Constructivism and more specifically, Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development).
- How and why is peer interaction and collaborative learning experiences important to the process of learning? What are the cognitive benefits?
- The impact of teaching strategies and techniques that incorporate peer interaction and collaborative learning on:
 - Learner autonomy
 - Learner confidence, self-efficacy and resilience within the classroom.
 - Learner’s personal, social and emotional development.
- What work has the teacher done in the lead up to this particular incident that has helped to create a culture of collaboration as evident within the classroom?

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)

- Throughout the observation, the teacher appeared to have full control over the learning environment, using a number of strategies to manage the classroom and the learners within it. For example, when the required the attention of the students following for example peer/group discussions, they would raise their hand and count down from three. The learners were observed on every occasion to copy this action, ending their discussions and re-focusing their attention back on to the teacher.
- The observer noted that the learners appeared to have a good understanding of the expectations the teacher had of them within the classroom. For example, the learners appeared to understand that if they wished to answer a question asked by their teacher, that they should raise their hand and wait to be addressed before sharing their response with the rest of the class.
- Directions and instructions were made explicit by the teacher throughout the lesson.
- Minimal distractions were observed during the lesson.
- Construction work was taking place and could be seen from the classroom windows however this appeared to cause minimal disruption to the lesson with the exception of Learner B appearing to become distracted at times.
- When sharing my observations with the teacher at the end of the observation and in particular, the critical incident that I had identified as detailed above, they discussed a further strategy that they use to encourage collaboration and discussion between peers

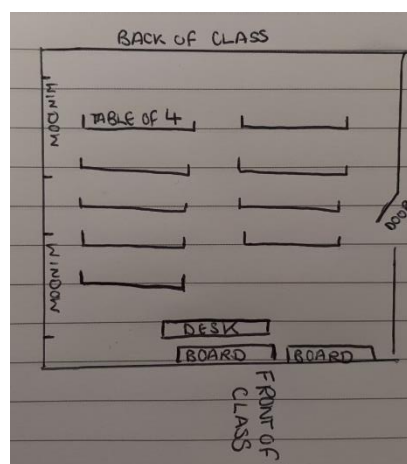
within the classroom, called 'Think-Pair-Share.' The teacher highlighted this to be an evidence-based strategy that encourages collaboration and enhanced critical thinking as well as building the learner's confidence within the learning environment.

Appendix C: Observation/Field Notes – Record 3.

Date and time, year group: 26/09/2022, 08:55 – 09:55, Year 7.

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

- Year 7 Science lesson.
- Area of Learning and Experience (AOLE) – Science and Technology.
- First lesson of the school day, following form period.
- At the beginning of the lesson, students were instructed to line up, single file in the corridor; teacher Y addressed any breaches of school rules i.e., inappropriate dress before permitting the learners to enter the classroom.
- A seating plan was in place (see classroom layout to the right) and upon entering the classroom, students were instructed to come in quietly, take off their coats and get their books out.
- Students appeared to settle quickly upon entering the classroom and awaited further instruction from the teacher.
- Teacher Y informed the observer that the purpose of today's lesson was to further explore the process of completing a scientific investigation and more specifically, to introduce the concept of variables within a scientific investigation.



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

During the lesson, the teacher was observed providing an explanation of the different variables a scientist needs to consider when completing a scientific experiment. Whilst providing an explanation of the different types of variables, the teacher identified that one of the students was not listening to the explanation being provided and more specifically, that he was using his ruler to pick the paint off the classroom wall. An observation was made by the observer of the critical incident that the learner's behaviour was distracting the student sat next to them and that as a result, they were also no longer listening to the explanation being provided by the teacher. At this moment in time, the teacher was addressing the entire class, standing in front of the whiteboard whilst using it as a teaching aid. The teacher continued to deliver her explanation of the three types of variables but was observed re-positioning herself within the classroom, standing directly in front of the learner's table. Whilst eye-contact instigated by the teacher was observed, the teacher did not address the pupil directly and/or verbally. When the learner noticed the teacher stood over their table, they immediately stopped what they were doing, put the ruler down and re-focused on the material being explained by the teacher on the whiteboard.

Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be “under the hood” in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider?

- How does what was observed ‘fit’ within the different behaviour models that exist within the literature (i.e., assertive discipline, logical consequences, reality therapy)?
- The role of conditioning (both classical and operant) in reducing disruptive behaviour within the classroom that have the potential to negatively impact the learning of others.
- The use of body-language as opposed to words to manage unwanted behaviour within the classroom.
- The role that non-verbal communication can play in reducing disruptive behaviour and in effective classroom management.

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)

- Throughout the observation, the teacher appeared to have full control over the learning environment, using a number of strategies to manage the classroom and the learners within it in addition to the example documented within the above critical incident. For example, when the required the attention of the students following for example peer/group discussions, the teacher would raise their hand and count down from three. The learners were observed on every occasion to copy this action, ending their discussions and re-focusing their attention back on to the teacher.
- The observer also noted that the learners appeared to have a good understanding of the expectations the teacher had of them within the classroom. For example, the learners appeared to understand that if they wished to answer a question asked by their teacher, that they should raise their hand and wait to be addressed before sharing it their response with the rest of the class.
- Directions and instructions were made explicit by the teacher throughout the lesson.