

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.

INTRODUCTION

To ensure that next generation learning is implemented, it is essential to focus on the learning process for each student and tailor the process to each student's interests and capabilities. Current teaching models have been criticized for being a centralized focus with traditional models of education which does not address the global world we live in today (Ricker, 2017). Many scholars have argued that these conventional models of education often ignore the whole picture whilst attempting to mould children in modern society (Tran, 2013). It has been argued that a multi-dimensional approach is needed in order to develop the learning goals of young children. Consequently, this new approach gravitates to a more holistic development of young children, which provides both the aspiration and guiding principle of childhood interventions and a key determinant of national development. The main obstacle of this approach is to coincide it with the new Welsh curriculum and make sure it links it with the four purposes where it aims to guide the future generation to be ambitious, capable learners, enterprising, creative contributors, ethical, informed citizens, and healthy, confident individuals (Government, 2015). In order to achieve this, I will critically evaluate a variety of educational theories alongside the use of critical incidents on a group of learners from a Welsh-medium secondary school.

OBSERVATION School & Class context

I will critically assess the role of classroom observations to uncover the positives and negatives from next teaching and learning from a Welsh median secondary school. Specifically, I will focus on the methodology for classroom observation in context to uncover many of the limitations and advantages of classroom observation in context model in relation to professionalisation of educators. In order to critically evaluate the context of the classroom I will include working with a non-structured observation strategy to identify patterns in classroom events and the subsequent opening of spaces for collaborative dialogues to reflect about the possible mechanisms behind these patterns. There has been a growing concern that the lack of critical assessment focusing on the stereotypes of the performative nature of teaching has resulted in policies of professionalisation that contribute to "decline in the creativity and innovation of teachers' work in the classroom" (O'Leary, 2012, p. 801). My hope is that classroom observation in context represents a mean of measuring productivity in education spending through the assessment of teaching practices. There is an ongoing debate that there are nuances in the observation approaches used across the educational systems globally "one of the underpinning issues traversing the different contexts and purposes of observation in schools is the notion of teacher effectiveness" (O'Leary, 2012, p. 793). I will be focusing on the observational outcomes by assessing the use of instructional time and materials. Additionally, I will also analyse the teachers' core pedagogical practices and the teachers' ability to keep students engaged. My reasoning behind this is because this type of framework is dominant in classroom observation studies as it suggests working under the assumption that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers (Mourshed, 2007).

Methodology

One of the significant benefits of classroom observation in context is that it allows behavioural categories to be defined objectively by myself, not independently by each respondents (Parra, 2019, p. 6). Additionally, it also enables the researchers to study the implementation of instruction and the structural and planned aspects (Parra, 2019). Teachers can be blissfully unaware of their classroom

behaviour, yet this same behaviour could be easily accessible to the outside observer (James W. Stigler, 1999). It also highlights training problems if needed to be used across large samples especially across a nation like Wales when a new curriculum is in the process of being implemented. It requires a great deal of effort to assure that observations from different lessons are observed in comparable ways. When considering the variety of factors such as different age groups, subject and ability it may be extremely difficult to achieve a high level of comparability (James W. Stigler, 1999). Another method of observation I considered using is the performance-driven model. This model varies from the straightforward application of structured templates to grade educators to the opening up of spaces for teachers to reflect and participate in their professional development (Gosling, 2014, pp. 13-31). The most refined version of PDM's "tutors observe each other as part of a formative process serving the dual purpose of promoting the development of the observer" (O'Leary, 2012, p. 806). The distinctive feature from this model is that the endorsement of the assumption of the existence of a linear relationship between teachers' effectiveness and students' performance (Wragg, 1999). Personally, I found that the benefits from classroom observation in context uncovers more of a critical evaluation in comparison to mainstream observation approach such as the performance-driven models where O'Leary states that it "does little if anything, to lead to an overall improvement in the standards of quality of teaching and learning" (O'Leary, 2012, p. 192). For example, one underlying assumption of PDMs is that the "observed teacher is an account waiting to be filled with deposits of wisdom from the observer, thus suggesting an imbalance of power and expertise in the the observer-observee relationship and the degree of autonomy afforded the latter" (O'Leary, 2012, p. 805). This is a restrictive approach because there is a disconnect from the teacher's agency from the context where teaching happens. As a result, a problem arises where the treatment of educational issues are blamed exclusively as personal problems of teachers as individuals (O'Leary, 2012). Generally speaking the classroom observation in context is not a model, but rather a way of categorising an observation "into the contexts in which it occurred" (Parra, 2019, p. 7). Instead of using structured templates to collect information, this observation has the privilege of being semi-structured which essentially enables you to gather "raw material upon which reflection is based and from which ideas are then generated" (Wragg, 1999, p. 59). Classroom observation in context is an approach that is useful not to measure standards, but to help researchers and practitioners identifying patterns that indicate the operation of potential underlying mechanisms affecting teacher student dynamics in a classroom setting. This facilitates me to critically evaluate the identification of next teaching by implementing the classroom observation in context method as one of the key aspect which creates a "genuine situation of experience upon which researchers and practitioners can reflect since this is likely to lead to more meaningful reflections" (O'Leary, 2012, p. 110).

Critical incident linked to Donaldson's Four Purposes

I will now analyse a critical incident from my classroom observation in context and explain how it can help achieve Donaldson's four purposes within the Welsh curriculum. Scholars have agreed that the of a critical incident was initially developed by David Tripp where he thinks that a critical incident is an interpretation of a significance of an unplanned event that is faced by teachers in which the events of it can be either positive or negative (Tripp, 1993). There is a consensus that critical incidents are used as a means for the teachers to perform self-reflection effort and although only few researchers have conducted research in this field this method can give great benefits for teachers (Farrell, 2013). This is useful for student-teachers due to the fact that "Critical incidents are not at all dramatic or obvious and they can often be straightforward accounts of very common events that occur in routine professional practice (Tripp, 1993, p. 423). From my observation, the

key instance that stood out to me in terms of linking with one the four purposes are when the teacher asked the class a personal question:

“How many students spoke Welsh over the weekend?”

This incident linked into the ambitious capable learners’ purpose because it allowed them to communicate effectively in different forms and settings using the Welsh language. This activity encouraged free speaking in class and allowed pupils to speak with minimal apprehensions about saying something incorrectly. This free speaking proved that the class were good listeners and enabled the pupils to retreat good information from their partners which fits into the category of undertaking research and evaluate critically what they find. Despite some pupils not fully understanding why their partners couldn’t use the Welsh language outside of school, it still led to a constructive debate where they wanted to investigate further in order to clarify why they could not use the language. As a result, this fits into the ambitious capable learners’ category of the four purposes because it encourages questioning where the pupils quite enjoyed trying to solve why some pupils spoke more Welsh than others outside of school. This critical incident also developed skills that is integral to the four purposes, specifically the cross curricular skills. This critical incident gave the opportunity for pupils to develop listening and speaking skills whilst being confident in using a technology by using their phones, laptops to translate any words they wanted to use via the “Ap Geiriaduron”. By extracting this information and describing each other reasons as to why they could/couldn’t use Welsh outside of school, it supported the pupils to communicate effectively by explaining why they found it challenging to speak the language. This is a clear example of cross-curricular skills. What this critical incident optimised to me was that these skills merged into one incident and not in separate lessons, despite it being a Welsh lesson the incident developed technological listening and language skills. One other skill I found from this critical incident that linked into the integral skills of the four purposes was personal effectiveness. Despite this not being a question that seems to trigger a debate, without any of the pupils realising it did exactly that. It led the pupils to question each other on why they do not use Welsh outside of school and as a result it made the pupils become aware of their social and cultural implications of their argument. This made them realise that they must be responsible for their own usage of the language which made them feel like their experiences are constructive in their Welsh learning, even if it is outside of school.

LITERATURE REVIEW

My first area of research from this critical incident will be on the preparation of teachers, which has proved to be an integrated activity in the process of which language teachers are taught to teach (Freeman, 1989). The reason behind this is because from my observation of the critical incident the teacher prepared the personal question which resulted in an effective debate. This is a new idea and has been long viewed as “a highly complex activity which requires knowledge, understanding practice and experience before it can be carried out in a fully professional and effective manner” (Stevens, 1974). No teacher is the same and different personalities are being involved in the learning/teaching process, they are given a chance to be individuals. If a teacher inserts her/his own personality with his/her own beliefs, classroom experiences and values can add a humane dimension that goes beyond the traditional views (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). This dimension can be of extreme importance when considering the importance of next teaching on learning groups as it will encourage a break away from standardized curricula and former models. The teacher I observed demonstrated this with the personalised question on how they used the Welsh language over the weekend, before tackling the listening task. This method demonstrates that the underlying assumption that the process of teaching practice has two basic educating strategies: training and development (Freeman, 1989) might be inaccurate. Both strategies are vital components in

preparing student teachers for their jobs. At the same time, the general consensus is that observation is a powerful tool which gives participants opportunities to gain insights into the classroom and also gather valuable data (Cohen, 2000). This was proved correct as I would not have seen this unique method of teaching unless I was in the classroom. As mentioned in this paper I decided to proceed with the classroom observation in context method which provided me with substantial knowledge base that has helped me understand effective teaching, despite not assessing in any strategic way via exam results or assignments. Scholars have argued that classroom observations should be “developmental rather than judgmental” (Williams, (1995, p. 85) in the sense that they offer opportunities for teachers to improve their awareness and abilities to interact and evaluate their own teaching behaviours (Williams, (1995). Linking this in with the critical incident, if judged on how many people completed their listening assignment or how many pupils achieved a good mark it would simply overlook any preparation the teacher made prior to the lesson. From my observational experience, it is clear to me that the classroom is a place where many processes of learning and teaching occur. This highlights the significance of considering what to observe and how to observe it (Wajnryb, 1992). One observation scenario that could have been of great importance would be the discussions after the lesson as it offers student teachers an opportunity to become aware of how issues are related and interact. This would allow teachers to develop skills and techniques, which will benefit them leading towards professional improvement and experience. The reason why I have highlighted a need to observe outside the classroom is because a few students experienced technological issues whilst using the translation app and notified the teacher after the lesson was done. This was missed in my observation appendix as I had already packed my observation notes ready to go home.

This issue has made me aware of another potential research area especially as one of the major challenges in education is ensuring that all students are prepared for today’s more technologically advanced world (Selwyn, 2016). In order to implement next teaching effectively a move away from using standardised textbooks is essential as it replicates the learning process designed a century ago. From my research, I found that there have been several conceptual articles, personal accounts, reviews of research and studies that have found that technology is not equitably distributed in schools and across all types of pupils. While I was investigating several sources or factors that may be responsible for the inequitable access and use of technology, the two main individual characteristics from pupils that caused the imbalance was sex and ethnicity. To be more precise, there is evidence that some pupils are even likely to become victims of differential access to technology based upon their sex and ethnicity (Owens, 1998). Several educators have discovered that the utilization of technology in the schools widens the achievement gaps between ethnic minorities and Caucasian individuals (Owens, 1998) (McLean, 2017). Primary and secondary pupils from higher-income families, for example have been found to use computers in school and in their homes more frequently than pupils from lower-income families (Waxman H. C., 1996). Ethnic minority pupils have also been found to have less access to computers than white students (Owens, 1998). However, most of these studies have either been either relatively small-scale studies comparing urban district to suburban districts or studies that have examined technology use in general. In addition to the issues associated with computer access and use, studies have discovered that there are imbalances related to how computers are utilised across school settings. Urban schools with primarily ethnic minorities such as Sub-Saharan and Caribbean pupils for example, have been found to commonly use computers for tutorial and rote drill-and-practice programs, while suburban schools with pupils from higher income families have typically been found to use computers for problem solving and programming (Waxman E. W., 1995). This “software” or

differentiation of how technology is used has harmful consequences for pupil learning because it know that drill and practice software typically emphasizes lower levels or basic skills of learning, in contrast computer programming and problem solving software targets on higher level thinking (Waxman E. W., 1995). Personally, I see these findings as essential information on learning how next teaching can be implemented with technology now dominating schools in these current circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic restricting a lot of pupils to online classes. It is also essential to cover technology in schools and discover if there is an equal opportunity for male and female pupils. Several studies of research have discovered that female students using technology significantly less than males in science and mathematics classes (Colin, 2014). Additionally, these studies have had a common theme that sex inequities favouring males during classroom instruction related to technology (Colin, 2014). However, there is some recent evidence suggesting that there is in fact no sex related differences in technology. In an observational study of 1,315 middle-school students, Huang and Waxman (Waxman H. C., 1996) discovered that there were no substantial differences in research when comparing to consistent sex related patterns. In fact, boys have generally received more praise and criticism in the classroom than girls, with teachers having more behavioural, procedural, and academic interactions with males whilst using technology (Waxman E. W., 1995).

Another scope of research that I have decided to tackle is how the influence of language difficulties on the wellbeing of pupils. This is due to the different vocal levels of Welsh that was displayed in my observation, which could easily influence the confidence of certain pupils in the classroom. It was made obvious which pupils spoke Welsh at home and which ones that did not speak a word of the language away from school. This requires research especially when language proficiency may have a profound effect on an individual's ability to develop and learn, due to its key role in the transmission of information and regulation of cognitive processes (Blinder, 2013). By concentrating on language proficiency, the communicative purpose of language is of great importance (Baker, 2001). The reason behind this because the ability to communicate effectively is vital in the measurement of a person's capability to perform socially and academically (Young, 2014). This makes language fluency a major determinant of successful integration and lessened trauma in school. If Welsh is not spoken at home, it is only natural that pupils process a lot of new information upon arrival of a Welsh medium school. The adaptation process of language demands that they interpret new experiences through their own subjective and pre-existing knowledge and perception (Young, 2014). Because of the subjectivity of these interpretations, language difficulties affect pupils in a variety of ways as they continue to build their own personal meanings and make sense of the adaptation process (Sawir, 2005). This can affect a child's development if not understood correctly and if we take Erikson's 8 stages of psychological development as an example it can hinder a child's progress in education. According to Erikson's psychosocial theory, we experience eight stages of development over our lifespan, from infancy through late adulthood (Cherry, 2020). On the fifth stage of development (ages 12-18) the theory explains that children face the task of identity vs role confusion (Cherry, 2020). This is a time where children explore various roles and ideas and attempt to discover their "adult" selves. Henceforth it is important teachers help with language difficulties especially in Wales where it is common that pupils attend a Welsh medium school whilst English is their first language. If these challenges are identified and tackled, it will ensure that stage 5 of Erikson's theory is carried out. As a result, it will make the pupil have a strong sense of identity with bilingualism, enabling pupils to take pride in their values in the face of problems and other people's perspectives (Cherry, 2020).

REFLECTION / EVALUATION & NEXT STEPS

In order to reflect critically it is important to mention the teaching needs that go beyond description and should involve analysis and evaluation (Mena Marcos, 2008). The reflection method I have chosen to uncover the next steps from the critical incident is the Brookfield lens model. The reason why I have chosen this is because this model enables a better understanding of how power underpins and distorts educational processes (Brookfield, 2017). Secondly, it also questions the assumptions and practices that appear to make our lives look easier on the surface in the long term detract from our best interest (Brookfield, 2017). Specifically, I will be utilising Lens 4 of Brookfield's model: Theoretical Literature. Unfortunately, I had to overlook the other lenses as I did not get the opportunity to use the lens of students (lens 2) or colleagues (lens 3) and I came to the conclusion that I would need a larger time frame to produce a substantial autobiography in order to use lens 1. The theory I found appropriate as a reflection model from the critical incident chosen is the Communicative language teaching theory. The method has been widely encouraged in schools with pupils who have an imbalance in language levels (Williams J. , 1995). This would therefore provide constructive reflection to the teacher where the critical incident appeared as there were pupils who sometimes used Welsh and other who never used it at all outside of school. CLT is an approach based on an amalgam of affiliated strategies that seeks to develop communicative competence in pupils and requires a commitment to using a second language as a medium for classroom communication as much as possible (Williams J. , 1995). CLT features include an emphasis on language use rather than language knowledge, greater emphasis on fluency and appropriateness in the use of the target language than structural correctness (Williams J. , 1995). Personally, I would find this useful in terms of identifying the next steps from the critical incident as it would move away from using a digital translator and to just naturally use Welsh language without any support. This would help my approach in teaching as it would prepare the pupils to practice speaking Welsh in a real world scenario by encouraging them to not be afraid to speak the language without any translation apps by their side. Naturally, this can only benefit the pupils in school too as the practice in real life scenarios should benefit their schoolwork too. By embracing the CLT method with classroom tasks and exercises that depend on spontaneity and student trial-and-error it creates an environment that is interactive, not excessively formal, it also encourages risk-taking and promotes pupil autonomy. If I personally tackle this method, I will hope of serving as more as a facilitator and participant rather than a traditional didactic role, which will enable pupils to become actively involved in interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning. In short it would create an approach the "puts focus on the learner" (Savignon, 2002).

Another theory that would provide the next learning steps from the critical incident is the Total physical response theory. This method is based on the coordination of language and physical movement. In TPR instructions give commands to students in the target language with body movements and students respond with whole body-actions (Asher, 1969). The TPR theory has some distinctive advantages in teaching a second language, as it greatly reduces the stress and can be interesting to pupils and also helps them to achieve a long-lasting learning outcome as it involves frequent recycling of language contents (Asher, 1969). It is important to know that reading and writing is not the focus of TPR but both skills can be trained in combination with commands. One method from Pinkasova suggests that the teacher have pupils to pick up a piece of paper with a command on it and perform the action at a later stage, rather than giving instructions orally (Pinkasová, 2011). This would initiate the students to read naturally. In conjunction with this activity, students can write commands for each other to kick off their own writing experience. Linking this in

with the critical incident, instead of pupils using the translation app to find words they do not know, this method can make the transition between speaking, reading, and writing be made undisruptive. The teacher then can alternate these skills to develop pupils' flexibility, which would also, in return, increase the variety of teaching.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Classroom in context helped me become aware of factors that shape teacher-student interactions in the observed classroom. My description of events and the reflection I gained from it indicate the struggle of teaching in a Welsh medium school as it exploited the classroom dynamics. However, the teacher did not let that hinder his classroom dynamics as he encouraged the class to test out their Welsh by asking them a personal question that was relatable in them which in return created an engaging environment. I did gather valuable data on how next teaching can be effective in the teaching environment by observing the preparation of teachers that go beyond assessment and exam measures by asking relatable questions that helped with the lesson objective. This incident also led me to research on how teachers prepare lessons as my observation demonstrated that classroom experiences and values can add a humane dimension that goes beyond the traditional views. This is a vital component in terms of implementing next teaching as the critical incident was an engaging question that tailors to the student's interest, which meets the criteria of the one the four purposes of ambitious capable learners. This is because the incident made them enjoy questioning themselves whilst communicating effectively using both Welsh and English and using digital technologies via the "Ap Geiriaduron" to communicate and analyse information. However, the critical incident also highlighted the struggles of implementing next teaching by analysing how technology can in fact, hinder a child's progress with factors such as wealth and even sex producing imbalances with the usage of computers. The critical incident also highlighted that the influence of language difficulties can also affect the wellbeing of pupils which is extremely important as it is part of the four purposes to be healthy confident individuals who have the confidence to participate. Whilst reflecting on this incident it did bring up theories that can be implemented to tackle these issues. For example, the communicative language teaching theory which emphasises on language use rather than language knowledge which will provide a greater emphasis on fluency and it could result in less translation via online dictionaries. Additionally, the total physical response theory could be used to build on the CLT to create a more natural way of speaking in the classroom.

APPENDICES

During my day in the School, I spent a significant amount of time observing several staff members with their pupils' approach. The lesson I am going to observe is a 50-minute Welsh lesson that had eighteen pupils, all of whom came from English-speaking family background which is a common environment is common in Welsh median school. It was a year 7 class bottom set. Due to the fact I will be using the classroom observation in context as my methodology I will be observing in a semi-structural way without templates. I will attempt to identify events to summarise what is seen in the class in order to uncover the elements for reflection. The focus would be aimed to uncover the methods of encourage class dynamics and participation.

As the class started, the teacher wrote the day's tasks on the board. From the start I could see how telling it is when pupils know what the plan is for the class as it proved to be very helpful. It also allowed the teacher to reference the list as he went on with the lesson and it also helped with anticipating how the lesson is going. For the pupils it allowed them to see the tasks for the class before the lesson begins which helped them feel involved in the progression of the classroom activities. By simply being transparent with the pupils about the lesson plan it made them more actively engaged with the lesson. When the teacher was done with writing the tasks on the board, he asked the pupils about their weekend with the following question:

"How many students spoke Welsh over the weekend?"

Naturally, the class then spoke about their weekends and who they spoke Welsh with. There was a variety of responses with some pupils claiming that they spoke the language with shop keepers and another there was another specific response claiming they spoke it with a friend via online gaming. This pupil elaborated further by saying that his friend was complaining about school, which conveniently transitioned well into the next fluency task. Personally, I found that this discussion of asking pupils about their weekends and how they used Welsh outside of class engages students in a personal way. The discussion allowed the teacher to gauge which pupils are speaking Welsh outside of class and it provided an opportunity for pupils to share experiences with each other. The discussion also allowed the class to talk about casual speech in every day settings like in the shops or on online games with friends. It even triggered a debate as some pupils questioned others to why they did not speak welsh outside of school. By relating the pupils' experiences with speaking Welsh, the class may be able to feel like all their experiences are constructive in their Welsh learning, even if it is outside school.

In order to start the fluency activity, the teacher ordered the pupils to stand in 2 lines at the front of the room. The lines faced each other, and the pupils were then asked to talk about their listening homework assignment. The assignment was to listen to a news report about the Climate Change crisis from S4C online.

The teacher labelled each individual A and B, then partner A was asked to tell partner B about their assignment. Partner B was then supposed to ask partner A follow up questions to obtain more information. It was apparent that pupils had done this activity in previous classes as the pupils understood the task the first time of asking.

Before tackling the task, the teacher asked the class how to be good listeners and gave examples of questions they could ask their partner in order to retract good information. In case they forget, the teacher wrote the example on the white board as a reference if they did get stuck. The teacher also

encouraged the discussion on how they can utilise nonverbal cues to show they are listening and engaged in the conversation. To track time the teacher used a stopwatch which was built into his smart board to assist him on knowing when 2 minutes has gone by. When the 2 minutes was up the teacher asked partner A to politely end the conversation.

The teacher then asked the groups to tell the class what their partner told them about their assignment. The student's pupils then switched roles and the task was then repeated. After two conversations, each pupil was called upon to tell the class about their partner's listening assignment.

At this point of the lesson it became obvious that the partners did not fully understand what their partners were telling them. Subconsciously, this led the pupils to discuss ways that they can clarify if they do not understand what someone has said to them.

Personally, I found this activity to be effective in a couple of ways. First, the discussion allowed the teacher to check that pupils had done their assignment. Additionally, the activity allowed pupils to share their experiences and which resources they used to complete the assignment. When the teacher split the pupils into partner it promoted free speaking in class and allowed pupils to speak with minimal apprehensions about saying something incorrectly.

My interpretation was that the pupils found the activity to be enjoyable and therefore engaged in the discussion which made them not hesitate to display their vocal skills.

By the end of the lesson the pupils also did some book work, where they used a textbook to pick up work they had done from the previous week. This meant that they spent some time recalling what they had been talking about. To review the vocabulary, they wrote the words on the board and defined them as a whole class. During this vocabulary review students were then put in groups, where they took turns to practice pronunciation. The activity was teacher led, and the teacher talked about the connections between pronunciation and spelling.

Interestingly, the teacher also talked about where your tongue should be during /ll/ pronunciations and linking sounds in words like "crys lliwgar".

This was an effective way to target pupils' mistakes in pronunciations while still focusing on new vocabulary. It also made me realise how little we focus on pronunciation in grammar.

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