

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

This report looks at a critical incident observed in a classroom to inform the observer of how they may reflect and evaluate what has been witnessed based on a literature and theory review. This, in turn, will inform and support the next steps they will take in their own personal and professional development to enhance their teaching skills.

It will look at the importance of critical reflection and why it is essential to develop the role of teaching as a profession by exploring the Qualified Teaching Standards (Welsh Government, 2017) and how the observed critical incident relates to the 4 purposes set out in the Curriculum for Wales Framework (Welsh Government, 2020).

The critical incident observed and evaluated within this report is focused on a group of mixed gendered year four learners in an after-lunch discussion (See Appendix 1).

To understand why the observation was chosen we must first answer the question, what is a critical incident? Psychologist John, C Flanagan (1954) states in 'The Critical Incident Technique,' that a critical incident comprises of a 'set of procedures' to collate information on human behaviours. We collect this information to gain insights into avenues for problem-solving and to develop our morals and principles. However, a more recent definition focusing specifically on education comes from educator, author, and researcher David Tripp who states, '...critical incidents are produced by the way we look at a situation: a critical incident is an interpretation of the significance of an event. To take something as a critical incident is a value judgement we make, and the basis of that judgement is the significance we attach to the meaning of the incident.' (Tripp, 2012, p.8).

The role of critical reflection

Critical reflection plays a key role in our evaluation and understanding of critical incidents to establish not simply what has occurred but why and what we should do about it. Tripp highlights that, to be aware of something is not enough in itself, we must know what to do with it and act accordingly going forward in our practice (Tripp, 2012, p.31). Similarly, Fook and

Gardener claim that critical reflection is the process we go through to discover the assumptions and bias we must adapt and change. It requires a deeper delve into what we base our thinking, actions, and emotions on (2007, p.14). From this, we can argue that without critical reflection of why incidents occur, or what the motivation behind a reaction is, observation gives little benefit to progressing our teaching standards, primarily to 'Critically reflect on own values, knowledge, skills to improve learning' (Welsh Government, 2017, p. 10-11).

In relation to education, critical reflection has enabled us to approach how and why we teach to keep up with advances in our society and the wider world. This is evident by the document 'Successful Futures' by Professor Graham Donaldson CB, undertaken in 2015 following the apparent need for a reform in the education system in Wales (Donaldson, 2015). In Wales, as part of the Initial Teacher Education (ITE), Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) and further into the teaching career, teachers are held accountable to the Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership. These comprise of five professional standards: Pedagogy, Leadership, Professional Learning, Innovation and Collaboration. One aspect of the professional learning standard includes the continued expansion of knowledge and understanding and the ability to reflect and change. This is demonstrated not only through teaching practice but through the development of the Professional Learning Passport (PLP) containing critical reflections prompting further growth (Welsh Government, 2019).

From Dewey's model of gaining knowledge through experience and reflection to Donald Schön's, reflection-in-practice or reflection-on-practice, critical reflection underpins the principles of learning and developing in education for both learners and educators alike (See Literature Review). Overtime various reflective models have been put forward as variations on previous theories whilst some have been disregarded due to an evolution in understanding and knowledge (Aubrey and Riley, 2019, p. 2). Despite the age of these theories, we see elements of these in current day practices such as restorative practice among peer and teachers as demonstrated in Newell and Simon's use of the teacher's experiences to guide learners in problem solving (Newell and Simon, 2019). Indeed, today we see the continued use of reflective models such as Graham Gibbs Reflective Cycle created in 1988. Comprised of areas of reflection, it is argued that Gibbs' model offers a comprehensive template for reflection particularly for repeat scenarios (Gibbs, 2013).

OBSERVATION school and class context

In line with British Educational Research Association (BERA) compliance guidelines all personal information regarding school, teaching staff and pupils has been redacted to respect privacy and anonymity (2018).

The observed school is situated in the Rhondda Cynon Taff local authority catchment and at the time of the last inspection there were 191 pupils enrolled at the school ranked as 'Good' in all areas of the assessment. The school had 19% free school meals allocation which was slightly higher than the 18% average and reported 39% of learners with additional learning needs which was higher than the Welsh average of 21%. The school's learner demographic is primarily white British with no learners reported to speak Welsh as the first language (Estyn,2019).

There are 7 classrooms with split classes allocated by age, with one year having a single classroom. One classroom has a mixture of two-year groups allocated by ability and age. The school is housed in an old, Victorian building. The classrooms are majority compact with high ceilings and pale blue walls.

The observation took place in a year 4 afternoon lesson. The class was a mixed gender cohort comprised of around twenty learners with a number reported to be absent due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. It was highlighted through further discussion that there was a whole school approach to using restorative practice alongside their school development plan aims.

Critical incident linked to Donaldson's Four Purposes

At the core of the new Curriculum for Wales are the Four Purposes of; ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives. Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work. Ethically, informed citizens of Wales and the World and healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society (Welsh Government, 2020, p.11).

It should be noted that the Four Purposes are found within the Curriculum for Wales Framework 2022. This curriculum framework is not currently compulsory in schools until 2022. The current Curriculum for Wales is still being followed in many schools in Wales. Nevertheless, to evolve our teaching practice and remain current in our thinking and approach, it is appropriate to compare the skills and knowledge gained and how they relate to the Four Purposes to offer insight into the future of schools in Wales curriculum and the values that underpin them. The Welsh Government classifies a school's curriculum as encompassing everything learners experience focused on the four purposes. It should cover what it taught, how it's taught and why (Welsh Government, 2020, p.5).

The critical incident observed a whole class discussion surrounding a negative incident that occurred during the lunch break. The discussion explored the emotions of the self and of others. This was achieved through questions such as 'how do you think that made them feel?' and 'how did that make you feel?' These open-ended questions allowed the learners to

discuss and explore the 'rights and needs of others as a member of diverse society' linking to the purpose of ethically, informed citizens. They were also given the opportunity to further explore this purpose by questioning their actions, what they could have done differently and what they should consider doing in the future to 'understand and consider the impact of their actions when making choices and acting' (Welsh Government, 2020, p.5).

It was further observed that the discussion and the non-judgemental environment allowed the learners to develop in another area of the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales 2022 as 'healthy, confident individuals' through building on their skills of forming positive relationships based upon trust and mutual respect. The environment and the approach of the teacher to the discussion by creating a safe environment enabled all learners to contribute if they were willing and able by putting their hand up. The learners and teacher allowed one another to speak without shouting out or cutting across demonstrating their respect. The learners discussed their feelings and emotions and referenced external examples showing a clear feeling of trust between themselves and the teacher. The teacher used a calming yet confident voice to steer the discussion and reassure learners that they would not be taking any sides and that this was not a telling off but a group problem solving exercise. In response to these observations, I will look further into the research around learners' reflective practice and emotional development and how that related to behaviour management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary observation was the use of reflective practice undertaken as a whole class approach. To understand reflective practice, we must explore the theory of John Dewey who is seen as iconic in his theories that learning should be based on practical life experiences and social interaction (Aubrey & Riley, 2019, p.8).

In Dewey's book 'How We Think' he coins the phrase 'mental furniture' to describe thoughts based on tradition, instruction, imitation of those in authority or appeal to our benefit or passion (1910, p.5). However, it would be simplistic for us to assume this is the end point for thought process and mental reflection. Dewey explores this by further noting that the information we have cannot simply offer a solution but can only suggest it. Our 'mental furniture' is valuable to offer a basis for thoughts to act as a steppingstone to reflective thoughts. Without these further steps, learners would remain in a state of confusion without satisfactory resolution. Dewey therefore argued that it is futile to expect a child to problem solve without prior experience (1910, p.13). Nonetheless, we must consider that at some point there needs to be that first experience to retain, otherwise we would never have a 'first' experience to base our future solutions and reflections on. Therefore, would Dewey consider another's experiences as being able to act as ours? Newell and Simon explain this coining the term of an internal

'problem space' that acts like an index of solutions comprised of the goal outcome, the current situation, and a range of solutions in between. Whilst the concept is simplistic the process itself is complex, and the bigger the perceived problem by an individual the bigger the problem space becomes making it harder to comprehend and navigate (2019, p. 140).

Much like criticism of Dewey's work, this also doesn't work without prior experience to a similar scenario to build solutions on and having learners' problem solve in groups to find solutions will be useless without individuals having built their 'problem spaces' based on similar scenarios. Newell and Simon, recognising this go on to say that scenarios do not need to be personal models but can be from others, such as from teachers to learners. By teachers modelling to learners from previous experiences they can guide and narrow learner thinking to a starting point with a manageable smaller 'problem space' followed by a range of avenues to guide them toward success and the building of their own 'mental models' (Newell and Simon, 2019, p. 140).

Someone who offers influence on Dewey on pre-conceptions and beliefs is the English philosopher, John Locke. In his book 'The Conduct of Understanding' he suggests that learners are governed by the 'ideas and images' in their minds and do not independently think past these naturally (1838, p. 3). Similarly, to Newell and Simon he continues to say that learners are heavily influenced by teachers however, he goes on to claim that learners are influenced to such an extent that pupils focus more on teachers than subjects, responding to their actions, body language, vocals, and personality. Given this level of status in the eyes of learners, Locke continues to say that educators need to initially safeguard individuals from their own minds and thought traits such as 'rashness, presumption' until such a time when they become more reasonable and 'less motivated by stiff authority and blind passion,' (Locke, 1838, p. 26). Whilst this does not give credit to the ability of learners' minds and independent thoughts, it does demonstrate the importance of teachers being self-aware of their bias and beliefs to shield learners from them until a time when they have built their own beliefs. This raises the question of how teachers know whether they are fully aware of their bias and beliefs, and by removing these from scenarios are they offering learners authentic context for them to build their own thoughts on. Locke offers four areas that can influence wrong beliefs; things are learnt to us as children by others that become ingrained and are beyond being unlearned, those willing to accept facts and reason but only look at a narrow number of sources, those people who put passion ahead of reason and those who seldom reason at all and simply believe what they are told by those in positions of power (Locke, 1838, p.50). The theories of Locke, Dewey, and Newell and Simon look to a single point of influence (the teacher) as a basis for past problem-solving schemas but what happens when conflicting views are given by multiple sources of influence such as teachers, parents, and other leaders.

Locke does touch on what we can see in the new Curriculum for Wales 2020 stating that 'the work of teaching must not only transform natural tendencies into trained habits of thought but must also fortify the mind against irrational tendencies current in the social environment' (Dewey, 1910, p. 26) which bears similarities one of the four purposes 'healthy, confident individuals are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.' (Welsh Government, 2020, p.11). This highlights the importance of understanding through real life context and develop resilience to do so throughout a learner's life and the negative impact of separating subjects from real life context is knowledge is learnt without the ability to apply to real life scenarios (Locke, 1838, p. 52).

Another aspect noted from the observation is the opportunity of learners to build on their emotional development. As highlighted by Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985), there is an importance to emotion in the reflection process. They claim there are three steps individuals should take when reflecting: recalling or detailing salient events in a specific experience, attending to their feelings regarding the event and evaluating the experience in the light of existing knowledge whilst integrating new knowledge into an existing schema.

Indeed, when looking at Schön's theory, one of the criticisms is that individuals' emotions and their effect on reflection are irrelevant and are not noted as an aspect of the reflection model. Donald Schön, an American philosopher and musician whose theory coined the terms reflection-in-practice and reflection-on-practice is noted to have been heavily influenced by Dewey (Aubrey & Riley, 2019, p.186). Like both Dewey and Locke is the idea of a 'master teacher' who offers multiple opportunities for in-depth discussion between teachers and learners to illustrate how reflection-in-action works, how to encourage it and how certain behaviours or attitudes can become barriers to the development of learners' reflectiveness. The differentiation between reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action is that an individual who reflects on incidents to evaluate, draw on prior knowledge and assess ways forward to be tried and tested. Reflection-in-action is reactive to the current situation and is seen more as a thinking on your feet approach without a follow up assessment or evaluation denying the individual the opportunity for further growth and understanding (Aubrey & Riley, 2019, p.186).

When looking specifically at emotional development and conflict resolution, Mark Finnis, a leading specialist in delivering restorative practice states that restorative approaches are not to be imposed on children by adults, the whole subject of behaviour is 'collaborative, constructed and formative process where everyone can win.' He continues to say that humans are hardwired to want connection and belong and therefore it is vital for teachers to 'connect before content.' (Gilbert, 2015). Restorative practice is focused on the importance of preventing damage to relationships and resolving them when they do happen by allowing all

the space to express the impact an incident had on them alongside ensuring those who have done the harm understand the impact of their actions (Wales Restorative Approached Partnership, 2016). Mark Finnis states that when there is conflict there are three perspectives 'mine, yours and the other' (ITL Worldwide, 2020). The 'other' can relate to peers or society emphasising the value in peer discussion as was seen in the observation. It should be noted that restorative practice stems from the practice of restorative justice, which gained traction in the 1990s (Ministry of Justice, 2013). Whilst evidence to date indicates success with the process we must view critically until consistent evidence is published and reviewed. We must also consider the need for learners to have the language to be able to comprehend and participate in this practice for without this their reactions may manifest in other ways.

If we look at Mayer, Salovey, Caruso & Cherkasskiy, it is suggested that emotional intelligence has been discussed by numerous scholars including Carl Jung in 1921, who claims people understand the world by thinking with their hearts known as the 'feeling function'. This was followed by Steiner in 1984, using the term emotional literacy and stated that with greater emotional awareness came greater well-being (2011, p. 529). This highlights the importance of emotional development on overall development and understanding but does not necessarily offer solutions for aiding learners to develop emotional literacy.

There are varying models associated with emotional intelligence, some focusing on individual emotions such as the ability to recognise and understand facial expressions and others with a focus on the varying emotions. These are known as integrative approaches. One example of an integrative emotional intelligence model was undertaken by Mayer & Salovey (1997). It consists of four branches: perception and expression of emotion, assimilating emotion in thought, understanding, and analysing emotion, reflective and regulation of emotion. These begin to develop in early infancy beginning with reading parental facial expressions in reactions and then develop into adulthood (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso & Cherkasskiy, 2011, p. 532).

One aspect of the model that generalises is the assumption that individuals who are considered emotionally intelligent have been raised by socioemotionally adequate parents, are able to discuss feelings and emotions, are less defensive, are able to cope with their emotions and develop further knowledge into specific areas of emotional expertise such as ethics, mortality or social problem solving (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso & Cherkasskiy, 2011, p. 533). We can see from this outcome that there is a focus on the parental influence and there has been no consideration of societal or educational influences.

When it comes to reflection and the development of emotional literacy, we must consider the reasons why these are required to develop in the first instance, behaviour. Disruptive or 'poor'

behaviour impacts not only the individual but the classroom and learning leading to disadvantages in later life including exclusion. Between 2010 and 2011 there were 330,000 exclusions in United Kingdom schools (Bennett, 2017, p.19).

A key focusing to tackling this revolves around the importance of language as proposed by Marie Gentles OBE, specialising in behaviour management through a preventative behaviour support. Gentles states that behaviour is a communication of an unmet need. What can often happen when undesirable behaviour occurs is that the behaviour is seen and not the child, leading to a lack of understanding of the child. This can lead to a limit in what the child is perceived to be able to achieve. Marie continues to say that by raising the expectations of that child and communicating the support for them all children want to achieve and please. It is imperative to understand what the child is trying to communicate through their behaviour. For learners to understand and express themselves in a healthy, safe way they must be equipped with the language to communicate their feelings and needs (Alcock, 2021). To tackle the issue of behaviour learners must understand the concept of consequences. Consequences are described as a conversation to be had between learners and staff both positive and negative in response to an individual's behaviour to encourage or discourage repeat behaviour. It should be noted, without the understanding of language the conversation remains one sided and ineffective (Bennett, 2017, p. 41).

REFLECTION / EVALUATION AND NEXT STEPS

What has been identified in the literature review is the importance of the relationship between the teacher and learners and the affect this dynamic has on learning. Whilst there are conflicting views on the level of importance of the teacher from Locke, Newell, and Simon it is clear to see that there is a need for that more knowledgeable figure to offer guidance and a basis for reflection. On evaluation of the critical incident, it was noted the teacher guided the discussion at the front of the group but not sitting behind the desk, leaving no barriers between themselves and the learners. We see by the work of Boud et al. the importance of emotional exploration and reflection to aid emotional development (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985). Whilst a three-step approach may be viewed as being simplistic given the complexity of thought processing, if we explore the three steps individuals are recommended to take, we can see that learners were given the opportunity to recall the events, explore their feelings during and after the event and then explore existing knowledge they held and build connections between the added information they gained from the group discussion.

Looking at the theory of restorative practice as implemented by the school, that behaviour is a topic to be explored as a group and that responses to behaviour are not to be imposed by adults onto learners (Gilbert, 2015), we see this demonstrated with the group discussion,

allowing learners to understand that their actions have consequences on the feelings of others as well as their own. This holds a similar tone to the approaches of Marie Gentles whose primary focus is on the relationships and the language used. Gentles also focuses on ensuring that learners have the appropriate language to express their feelings (Alcock, 2021). This can be modelled and demonstrated by teachers, which is evident in the critical incident. Using open questioning gives the opportunity to check whether learners have understood what is being discussed and is an approach I will take going forward.

In response to the theory and reflection, I will develop further by allowing ample time for critical reflection using models such as Gibbs 6 stages of reflection to reflect and establish barriers such as bias and belief that may be misinformed or underexplored (Gibbs, 2013) to inform the building of my PLP and achievement of the QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) standards (Welsh Government, 2019).

The initial 'in class focus will be on relationship building between myself and the learners to establish that safe, nurturing environment. Whilst this is an ongoing target it will be a focus in the initial stages of any school placement. The focus around consistent language will be established between myself and the learners and any other staff central to the care of the learners in order create a congruent experience as noted by Marie Gentles (Alcock, 2021). This will include following school behaviour plans and policies.

Time will be given for learners to build on their emotional development by exploring their emotions and reflecting on the emotions of others through both curriculum-based subjects (where appropriate) and in response to scenarios such as the critical incident observed. This will be undertaken individually or as a peer group to ensure inclusion of all learners in the reflective practice and to allow the time and space they individually need to process; problem solve and collaborate to arm them with the skills to tackle similar problems beyond the classroom.

Part of this activity will be based around ensuring that the learners have access to the language they need to express or process their emotions to limit the opportunity for repeating behaviour. The process will be modelled on the study by Boud et al (1985) recapping on their experience, allowing them time to think about it and process it and then evaluate it (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985).

CONCLUSION

In summary, it is evident the importance of critical reflection and the role it plays in the continued development of professional practice and the education system as highlighted by Donaldson's Successful Futures (2015) and the QTS standards (Welsh Government, 2019)

that all educators in Wales are held accountable to. From the reflection of the critical incident observed it is apparent, the use of critical reflection enhances the emotional and overall development of learners through reflective practice and real-life contexts to build resilience and aid the creation of 'healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society (Welsh Government, 2020). This is supported by the theories of Newell and Simon, Boud et al, Mayer, Salovey, Caruso & Cherkasskiy and more recently Mark Finniss and Marie Gentles.

We see from the work of Dewey, Schön, Locke, Newell and Simon that an essential element of reflective practice in learners process is the teacher or 'master' in the guiding this journey to problem solving and self-reflection. Locke notes it is imperative for teachers to be aware of their own bias and beliefs and the influence they have on learners. This highlights the importance that teachers must continually reflect, adapt and develop their approaches and practices to ensure they are delivering an authentic experience to learners.

It is from the knowledge gained from these theorists and practitioners alongside the criteria of the QTS and Curriculum for Wales 2022 that I will develop my practice throughout my ITE and beyond beginning with nurturing learner relationships to create a safe and consistent space for them to develop and thrive.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix 1

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

Record 1

Date and time, year group:

22.9.21 Year 4. Lesson directly after lunch

Where and When:

Within the classroom following an incident on the yard during the lunch period. The incident began instantly as soon as the children entered the classroom.

What happened:

Multiple children came up to the teacher to inform them of numerous incidents that happened at lunch time which had caused upset and mild injury to individual children. One child told the teacher if they had been the one to upset/injure other children. The teacher informed them that they would have a class discussion about it and directed them to begin their independent reading task first. None of the children were in distress or injured or at immediate risk.

Once they had completed their independent quiet reading task they were directed to sit on the carpet. Some children remained in their seats which the observer was informed at the end of the class was acceptable and typical behaviour due to the size of the classroom and individual behavioural circumstances.

The teacher explained that they would be discussing what happened on the yard at lunch time and that they would also discuss what the solution would be to ensure they knew how to deal with the situation if it arose again.

They established how it happened by raising their hand and waiting to be asked. None of the children shouted out and all seemed to be paying attention to the teacher. When it was established that the incident had occurred due to the children playing games the teacher used personal experiences of how games are good and should be enjoyed giving the children context.

Children were asked multiple questions during the process such as what could go wrong when playing games, what can sometimes happen and how should they respond to this. The children were encouraged to solve the problem themselves through group discussion with the teacher guiding.

Children were asked about how they felt about the incident with responses such as 'sad,' 'angry,' and 'overexcited'. The teacher explained that adults also experienced these emotions and that adults make mistakes and that apologies don't always go well so they must understand how to accept a rejection to an apology and asked the children how they would do this. They were asked to think about how the other person may be feeling.

Throughout the discussion the children all remained engaged and even became more eager to answer as the discussion went on. The teacher used a stern but soft voice and made it clear that it was not a telling off and that nobody in the class was intentionally unkind but that sometimes we can all do unkind things if we are feeling sad, angry or overexcited.

They were then tasked with coming up with three things they could do on the yard if they no longer wanted to be involved in games. The children responded with constructive answers demonstrating awareness of the direction of the conversation. The teacher elaborated saying that nobody needs to do anything they don't want to do.

The teacher through the discussion would use children's names to let them know they were to answer if they had their hand up.

The discussion finished with the teacher asking if all the children were happy with the discussion and that they were happy with the resolution they had come to. They directed the question to the whole class and individuals who had been directly involved. It was agreed by all that they were happy it was concluded.

In order to draw a line under the incident and to praise them on their ability to resolve conflict without relying on adults they were shown videos of school pets as a reward.

Areas of possible exploration:

The effectiveness of a restorative approach to behaviour management

Conflict resolution as a group approach rather than individually.

Notes:

Why did the children wait until getting back to the class to discuss with the teacher rather than tell the dinner staff?

Children were responded to individually to tell them that the issue would be discussed following their task. This is a daily 'calm down' task that they undertake after lunch to re-focus the learners

Record 2

Date and time, year group: 22.9.21 AM Year 3 class

Where and When:

In the classroom setting undertaking a writing lesson working individually and in pairs.

What happened:

Two children were observed working together to write a list of ingredients of what makes a good friendship. They were using a pre-determined list of words and phrases they would need to use to compile their list. They were writing in their books and had to focus on their handwriting and layout skills.

The two learners were fully engaged with the task discussing and demonstrating to one another what they should put on their list, but both were standing up to write rather than sitting in their chairs as their peers were doing. This was not commented on by the teacher who was assisting others and reviewing their completed work. They were not being disruptive to the rest of the class as there was a level of discussion happening around them. Once they had completed the list, they took it directly to the teacher who was sitting among the class. They had to wait their turn to show their work and were moving around energetically and play fighting briefly.

Once they had shown their work they were praised on their teamwork and the teacher commented on the good skills they had used to complete their work.

Areas of possible exploration:

Looking into how giving children freedom to work in their own way can enhance their concentration and engagement with tasks.

The comparison between individual and group work on the outcome and success of task completion and retention.

Notes:

Directions were clear and all children knew what they had to do and were carrying on with the task independently. There was a prominent level of noise but there was no shouting or misbehaviour happening while the task was being undertaken.

Record 3

Date and time, year group: 23.9.21. First lesson. Year 5/6

Where and When:

During the numeracy lesson. Working independently following on from a lesson on the previous day. Classroom had several children absent with the teacher and a regular LSA. The classroom size was compact with seating arranged in two horseshoes. Students with ALN mostly sitting on the inner horseshoe table closer to the teacher's desk. There is no space for break out areas

What happened:

The lesson was to create a bar graph and took a step-by-step approach where the teacher would demonstrate a step to the class and then they would mirror before moving to the next step. Questions were asked throughout, and children would shout out answers neither being encouraged or discouraged to put their hands up.

The lesson was begun on the electronic whiteboard placed to the side of the classroom which restricted several learners being able to see the board easily without having to turn or turn completely around.

The level of engagement was mixed with the higher ability children working independently and those needing additional help being distracted by other peers or objects. The teacher and LSA along with the observers would move around the class to assist and once a step had been completed the teacher would then go onto the next step and repeat the process. There was a differential in the engagement and progress

learners were making with the steps with a 'giving up' attitude if they did not understand or know how to do the task. Some would ask for assistance, but others would not.

Once a few steps into the task the teacher changed to use the manual whiteboard that numerous learners did not acknowledge as a step that needed doing.

The teacher then completed the task on the electronic whiteboard and the learners were allowed time to complete the task. Not all the students completed the task with some working on simplified steps. One learner put their book back in the draw without completing the task saying, 'I'm no good at math.' They did not ask for assistance from the teaching staff and were discouraged from looking at their peers' book as it was an individual task. The observer helped with the task, which was then completed, and the learner began an animated conversation about their hobbies and the things they were good at.

Areas of possible exploration:

The lack of space affecting the layout of the classroom resulting in fragmented demonstration using two boards.

The need for rules such as raised hands to encourage children to ask questions and to allow for a calmer atmosphere in the classroom – how the atmosphere of a classroom can affect engagement and concentration.

Notes:

The environment was busy with little room for learners and teaching staff to move around making it more difficult to engage with the learners in the back row.

There were numerous distractions between the peers themselves and the classroom as they had chicks hatching – these were the focus of their numeracy work

The learners entered the room with a prominent level of energy despite all being well behaved they appeared easily distracted.