

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 critical evaluation will explore the next stages of teaching and learning by evaluating and analysing the critical incident found from observations within the educational setting. Carrying out observations to find a critical incident will allow teaching practitioners to develop understanding of ability the individual learner has attained and can then provide the support their needs to develop them further in the education experience. Farrell (2008) suggests that if teachers reflect on these critical incidents found from observations then it allows them to identify new understandings of various teaching approaches and learning techniques that they may find useful in their class. He also goes on to discuss how analysing critical incidents can be very useful for teachers when it comes to assessing pupils on their ability to complete set tasks (Farrell, 2008).

This critical evaluation will also explore the observation techniques used and the methodology will show the different observation techniques that could be used in these situations, as well as discussing the chosen technique that will be used when identifying the critical incident. In addition to this, the critical incident will link to at least one of Donaldson's report focusing on the four purposes. Furthermore, this critical evaluation will link the critical incident to relevant literature focusing on three aspects such as behaviour management, teacher positioning and classroom management; exploring how the critical incident and these three aspects can have an effect on pupils' learning and development and how the teacher can identify the next steps for the learner.

Observation

The observation was taken place in a medium sized primary school which includes nursery and on average consists of 240 pupils overall. The primary school is located on the north-western outskirts of Cardiff and serves a mixed catchment area which includes a large number of families living in local authority/social priority housing. Within the school approximately 45.1% of pupils are eligible for free school meals which is much higher than the average for Wales (ESTYN, 2015). Additionally, there are at least 30% of pupils that are identified as having additional learning needs (ALN). The school offers an autism spectrum

condition specialist primary resource base for these pupils who are encouraged to participate within the mainstream setting.

The findings in the Estyn Report from March 2015 shows that school overall's performance was rated as good which indicates that the school has many strengths and that there are no important areas that require significant improvement (ESTYN, 2015). Whilst this outcome was positive, the Estyn report has a category for 'Excellent' which suggests that the school could review their performance to better themselves and provide a more positive role for future learners.

From the observations that were completed there were many critical incidents found to analyse further. The term 'critical incident' comes from history where it refers to some event or situation which marked a significant turning point or change in the life of a person or an institution as stated by Tripp (2011). Tripp (2011) states that a critical incident is an interpretation of the significance of an event. The event becomes critical when we make the judgement of the situation and whether there is a significant meaning behind the incident. These incidents appear to be 'typical' rather than 'critical' at first sight but become critical through analysis. This is supported by Farrell (2008) as he states that a critical incident is any unplanned event that occurs during class. So, a critical incident comes from something minor happening but then being analysed further with different possible outcomes is when it becomes critical. The observation is the production of an incident, the pre critical stage. The critical incident is created by the original incident which then leaves the questions for research to widen understanding of the incident (Tripp, 2011).

The critical incident was identified in an observation in a year six maths lesson after the teacher explained what the task was to the pupils. The pupils were set the challenge of calculating the missing numbers in an equation where they had to use addition and subtraction maths to enable them to work out what the missing numbers were. The teacher did three examples on the board in front of the whole class to demonstrate how it should be done. Once the teacher had finished the examples, the class were then given a worksheet with numerous equations on for them to complete. The teacher then sat down by three pupils at the front to aid them whilst completing this work. As a result of this, there were many pupils elsewhere in the classroom who were struggling or some who were distracted and not engaging in the task at all. So the main point that was drawn from this critical incident was where the teacher was positioned in the class and how that had an impact on not just the three pupils that the teacher was working with but mainly all of the other pupils in the class that were either not completing the work because they were struggling or just that they were simply distracted by other events happening around them.

From the observation, the critical incident found links to Donald's four purposes particularly the 'Healthy and Confident individuals' purpose. Throughout the observation there was clear distinction between pupils that were more capable and confident learners that required very little assistance or guidance from the teacher and the pupils that were less able and less confident with their work so therefore needed to have the additional support and encouragement and motivation from the teacher to enable them to complete the task. From the critical incident, it was evident that the classroom layout and the seating arrangement of the pupils and teacher was not suitable in this situation as there was a disadvantage to the pupils who were struggling with the task. Within Donaldson's report, it is stated that collaborative work can enhance pupil's learning and development, so a review of the seating arrangements could be done to improve the learning experience for all pupils and would also create positive peer relationships between the less able pupils and the more confident learners (Welsh Government, 2018).

Methodology

Research shows that all pupils have their own individual personalities and whilst being observed their needs are identified, which then aids the teacher in establishing their strengths and weaknesses within their learning capabilities (Pacey, 2016). Additionally, observation within a classroom can show how the children are developing their learning and can encourage aspiring teachers to utilise the knowledge gained to further their teaching experience (Pacey, 2016). Observing pupils within the classroom environment and listening to them and understanding exactly what they say and what they do is a vital tool to allow the teacher to engage and meet each individual pupil's needs (NDNA, 2017). As well as this, the use of observations allows policy makers and researchers to create plans for development for each individual child's needs to be met within the education system (Barber and Paul-Smith, 2012).

Carrying out an observation is almost like a fishing exercise using nets with different sized holes. What you catch depends not only on when and where you fish but also on your equipment (Fawcett and Watson, 2016). Much of the early research on classroom management began with classroom observations to establish teacher behaviours that were observed in teachers considered highly effective (Gardner, 2005). By collecting narrative descriptions of effective teacher behaviour, researchers were interested in identifying practices and behaviours across teachers that allowed them to make recommendations for effective classroom management (Gardner, 2005). The use of recording observations is a highly rated source when investigating a case study as it allows observers to analyse their findings effectively (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

There are many different observation methods that can be used in classroom and school settings which allows teachers to analyse and monitor children's learning development. Some of these methods can vary from being narrative, child targeting and sampling specific events (Fawcett and Watson, 2016). The observation method that was used to identify the critical incident was the narrative method, where every action that took place was recorded constructively which can be found in the appendices. The narrative method is one of the simplest ways of recording an observation by taking note of each of the actions that happen (Fawcett and Watson, 2016). This method can be used in a quick and efficient way as there is no preparation needed for it to take place, only a pen or pencil and paper is needed to carry out the observation (Fawcett and Watson, 2016).

The research method that will be used throughout this critical evaluation will be the investigation of a case study, the case study being the critical incident found from the observation. A case study is an important source containing research data, either on its own or to supplement other researcher's data. A case study provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles. Indeed, a case study can enable readers to understand how ideas and abstract (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Case studies can establish the cause and effect, identify one of their strengths is that they observe effects in real contexts, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects, and that in- depth understanding is required to do justice to the case (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

Literature Review

After completing the observation and identifying the critical incident, it has allowed three areas which can be further researched to develop understanding and knowledge on the critical incident. The three areas that will be researched are behaviour management which will look at how the critical incident has had an effect on behaviour in the classroom and how it could have been managed differently; teacher positioning within the classroom which will look in to how the teacher positioning can have an effect on pupils learning and classroom management, looking at whether the layout of the classroom can have an effect on the pupil's learning and behaviour.

According to Macnamara and Moreton (2016) challenging behaviour within the classroom often occurs from the pupil's having a view and then that view being ignored by the teacher. They suggest that instead of solely disciplining or shutting the pupil down, perhaps teachers should gain pupil trust and acknowledge pupils' views on whatever ails them (Macnamara and Moreton, 2016). They acknowledge that the mainstream method of discipline is

punishment, but does not always work with pupils who are constantly display challenging behaviour. In actuality, the punishment itself may be encourage the pupil to rebel and continue their disruptive behaviour which can have a detrimental effect on their learning. Disruptive behaviour in the classroom is widely acknowledged as being one of the major problems facing many, teachers, and children with behaviour problems are a common type of referral to educational psychologists (Wheldall, 2017). Alternatively, in some situations the pupils who are causing the disruptiveness need to be temporarily separated from the classroom to allow the teacher to carry on with the lesson and the rest of the pupils to continue engaging with their work (Macnamara and Moreton, 2016). The isolated pupil should then be confronted by the teacher in a non-aggressive manor discussing the incident and look for ways in how they can both move forward to avoid this happening again. Welsh Government (2012) states that understanding the root cause of the pupil's behaviour is essential, as without this it is unlikely that any behaviour strategy will be sustainable. Research suggests that effective classroom behaviour management is an essential prerequisite for effective classroom learning (Wheldall, 2017).

Positive teaching advocates would encourage teacher praise and approval and discourage disapproval and reprimands. Research carried out by theorist B. F. Skinner reinforces the theory of conditioning behaviour. Skinner believed that understanding behaviour would include looking at the causes of the behaviour then dealing with the appropriate consequences, this approach is known as operant conditioning (Mcleod, 2015). The idea of approach, operant conditioning, looks at the changes in behaviour by the use of positive reinforcement which is given after the desired response. Mcleod (2015) uses the example of "if your teacher gives you £5 each time you complete your homework (i.e. a reward) you are more likely to repeat this behaviour in the future, thus strengthening the behaviour of completing your homework" as a way of explaining how the positive reinforcement can impact individual behaviours.

Classrooms with frequent disruptive behaviours have less academic engaged time, and the students in disruptive classrooms tend to have lower grades and do poorer on standardized tests (Shinn et al., 1987, cited in Hazari et al 2015). Research suggests that pupil's behaviour is often dependent on their own choice. The choice theory explains that behaviour is seen as a choice by a particular pupil who reflects on their self-worth (Wubbolding, 2000). Choice theory states that human beings are motivated to fulfil the psychological needs of belonging, power or achievement, fun or enjoyment, and freedom or independence as well as one physiological need of survival or self-preservation (Wubbolding, 2000).

The second area of research in teacher positioning. A teacher's actions and choices serve to position the teacher within the classroom, which has implications for how students will engage with the class and content (Hazari, Cass and Beattie, 2015). These authors suggest that teachers' physical, structural, contextual, and social cues can have an influence on the extent to which students engage within the classroom setting. The Welsh Government (2012) believes that the positioning of the teaching within the classroom is a vital key to establishing a positive learning environment. From the critical incident, it was recognised that the pupils located towards the back of the classroom were not engaging with the teacher or the set work as they should have been compared to the pupils at the front of the classroom where the teacher was positioned. Research completed by Harre and Moghaddam (2003) (cited in Hazari et al 2015) has identified that there is a clear link between teacher positioning and engagement within the classroom. Pupils who are more engaged with their learning are more likely to succeed in their education and be successful in their future development. Clerin and Creaven (2013) (cited in Hazari et al 2015) state that pupils who feel like they belong and are comfortable in the school and class settings, are more likely to portray a better academic performance than less engaged peers. Furthermore, the organisation and layout of the classroom can have an impact on pupil engagement (Gardner, 2005). On the other hand, depending on how the classroom is laid out determines whether there could be more distractions in the classroom which could have an impact on the learning environment (Gardner, 2005). Each classroom should provide environmental conditions that enhance the comfort level of its occupants. The design should incorporate materials and systems that address noise control and climate needs. Visual enhancement and comfort are a significant part of the ideal learning environment (Gardner, 2005).

According to the British Council cited in Welsh Government (2012), teachers should consider many factors when it comes to planning the layout of their classroom, including the seating arrangements. Some of these factors may include, ensuring that all children are facing front and are able to see the board and displays clearly. Also, it is important that when considering the layout of the classroom the teacher allows enough space to move around the room to monitor the pupils progress during their working activities throughout each lesson. The classroom layout should allow flexibility and accommodate the variety of different sized groups when it comes to collaborative working activities (Gardner, 2005). Welsh Government (2012) agree that the way that the classroom is laid out has an impact on the pupil's learning. the layout of the classroom could also be organised around learning centres and should be accessible to all pupils when ever they want. Th classroom layout should also facilitate the teachers ability to move freely around the classroom to offer support and monitor each individual leaner with their learning as well as allowing the teacher

to assess and give quality feedback to the individuals on their work to ensure the pupils are staying focused on the task and that they are completing it to the best of their ability (Welsh Government, 2012).

Linking to another area of research, it can be identified that teacher positioning within the classroom can correspond to behaviour management. If the teacher is positioned in a way that all children are facing the directly then there could be less of a chance of disruptive happening (Welsh Government, 2012). Additionally, it would then also allow the teacher to identify and acknowledge any disruptive behaviour and then deal with it before it escalates to a level where it becomes too difficult to control. The layout of the classroom can have a serious impact on the way that teachers teach and the way that the pupils learn. This article looks at some of the basic points that you can consider regarding the way you arrange your classroom (Budden, no date).

The third area of research carried out is classroom management. Classroom management has been defined broadly as any action a teacher takes to create an environment that supports and facilitates both academic and social-emotional learning (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006, cited in Oliver, Wehby, Reschly, 2011) The way that the teacher manages the class can have an impact on nearly almost every situation and incident within the classroom such as behaviour. Procedures that structure the classroom environment can encourage appropriate behaviour, and reduce the occurrence of inappropriate behaviour which are necessary for strong classroom management (Evertson, Emmer, Sanford, & Clements, 1983, cited in Oliver, Wehby, Reschly, 2011).

Teacher's classroom management practices have a significant, positive effect on decreasing problem behaviour in the classroom. Teachers who use effective classroom management can expect to experience improvements in pupil behaviour and improvements that establish the context for effective instructional practices to occur (Oliver, Wehby and Reschly, 2011). The ability of teachers to organize classrooms and manage the behaviour of their students is critical to achieving both positive educational outcomes for students and teacher retention. Effective classroom management is also related to prevention efforts. Children's behaviour is shaped by the social context of the environment during the developmental process (Kauffman, 2005, cited in Oliver, Wehby, Reschly, 2011).

The Welsh Government (2012) believe that effective behaviour management is based on the teachers' ability to successfully create a well-managed, structured classroom environment so that learning can occur. Teaching a number of children with different needs, behaviours and attention spans can be challenging. However, when a positive learning culture is created, the children will learn better because they will know what is expected of

them. Additionally, having set rules and routines which are understood by each individual in the class can create an effective impact within the classroom straight away. Furthermore, this can encourage positive relationships with the pupils in order to gain the teacher-pupil respect that is expected in the classroom and enabling that all pupils are aware of the boundaries and know exactly where they stand and understand their role and worth within the class (Welsh Government, 2012).

Reflection / Evaluation

In reflection to the critical incident that was found from the observation which was the teacher positioning within the classroom I found that it had a detrimental effect on all of the pupils within the class. After considering both aspects of the critical incident I decided to focus on the impact that it had on the majority of pupils that were almost excluded from the class as the teacher was only working with three out of the twenty-one pupils in the classroom. I found that from the critical incident, there were many pupils who found the task challenging and almost impossible to complete as they were either really struggling with the work or that they were simply just off focus and would rather get distracted by talking to the peers about something that had nothing to do with the task. Reflecting on this showed that this had an impact on their learning as they were not getting fully involved and engaging with the task in order to challenge themselves and possibly better their knowledge and understanding of the task they were supposed to be completing.

After evaluating the critical incident through research on specific areas relating to the critical incident, I believe that there could be many ways in which the critical incident could be solved. Some possible solutions could entail the teacher moving them self freely around the classroom, being available to offer help and support to all pupils in the class rather than just a minority group. This would allow more pupils to be fully engaged in their learning and allow them the opportunity to develop their educational knowledge and progress with their understanding successfully.

Reflecting on this critical incident has had an influence on how I would portray myself in my own teaching practice. By doing these observations and carrying out a wide range of research, it has made me more aware of the amount of different approaches there are when it comes to different aspects in the classroom. Before this, I do not think I was fully aware of something which now seems so simple as 'teacher positioning' being such an importance in the classroom, also not realising how much of an impact it has on pupils learning. It has made me realise that there are so many different areas that need to be considered within the various teaching strategies that can be acted out in the classroom.

Conclusion

To conclude, research has confirmed and has highlighted the importance of carrying out observations within the classroom which allows teachers to develop their next learning steps for each individual pupil to continue in their learning experience. From the research, it is clear to understand that there is a significant importance to the way that teachers manage their classroom environment in order to offer support and guidance to all the pupils and ensure that they are all engaged with their learning. When linking the research carried out to the critical incident found from the observations it was understandable that teacher positioning within the classroom can have a significant impact on all of the learners within the class and not just the minority that the teacher was working with when the critical incident was identified. The research found suggests that teacher positioning has an adverse effect on pupil's engagement and can create a productive learning atmosphere within the class, as supported by the Welsh Government (2012) believes that the positioning of the teaching within the classroom is a vital key to establishing a positive learning environment.

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Appendices

Observation 1

Date: 26 th September 2019
Lesson details: Year 2 Maths lesson Subject 'Fact Families'
Classroom culture (Are the students focused on learning?) Lesson started off with all pupils sat on the carpet facing the teacher for the initial introduction to the lesson. The teacher started off with using the bead bar which was colour coded in to tens, for the children to practice their ten times tables. The teacher went through the ten times tables with the children as a class, they were all shouting out together each number of the ten times tables as the teacher was moving the beads. The majority of pupils were all engaged with the activity although there were a few sat towards the back who were not focused and were getting distracted by other things around them. One child was being quite disruptive for a while, the teacher ignored the behaviour for a period of time but then moved the child but explained that the reason for the movement was so that the child could hear and see what was going on better to try and get the child more engaged.
Objectives (Is there a clear purpose to the lesson? How do the lesson activities promote that purpose?) From this initial activity, there was no real clear purpose to the task that was set after which was fact families. As the numbers that were involved in the fact families lesson wasn't within the ten times tables.
Direction (Are the students clear about what they are doing and how to do it well?) After the first activity the teacher went on to the white board to give examples of the fact families lesson, they would be doing and to explain exactly how the task was to be completed. From this point all the pupils were understanding the task. The teacher made sure of this by asking them all at a time for answers to the questions, making sure that each child had an answer to give.
Access and challenge (Are all students able to engage in the lesson? Are all students challenged?) Throughout this point of the lesson, all pupils were engaged and listening to what was being said. Even the pupils who were distracted at the start of the lesson were focused and engaged on the explanation of the task, as the teacher was choosing them at random to answer the questions.
Assessment (How does the teacher assess student understanding before, during and after the lesson? How is this used in their teaching?) The teacher used a lot of questioning throughout the whole lesson and sometimes used the ping pong technique of questioning to the more able pupils.
Specifics / Critical Incidents (Are there particular telling moments and examples which it would be helpful to discuss?) One critical incident that would be interesting to look at is why when the teacher moved the one pupil because he/she was being disruptive, she said that it was so they could see/head better when it was actually because they were being disruptive.

Observation 2

Date: 2 nd October 2019
Lesson details: Year 6 maths activity
Classroom culture (Are the students focused on learning?) The teacher started off by questioning the pupils on their nine times tables. All pupils started off engaging with the teacher but the majority went off focus after giving their answer to the question that they were given to answer. The teacher then got all of the pupils' attention by raising her hand, this was a classroom rule that when the teacher raised her hand it would show that she wanted their attention and would keep her hand up until all pupils responded by mirroring with their hands up also. The teacher then went on to explain that there was a short activity that they were going to do which was a game of bingo, with the answers on the pupils' whiteboards being numbers from the nine times tables with the teacher saying the equation. For example, "what is 5 x 9?"
Objectives (Is there a clear purpose to the lesson? How do the lesson activities promote that purpose?) The initial questioning and activity of bingo had no purpose to the lesson that was actually taking place which was 'calculate the missing numbers'. The questions that were set to the pupils had no sums where they had to calculate numbers from their nine times tables.
Direction (Are the students clear about what they are doing and how to do it well?) During the explanation of the task the pupils seemed to understand what was going on and those who volunteered to answer the question on the board with the teacher understood it well. But when it came to the teacher setting the task and sending the pupils to work independently a lot of the pupils struggled with completing the work. During this point of the lesson the teacher was sat down the front of the class working with and supporting three pupils with the task
Access and challenge (Are all students able to engage in the lesson? Are all students challenged?) Throughout, the majority of pupils were engaged but quite a few were dipping in out of focus. All pupils were challenged as the teacher was varying the questions to each pupil to challenge their ability.
Assessment (How does the teacher assess student understanding before, during and after the lesson? How is this used in their teaching?) The teacher assessed through questioning
Specifics / Critical Incidents (Are there particular telling moments and examples which it would be helpful to discuss?) I found from this observation that during the working task that was set the teacher was sat at the front of the class working only with three pupils. Whilst this was the case, there were many pupils around the class who were struggling with the work and due to not getting any support they fell off task and did not complete the work. So, one area that I would discuss would how teacher positioning can have an effect on learning.

ARC 2

Dyddiad/Date: 2nd October 2019

Digwyddiad critigol (Ffocws)/Critical incident (focus): Teacher positioning

Profiad/ Experience	
Teimladau/ Feelings <i>Beth yw eich teimladau ynghylch y profiad?</i> <i>"What are your feelings regarding the experience?"</i>	From the critical incident found in observation 2, I felt that I wanted to get involved in the lesson by going around and offering my support to the pupils who needed it and were struggling with the work. I found it difficult to sit back and simply just observe what was going on as I feel like I could have helped a number of pupils.
Cofio a Deall/ Remember and Understand <i>"Allwch chi restru elfennau'r achos yng nghyd-destun y dysgu?"</i> <i>"Can you list the aspects of the incident in the context of learning?"</i>	The incident I found showed that there were a few pupils who's learning was affected as they couldn't carry on with completing the work because they found it too difficult and didn't know how to answer the questions.
Gwerthuso a dadansoddi/ Evaluate and analyse <i>"Beth y gellid ei gadw yr un fath i sicrhau addysgu a dysgu effeithiol yn y dyfodol?"</i> <i>"What could be kept the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?"</i>	The teaching method at the start of the lesson was a very effective way in regards to the explanation of the task, the questioning that was done and the assessment methods used.
Casgliadau a chamau gweithredu/ Conclusions and actions <i>"Beth yw eich atebion posibl i'r mater a nodwyd?"</i> <i>"Beth y gellid ei wneud nesaf?"</i> <i>"What are your possible solutions to the issue identified?"</i> <i>"What could be done next?"</i>	One solution would be for the teacher to have support in the class (a teaching assistant) so that they could be there to help individuals. Another solution would be for the teacher to move around the class more so that it would be fair for all pupils to receive any help that they require. A final solution that would be helpful would be, by the teacher stopping the whole class half way through the task and do some assessment techniques as a whole class for the teacher to know exactly what stage the pupils are at and could even explain the task again in further detail for those who were still struggling.
Y profiad newydd / Transformed experience	