

An individual reflective response to the Professional Teaching Experience

Throughout my three weeks on the Professional Teaching Experience (PTE) I have used reflection in a variety of methods to improve my teaching performance. Welsh Government (2015) defines reflection as “a process by which you: stop and think about your practice, consciously analyse your decision making and draw on theory and relate it to what you do in practice.” As it has been my first placement the experience felt different as the week commenced and, of course, the surroundings were alien. However, as the weeks progressed the experience became one of enjoyment with a combination of helpful staff, diligent pupils and an all round pleasant school. The Professional Teaching Experience has gone well so far, with the inclusion of two weeks observation, one week working with groups and one working on whole class lessons. I feel that I have worked well with the children, however, I have worked alongside the class mentor to choose a compilation of personal targets relating to the QTS standards.

One of the personal targets is to include more incidental Welsh during lessons and group work. This target coincides with the QTS standard S3.3.2, which aims to make use of the Curriculum Cymreig for learners aged 7-14. In order to do this I tried to use more incidental Welsh throughout the day in general classroom sessions not just during the activities. I chose this target due to the fact that there is a focus on the teaching of Welsh in schools. The Welsh government have identified “three strategic themes” in order to help promote the language and make it a sustainable language for the future generations. The three themes are:

- “1. Increasing the number of Welsh speakers.
 2. Increasing the use of Welsh.
 3. Creating favourable conditions – infrastructure and context.”
- (Welsh Government, 2017)

I feel that the target has been achieved through the use of commands and other Welsh words and if the children do not understand the word I will repeat the word or sentence in English to reinforce the point. I feel that the incorporation of incidental Welsh is very important to provide children with the chance to learn their national language. Davies (2013) states that the “education system has a vitally important role in securing the future of the Welsh language”. Also, the ‘One language for all’ report recommends that the Welsh language should have an “integral part in the curriculum across all subjects to gain an understanding of the context of the language”. In addition, as the curriculum is changing Welsh will be seen as a priority. Donaldson (2015) states “each of the Areas of Learning and Experience should include a Welsh dimension in line with the recommendations of the the independent review of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig”. I believe that using as much Welsh as possible in the classroom will help to ensure the sustainability of the Welsh language and help the Welsh Government to reach their objective of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Through the use of the Assisted Reflective Conclusion (ARC) Model (see appendix), I have been able to reflect on my experiences in PTE 1 which has allowed me to incorporate my past experiences into my planning and teaching regarding PTE 2. During one of my maths lessons I feel that I did not use a suitable amount of incidental Welsh. I believe that it was a disappointing element to the lesson as I feel the incorporation of incidental Welsh will have a critical impact on whether the Welsh Government will achieve their goal. I feel that the cause of the disappointing element could have been because it was my observation lesson and I just wanted to ensure that the children completely understood the task in hand. For future practice I will try to include more incidental Welsh in the form of commands and common Welsh words relating to the activity.

Another one of the personal targets is behaviour management which relates to the QTS standard S2.7. It states that “the teacher knows a range of strategies to promote good behaviour and establish a purposeful learning environment”. During the first few days of PTE 1 I struggled a little bit with quite a boisterous and challenging class to get their attention as I had not fully settled into the class. However, I feel that I have worked well to establish a firm but approachable attitude with what can be a difficult class. I believe that I have clearly shown the standard that I expect from the children and mirrored the behaviour strategies used in the class. However, I feel that the behaviour of the class differed during lessons. During creative or active lessons, such as, Physical Education the more boisterous children are better behaved as they seem to enjoy the lessons. Adams (2009) suggests that “there is some evidence to suggest that when a creative culture is

established in schools behaviour improves as children become more interested in learning.” I comprehensively agree with this statement as I have found that if the children do not enjoy the activity they are completing they are more likely to misbehave. I noticed that during one of my maths activities all the children were engaged and they enjoyed the activities and relished the plenary quiz. Therefore, I felt that the children benefited from the learning experience. Furthermore, I believe that the use of extrinsic rewards such as house points and a ‘Super hero behaviour chart’ in the class is a good way to encourage good behaviour. As a result of the “Behaviour for Learning materials” (EPPI Centre, 2004) teachers have been motivated to change the dynamic of behaviour management “moving away from a ‘blame’ culture to seeing behaviour in the context of social interactions.” Grigg (2010) I have been able to see this occurring first hand during my time on the Professional Teaching Experience. Skinner’s (1954) theory of operant conditioning proposes that the behaviour of a child is reinforced by the reactions of adults. He believed that the best way to change behaviour was to “modify the environment”.

Skinner (1954) did not approve of the use of punishments in the classroom as a form of behaviour management. He believed that punishments only hindered behaviour management and actually causes a decrease in the level of behaviour. He promoted the constant use of reinforcement in the form of extrinsic rewards, such as house points, etc. Skinner believed that this was a more efficient way to alter and influence the behaviour of the children. In addition, as a result of the work of Canter and Canter (2009) there has been an insistence on an assertive approach in comparison to discipline and punishment. Their research shows that “consistency and positive reinforcement are key principles” in maintaining behaviour levels. Furthermore, the research of Grigg (2010) suggests that “the use of positive and constructive language is highlighted and negative comments are discouraged”. I agree with this theory as I believe that providing the children with rewards has worked well during my time on the Professional Teaching Experience as a method of behaviour control. However, I feel that establishing a firm but fair attitude with the children has been an effective way of informing the children of the standards of behaviour they are expected to meet. Therefore, I will continue to establish this attitude but also incorporate the house point system to maintain behaviour. Furthermore, I will reflect on my past experiences relating to behaviour management through the use of ARC forms. This will provide a foundation of behaviour management strategies that I may have used and an insight into which strategy worked best.

During my observation week I used the method of observation to examine how the class teacher coped and dealt with behaviour management. I found that the children understood the standards they were expected to set while in the classroom. I feel that it was a positive method to use as it allowed me to get to know the children during my first week. Also, I was able to establish relationships with the children. Daniels & Perry (2003) state that “teachers who use more learner-centred practices produced greater motivation in their students than those who used fewer of such practices”. I feel that building these relationships has been beneficial throughout my time in the class.

In conclusion, the method of reflection has been beneficial in my overall progression while on PTE. Reflective practice possesses a variety of advantages such as it can identify personal and professional strengths and areas for improvement. Also, it can act as a source of feedback for the teacher which can be used to further improve their teaching style and their ability to tailor their planning to the class. Moon (2004) states that “we reflect in order to learn something, or we learn as a result of reflecting”. As a result of my personal success when using the method of reflection I will continue to use the Assisted Reflective Conclusions Model and Observations to further improve my teaching during PTE.

References

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Appendix 1

Model Beirniadau Wedi Adfyfyrio (BWA)

Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model

Dyddiad/Date: Tuesday 12th March

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

Maths lesson- working with palindromic numbers

Profiad/ Experience	
Teimladau/ Feelings Beth yw eich teimladau ynghylch y profiad? <i>What are your feelings regarding the experience?</i>	I really enjoyed working with the whole class for this maths lesson. I felt that the activity went well in the fact that all the children were engaged throughout the activity and most enjoyed working out the solutions based activity.
Cofio a Deall/ Remember and Understand Allwch chi restru'r agweddau ar y profiad dysgu a aeth yn dda? <i>Can you list the aspects of the learning experience that went well?</i> Pa elfennau o'r profiad dysgu oedd yn siomedig? <i>What were the elements of the learning experience that were disappointing?</i>	The aspects that went well were: • The activity helped to improve the column addition skills of the children and introduced the concept of palindromic numbers. • The activity was differentiated for each group challenging each pupil to the best of their ability. • There was a differentiated extension activity for each group and it related to the class topic (Ancient Egypt). • Most of the pupils were engaged and seemed to enjoy • Pupils used whiteboards to calculate answers which showed if the children understood or not. I believe the disappointing element of the activity was: • Not enough incidental Welsh was used throughout the lesson.

Gwerthuso a dadansoddi/ <i>Evaluate and analyse</i> Beth fyddwch chi'n cadw'r un fath i sicrhau dysgu ac addysgu effeithiol yn y dyfodol? <i>What will you keep the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?</i> Beth oedd achos yr elfen siomedig bwysicaf? <i>What was the cause of the most important disappointing element?</i>	The aspects that I will keep the same is: • The differentiation of the activity and the extension activity • The use of whiteboards by the pupils to show their answers • The use of 'Kahoot' as a form of Assessment for Learning. The cause of the most disappointing element: • Could have been because I was being observed for the first time and I just wanted to ensure that the children understood the task in hand and what they were meant to do.
Casgliadau a chymau gweithredu/ <i>Conclusions and actions</i> Beth yw eich atebion posibl i'r materion siomedig a nodwyd? <i>What are your possible solutions to the disappointing issues identified?</i> Beth ydych yn mynd i'w wneud nesaf? <i>What will you do next?</i>	To try to limit the disappointing element I will try to include more incidental Welsh in the form of commands and common Welsh words. Also, to use more complex Welsh sentences but repeating in English. Next, I will include column subtraction in the next Maths activity.
Y profiad newydd / <i>Transformed experience</i>	