

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.

Critical incidents refer to an '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 a significance we attach to the meaning of the incident ... which marked a significant turning-point or change in the life of a person, institute on, or social phenomenon' (Trip, 2011). Most critical incidents are not all negative or dramatic, mostly straightforward and occurring within a routine professional practice. They are 'indicative of underlying trends, motives, and structures' (Trip, 2011). Critical incidents can appear typical at first glance but through analysis are rendered critical. Therefore, there is a need for critical evaluation into incidents to determine whether it offers a significant turning-point. This can be achieved by analysing the underlying trends, motives, and structures. Thus, creating significant turning-points within an educational institution.

A critical evaluation is to critically evaluate a statement, concluding on whether an argument or set of research findings is accurate. A critical evaluation will warrant an assertive response that details the extent to which the findings, theories, or arguments are accurate. This is important because understanding, analysing, and critically evaluating typical behaviour models can determine significant characteristics that can be used to create change within a classroom.

The first thing to think about when critically evaluating is what research findings are linked to or within the incident that has taken place, whether they contain accurate information about the criticality of the incident, and if they offer a turning-point for change. This structure is helpful when critically evaluating teaching models, such as behaviour management, positive reinforcement, and differentiation, focusing on a case study that is based on an observed critical incident.

The curriculum is the interaction of delivering knowledge between teachers and students. Grundy (1987) states that it is 'not simply a set of plans to be implemented, but rather is constituted through an active process in which planning, acting, and evaluating are reciprocally related and integrated into the process'.

There have been significant improvements in the health and wellbeing of adolescents in Wales. 'Wales has one of the most extensive health promoting school programmes in the world, the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes, which supports schools to implement the World Health Organization's health promoting school's framework' (Hewitt, Anthony, Moore, Melendez-Torres, Murphy, 2019). This implies that there is a potential for schools to influence students to have a positive outlook on health and wellbeing. Recent research has challenged the belief that devoting resources to improve health and wellbeing in schools could be at the expense of educational attainment (Littlecott, Long, Hawkins et al, 2019). The new curriculum aims to implement the four core purposes outlined in the successful futures report. One of the four core purposes is that children should develop as 'Healthy, confident individuals' (Donaldson, 2015). This is one of the six areas of learning that form the structure of the curriculum. Thus, putting importance of health and wellbeing in schools. This is promoted by the welsh government as there has been several key policy developments that endorse schools to protect and promote health and wellbeing. These include Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act 2015, and the

Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 (Hewitt, Anthony, Moore, Melendez-Torres, Murphy, 2019). This implies that reflecting on the wellbeing of students and policy changes in Wales has had a significant impact on the reform for the new curriculum and has put student health and wellbeing at the forefront of change.

ICT has had a significant impact on how teaching is delivered in and out of the classroom. It allows for new and creative ways for learning to take place. This ensures that students outside the school environment can still gain knowledge without being at a disadvantage. There is a consensus that use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) will enhance the quality of teaching and learning process (Paul, 2002; Papert, 1987; Voogt & Pelgrum, 2005; Watson, 2001; Well-Strand, 1991). This implies that the role of ICT is to support and enhance the curriculum, allowing for effective delivery which creates an inclusive environment (Tagg, 1995). One of the four purposes in the new curriculum, successful futures, is the development of 'ambitious, capable learners' (Donaldson, 2015). This allows students to be ready to learn throughout their lives. Being involved in modern society and the workplace demands a high level of digital skill. This puts emphasis on the ability to be able to continue progression outside of education. The report (2015) states that literacy, numeracy, and digital competence should be developed and strengthened across the whole curriculum and digital competence should be developed to establish progression in students learning. This encourages students to be critical learners. Therefore, establishing critical reflection as a key part of learning.

Professional standards are the 'skills, knowledge, and behaviours that characterise excellent practice and support professional growth' (Welsh Government, 2018). These characteristics are a combination of five different standards. These are Pedagogy, Leadership, Professional learning, Innovation, and Collaboration. The five different standards allow for reflection into a teacher's practice. This can develop the teaching delivered to students, hence, improving learning. Professional standards are also accompanied by overarching values that drive all teachers to deliver the best teaching practices. This works hand in hand with the new curriculum. It puts emphasis on Welsh language and culture, rights of the learner, the professional learner, the system role, professional entitlement, literacy, numeracy, and digital competence. This supports the development of students learning as teachers are required to reflect on their practice. This reflection supports teachers to 'strive for sustained excellent practice from initial training through to school leadership, (Welsh Government, 2018).

Reflective individuals have an open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness. To develop individuals to become reflective thinkers it is essentially to follow the processes of experiencing something, thinking on the experience, and therefore learning from the experience. Kolb (1975) states that the learning cycle emphasizes reflective observation as a key principle to analyse and come to conclusions from an experience. This aims to take learning into different experiences, developing reflective practice. This allows individuals to create a description of the experience and come to conclusions that can be taken into consideration in future events. While the reflection at the time of the event happening focuses on deciding how to act at the time and acting immediately, the reflection after the event focuses on thinking about what you might do differently if it happened again and having new information or theoretical research that can inform the experience to process feelings and actions. This suggests the importance of critical reflection within individuals, as it allows for a breakdown of an event or experience and can encourage personal

development. This is important within the new curriculum as it encourages students to be 'ethical, informed citizens' (Donaldson, 2015).

Tripp (2011) observes that deep analysis of critical incidents can inform teacher judgement and practice. Observation offers the rare opportunity for deeper understanding into the development of the professional standards.

The observation took place in an English-medium 11-18 school in the Vale of Glamorgan (Estyn, 2019). On roll are 1,521 that include 335 pupils in the sixth form. This has gone up since the last inspection by 73 pupils. Most pupils come from the surrounding villages. Around 4% of pupils are eligible for free school meals which is considerably lower compared to the national average of 16.4% for secondary schools in Wales. Around 4% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales (Estyn, 2019). 1% of pupils have statements of special educational needs compared with 2.5% for Wales as a whole. Close to 8% of pupils have a special educational need, which is lower than the national average of 19.2% (Estyn 2019). Most of the pupils are from a white British background. Around 2% of pupils speak English as an additional language (few pupils speak Welsh at home) (Estyn, 2019). The headteacher has been at the school since April 2012. 'The current leadership team is made up of the headteacher, a deputy headteacher, three assistant headteachers, three associate assistant headteachers and the business manager' (Estyn, 2019). Nearly all pupils display a highly positive attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic, resourceful, and independent learners (Estyn, 2019). The pupils show resilience in their learning and behave maturely and respectfully in lessons (Estyn, 2019). The school council has an outstanding impact on school life, playing a key role in helping pupils 'develop as confident, mature citizens' (Estyn, 2019). All inspection areas achieved a judgement of excellent by Estyn (2019).

Critical incidents allow teachers to focus in on their reflective practice. They can reflect on when things go well or wrong, informing teaching practices. Critical incidents can be considered mundane until analyse into them.

The critical incident observed was in a year 11 English Language classroom (Appendices, record 3). The class was made up of mixed ability students that all achieved a C in their GCSE English Literate exam. This implied that differentiation is needed to occur within the lesson to allow all pupils to achieve their best. The lesson began with the pupils entering the classroom and presented with a bell task to complete. This allowed for students to think, focus, and be on track as soon as they entered the classroom. This develops independent learning. The bell task was based on work they had done in the previous lesson and was re-capping on key information. This moved learning from the short-term memory (STM) to the long-term memory (LTM). Each re-cap fixes the learning more firmly into the LTM.

Therefore, stating that it takes progressively longer for the learning to be forgotten. Student 1 arrived late to the lesson and apologised as they entered the classroom. The teacher pointed to their seat without making a scene that would disturb the rest of the class. The student took long to get stuff out of their bag and get ready for the lesson. The teacher encouraged the student to move quicker in getting ready. This was meet with attitude. The teacher ignored this to focus on the rest of the class who were ready to learn. Once Student 1 was ready to learn they engaged in the lesson by sharing back work and participating in discussions. This allowed all pupils to be on task and working effectively within the lesson. This also allowed the teacher to go around the classroom and check in with other pupils. This meant that the teachers focus was on the whole class and not just one student misbehaving. This implied that the teacher encouraged pupil centered learning and used

positive reinforcement throughout. This was conveyed when Student 2 answered a question and was unconfident in their answer. This was met with positive reinforcement from the teacher. This encouraged the student to become a 'healthy, confident individual' (Donaldson, 2015). By the teacher giving positive reinforcement to the student, it was fulfilling the value of their answer allowing for confidence to grow and develop. However, even though the class was engaged in the lesson, Student 1 had become disruptive. They started shouting out answers and demanding the teacher and the class' attention. Dreikurs (1968) states that this need of attention is a behaviour that is motivated by unconscious need. This is based within the logical consequences model. The teacher made sure not to take away the student's enthusiasm to learn but reminded them of the behaviour code within the school. The student then knew when their behaviour had pushed the boundaries. Even though Student 1 is an 'ambitious, capable learner' (Donaldson, 2015) They still found the need to be disruptive within the lesson. Throughout the lesson it was conveyed that positive reinforcement worked best for handling that student's behaviour. This implied that Student 1's wellbeing was the issue that needed to be focused on in creating a positive classroom environment for all the students. The prevention of 'emotional and behavioural problems and promotion of positive wellbeing in children and young people are national priorities in Wales' (Hewitt, Anthony, Moore, Melendez-Torres, Murphy, 2019). Behaviour problems are one of the key issues within schools and often can escalate and affect students' health and wellbeing. 'Just over one-third (36%) of adolescents reported that they had been in a physical fight in the last 12 months, with 11% reporting they had been in three or more fights' (Hewitt, Anthony, Moore, Melendez-Torres, Murphy, 2019). The critical incident of the lesson focused on Low level disruptive behaviour, how positive reinforcement works in a classroom to handle different situations, and the use of differentiation within mixed ability lessons.

Parsonson (2012) states that a classroom with little disruption requires planning and consistency which links to factors such as clear rules, routines, recurring praise, constancy, suitable tasks for ability to be challenging but not easy and for children to have the opportunity to participate in discussions within the classroom decisions. If the lesson does not have planning and is ineffective then students' poor behaviour will increase, whereas achievement will decrease. Sanders and Rivers (1996) reported the effects of ineffective teachers over 3 years as having a depressed effect on student achievement in math by as much as 54% regardless of the ability of the learner. Differentiation is dependent on positive teaching standards. Kennedy (1999) ran a study into maths and science lessons and found that 'teachers use strategies linked to content to show results with students' (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, Yoon, 2001). This suggests that classroom instructions need to be carefully considered in improving teaching and learning. If a lesson has clear instructions on what is expected, then there is little room for behaviour issues to occur. However, Dyson (2001, p.25) states 'All learners are different, insofar as they are individuals with distinctive learning styles, needs and interests'. Implying that in every classroom there must be differentiation taking place. Dyson (2001) continues by stating that 'Teachers react to these differences by placing students in different teaching groups and offering variations on the curriculum. However, in doing this, institutions are in 'real danger of creating a "ghetto" of students with more complex difficulties who have no real part to play'. Therefore, going against the points laid out in the successful futures report (2015). The report suggests that teaching and learning should focus on 'giving opportunities for problem solving, creativity,

and critical thinking ... challenging children and young people to be the best they can be' (Donaldson, 2015). The choice of different tasks allows students to have alternative activities without dividing them up into ability, preventing the portraying to peers of particular learning needs. This allows all students to participate within the lesson regardless of ability. It allows the stronger students in the class to be able to challenge themselves further. The issue that can occur with this is if students don't push themselves to be challenged. Some students might merely just do the first activity, whereas they could indeed complete all three. This then becomes a classroom management issue. Therefore, bring back Sanders and Rivers (1996) argument that ineffective teaching has an affect on student achievement.

T Sumiati et al (2019) states that 'Motivation is really important because it is a complex part of human psychology and behaviour that influences how individuals live and have an important influence on a learner's attitude and learning behaviour' (Amirkhanovaa, Ageevab, Fakhretdinovc, 2016). If a student is not motivated to learn then they cannot follow the learning instructions properly 'motivation is the desire to enable, activate, channelling and directing the behaviour of individuals in carrying learning attitude' (T Sumiati et al, 2019). T Sumiati et al (2019) held a study focusing on qualitative approach. This meant getting a detailed description of the number of positive reinforcements done within a lesson to see if the learning motivation had increased or decreased. This was carried out on children between 5-6 years old. The study conducted observed that children who seem less motivated to learn, positive reinforcement increased the learning motivation in children. The reinforcement given is an effort to build learning motivation and important in achieving learning success' (T Sumiati et al, 2019). This is back up by Skinner's (in Kelly and Pohl, 2018) introduction of the theory of operant conditioning. This system focuses on the association of rewards and punishments using reinforcement. Operant conditioning focuses on good behaviour associated with both negative and positive reinforcement, as well as bad behaviours association with positive and negative reinforcement. This theory implies to students that they behave and complete learning objectives then they will get positive reinforcement back. It allows draws the line between what is acceptable within the classroom and students know exactly what will happen if they misbehave. This creates a cohesive code of practice regarding behaviour across the school. Therefore, students know what is expected of them no matter what lesson they are in. This allows teachers to follow an effective behaviour model that outlines what to do if a student is misbehaving. Thus, creating consistent behaviour protocols.

Van Lier et al (2004) states that 'children who are disruptive within the classroom are at a higher risk of many negative outcomes such as school and academic failure, poor relationships, substance use, conviction of crimes and mental health issues'. Behaviour issues can have a significant effect on the individuals around them, leading to negative impacts on 'physical and mental health and wider into society through crime and anti-social behaviour' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2018). Discipline issues are one of the top concerns within a school. More than '40% of teachers reported that challenging behaviour interfered with their teaching' (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2000). Behaviour problems often lead to academic failure. Student discipline problems, particularly among minority students in low socioeconomic communities, highlight the need for teachers to implement effective classroom and behaviour management practices (Tincani, 2011). Managing behaviour in a classroom is important to create a climate where learning can flourish. This is important as without the school ethos encouraging good behaviour and

promoting a learning environment, it then makes classroom management difficult to carry out. This is due to not having focus and importance placed onto behaviour management or learning. Importance needs to be placed onto behaviour management as it needs to be in place to protect the 'basic rights of safety, learning, and respect for all pupils' (Hewitt, Anthony, Moore, Melendez-Torres, Murphy, 2019). This helps to teach children about socially appropriate and acceptable choices, developing them to become 'ethical, informed citizens' (Donaldson, 2015). By encouraging them to make choices children can feel successful and achieve creatively. This develops them to become 'enterprising ... contributors' (Donaldson, 2015).

When reflecting on the critical incident observed it was clear that positive reinforcement was a main part of the school's behaviour management. 'The [REDACTED] Code for behaviour is applied consistently across the school. This contributes to very high standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning' (Estyn, 2019). This conveyed that the teachers know how to deal with behaviour issues in a consistent manner, creating a whole school approach to behaviour. It also implied that using positive reinforcement to appreciate students' achievement worked as a way to encourage students to learn. This allowed for a personal relationship between the teacher and students, creating an environment of trust and a willingness to achieve as a unit. The mixed ability classes created an atmosphere of togetherness. This was due to the seating arrangement within the lesson. By having stronger members of the class sitting next to weaker ones it allowed for peer discussion and growth for both students. A key next step identified is how to encourage enthusiasm within a classroom without it becoming disruptive. This was a key observation within the lesson as it was clear that students enjoy and have a passion to learn. This meant that pupils were engaged throughout. The main issue was trying to keep the focus on learning and the reminder of the behaviour code. This, however, was done without diminishing their enthusiasm to learn and be a part of the lesson. A suggestion I would make to try and overcome this issue would be to hand out students a posted note at the start of the lesson, explaining that they can only write down one question on the note and at the end of the lesson I would take them in and answer them on Google Classroom. This would stop the questioning that was unrelated to the lesson and would encourage them to independently answer their own questions before writing down the one they need an answer for. The observation of this critical incident has informed my own professional and personal development. It has demonstrated how to overcome the issue presented in the classroom as well as reminding to give attention and praise good behaviour, not just giving attention to bad behaviour. It has opened my mind to thinking about having different activities within the lesson to cater to all students.

In conclusion, critically evaluating and identifying key teaching and learning steps can enhance the observation of critical incidents. It develops reflective thinking, allowing for personal and professional growth. It makes individuals become open-minded, take responsibility for mistakes, and develops empathy. Reflective practice allows for a transfer of knowledge between personal and professional life. Using Donaldson's four purposes, allows for integrating reflection of practices within the new curriculum. This makes the transfer over to the curriculum smoother. Professional standards for teaching and leadership enhance reflective practice. They support the development of students learning as the teacher constantly must reflect and adapt based on what works best to deliver

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teaching to the students. Therefore, creating an inclusive, creative, reflective, and passionate environment for students to develop as 'ethical, informed ... healthy, confident ... enterprising, creative ... ambitious, and capable learners' (Donaldson, 2015).

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Appendices

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

Record 1

Date and time, year group: Year 13 P2 Geology
Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AOLE, general classroom context • Geology lesson in C block • Context of the lesson was rock movement throughout the years
What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident (the more detail the better to refer to in your later work) • Pupils were on task • They were very quiet and reluctant to answer questions • Teacher used rhetorical questions to get the class thinking • The use of continuous question to get them participating • Open discussion
Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be “under the hood” in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider? • Pupil centered learning – creating individual learners • Any wellbeing issues – E.G not getting enough sleep the night before • Have they understood the topic discussed within the lesson. • Could be struggling with the workload.
Notes: any details you can note (is it a busy environment, is it after lunch, are there lots of distractions, are directions made explicit - the more you can refer to the better here) • Hand-outs were not overwhelming or distracting • Resources are easily accessible • Time management • Clear instructions

Record 2

Date and time, year group: Year 7 P4 Ethics and Philosophy
Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AOLE, general classroom context • Ethics and Philosophy • Understanding key words • Relating key words to text
What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident (the more detail the better to refer to in your later work) • Class was excited and enthusiastic • Lesson started off with a bell task • Reminder of classroom rules • Clear instructions • Positive feedback when pupils did something good or follow instructions • Using spinning wheel as a teaching technique • Walking around the classroom to get everyone's attention • Group discussions • Peer and self-marking
Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be "under the hood" in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider? • Positive reinforcement • Rhetorical questions – pupil centred learning. • Re-caps – STM to LTM
Notes: any details you can note (is it a busy environment, is it after lunch, are there lots of distractions, are directions made explicit - the more you can refer to the better here) • Just after lunch so students were energetic • Clear instructions • An example of how work is expected to be set out in booklets. • Homework collected while students were set on a task.

Record 3

Date and time, year group: Year 11 P3 English Language
Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AOLE, general classroom context • Preparation for GCSE English Language exam • Creating revision tools
What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident (the more detail the better to refer to in your later work) • Lesson started off with a bell task – Re-Cap • Student arrived late to lesson • Class was engaged with the lesson • A few students were disruptive but were on task • Class discussion • Student teacher relationship
Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be “under the hood” in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider? • Positive reinforcement • Low level disturbance • Behaviour management • Differentiation • Re-cap – STM to LTM
Notes: any details you can note (is it a busy environment, is it after lunch, are there lots of distractions, are directions made explicit - the more you can refer to the better here) • Lesson was after break • Mixed ability class • All achieved C or above in GCSE English Literate exam