

A critical evaluation and the identification of next teaching and learning steps, focusing on a case study of an individual learner based on an observed critical incident

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Introduction

This essay will be an observation and evaluation of a critical incident within a secondary school setting. It will reflect on the implications of the critical incident on my subsequent teaching practice and within a wider context, demonstrate how reflections on critical incidents can positively impact future teaching practices and student development. This essay will utilise the works of Tripp, Donaldson and Brookfield, among several other education focused academics, to demonstrate how effective critical incident observations and reflections can be to improving teacher practice within the education system. These reflections can aid in improving responses to ethical dilemmas and behaviour management development, for example. Tripp defines a critical incident as ‘an interpretation of the significance of an event’ and the subsequent inference of a value judgment by the observer, on the basis of their interpretations of what happened and the deeper factors or structures that caused it to happen (Tripp, 1993).¹ A critical incident does not necessarily have to be negative, as Orly argued, despite what the connotations of “critical” may imply because a necessary part of critical incident analysis is the understanding of context to an action or behaviour and how parties interpretations have consequences on the subsequent response to the incident (Orly, 2011).² This is the nature of the critical incident observed for this essay.

¹ Tripp, D., *Critical Incidents in Teaching: Developing Professional Judgement* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.8

² Orly, S., (2011) ‘Teachers’ critical incidents: Ethical dilemmas in teaching practice’, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, (27), p.649

Observation

The school in which the observation took place is an English medium coeducational, comprehensive school for ages 11-16. The date of the observation was 29th September 2020 and the class in which the observation took place was a mixed gender and ranged ability Year 8 class, making the children aged 12-13. The subject of the lesson was Spanish, which falls into the 'Languages, Literacy and Communication' Area of Learning and Experience under the new Donaldson curriculum but this particular school has yet to adapt to the new curriculum as of October 2020 (Donaldson, 2015)³ (See Appendices 1-1.2).⁴ The area in which the school is located is above the Welsh national average for deprivation and poverty in terms of unemployment, few to no qualifications and low weekly income figures. These factors will evidently have an impact on a significant proportion of the pupils within the observed class and this should be taken into consideration within the reflection and evaluation of the critical incident.

Within the context of this specific critical incident, positive reinforcement was used as a behaviour management technique, likely as a deliberate attempt to control the behaviour of the pupils. Before providing verbal praise to the targeted pupils, the group were disengaged with the first task of the lesson and were causing low-level disruption to others within the class. However, it was observed that once the pupils received praise and specific, individualised positive attention from the teacher regarding their abilities and achievements in previous lessons, they settled down and engaged with the subsequent lesson tasks. This critical incident demonstrates an evidenced link between positive reinforcement and increasing the engagement of pupils. As a consequence, this betters the classroom management of behaviour from a teacher perspective (Appendix 1.2).⁵

In order to abide by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines for educational research, the data gathered from the observation should be anonymised as 'the confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the

³ Donaldson, G., (2015) 'Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales', p.5. Available at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/successful-futures-a-summary-of-professor-graham-donaldsons-report.pdf> (Accessed on 19/10/2020)

⁴ Appendices 1-1.2

⁵ Appendix 1.2

conduct of research' (BERA, 2018).⁶ Under these guidelines, all participants must be fully consenting and entitled to privacy in the recording and storing of observation details (BERA, 2018).^{7 8} To do this, the school, staff and pupils involved remain anonymous throughout this critical evaluation and reflection.

⁶ BERA, (2018), (40), 'Guidelines for Ethical Research', p.21. Available at: https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/BERA-Ethical-Guidelines-for-Educational-Research_4thEdn_2018.pdf (Accessed on 14/10/2020)

⁷ BERA, (2018), 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research', (8-10), p.9. Available at: https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/BERA-Ethical-Guidelines-for-Educational-Research_4thEdn_2018.pdf (Accessed on 14/10/2020)

⁸ BERA, (2018), 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research', (40), p.21. Available at: https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/BERA-Ethical-Guidelines-for-Educational-Research_4thEdn_2018.pdf (Accessed on 14/10/2020)

Methodology

Observations in education can be carried out in three main ways. These are structured, unstructured and semi-structured, where all of these models are non-participant and purely observatory. Structured observation is systematic, specific data gathering for predefined categories and falls under an operationalisation approach. This will often collect quantitative data which measures the quantity opposed to the quality of the information gathered. This is in comparison with an unstructured observation approach which involves the monitoring and recording of all data of the behaviour or situation which the observer deems relevant. A semi-structured method is a medium between the two aforementioned approaches, where a skeleton of ideas or themes can be explored but the observer has a level of flexibility involving the data they choose to collect. An advantage of using this semi-structured approach is that it allows a degree of flexibility as to the amount and detail of the qualitative data gathered. The observer has a framework of themes to guide their observation but by utilising qualitative data within these categories, it provides context to a critical incident which quantitative data could not convey because that is purely figures with no detail.

However, it must be noted how using semi-structured observation can produce a Hawthorne Effect, even when the observation is non-participant such as this case. Bennett makes reference to the Hawthorne Effect in behaviour theory as it refers to when participants under acknowledged observation, change their behaviour as a response to being observed (Bennett, 2013).⁹ As the students and the teacher were aware of the observation taking place, this may have affected the way in which they engaged and reacted to incidents within the classroom (Appendix 1.2).¹⁰ Furthermore, an ever-present issue in observation studies is the observer expectancy. This effect states that an observer will be looking for results in relation to their desired findings and this means their expectations may influence the data gathered by the observer. In this case, as the observer, I was looking for at least four critical incidents of which to gather information and context about and therefore, this expectation may have influenced the way in which I collected my data and perceived certain classroom incidents in order to fit them within the predefined category of a “critical incident” (Appendices 1-4).¹¹ However, as

⁹ Bennett, T., *Teacher Proof: why research in education doesn't always mean what it claims and what you can do about it* (London: Routledge, 2013), p.34

¹⁰ Appendix 1.2

¹¹ Appendices 1-4

Tripp noted, an incident becomes “critical” when the observer attaches ‘an interpretation of the significance of an event’ and as long as the observer is aware that this is subjective on the basis of their perceptions, it should not affect the validity of the observation findings (Tripp, 1993).¹²

The observation model selected for this task was a semi-structured observation. This model was selected because it allowed for an extensive form of qualitative data gathering. While the data gathered was used within predetermined categories, these categories were general enough to allow a degree of flexibility in the observation data being collected. The details of the observed critical incident were able to be as extensive as I, the observer, chose to make them. When analysing a critical incident, Tripp suggests there are two ways in which to analyse a critical incident; classificatory (what is it an example of?) and social (is it just and if so, for whom?) (Tripp, 2012).¹³ Using Tripp’s thinking strategy of analysing the ‘non-events’, which involves the understanding that by one incident happening, another incident did not and we have to question the significance of why this did not occur, this critical incident was an example of strong classroom and behaviour management and had a positive social impact on the students and teacher involved (Tripp, 2012).¹⁴ Using thinking strategies for non-events, by the teacher using positive reinforcement and praise to engage and inspire self-confidence in the pupils, a further escalation of disengagement and disruption did not occur. The significance of this is that the lesson was able to continue uninterrupted and the pupil’s self-confidence increased as a result of individual praise.

¹² Tripp, D., *Critical Incidents in Teaching: Developing Professional Judgement*, p.8

¹³ Tripp, D., *Critical Incidents in Teaching (Classic Edition): Developing Professional Judgement*, (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), p.27

¹⁴ Tripp, D., *Critical Incidents in Teaching (Classic Edition): Developing Professional Judgement*, p.45

Four Purposes

Under the Donaldson report of 2015, *Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*, the Welsh education system was faced with the call for reform to the national curriculum. Having undertaken a long-term observation and analysis of the Welsh curriculum in action throughout all types of schools, Donaldson concluded that the curriculum in Wales needed to be differentiated from the English system, in order to meet local needs and provide up to date learning (Donaldson, 2015).¹⁵

Alongside collaborating secondary school subjects in grouped Areas of Learning and Experience, the main outcome of the Donaldson report proposals provided foundations for the purposes of the new curriculum in Wales. These four purposes would allow young people to develop as ambitious capable learners, enterprising creative contributors, ethical informed citizens and healthy confident individuals (Donaldson, 2015).¹⁶ These purposes were introduced to 'guide all future decisions about national and local educational priorities, and underpin all teaching and learning in Wales' (Donaldson, 2015).¹⁷ Using the framework provided by the Donaldson report, a link can be made between the critical incident analysed in this observation and the purpose of students being developed as healthy, confident individuals. The approach of the continued use of positive reinforcement and praise, particularly towards children who have demonstrated and been evidenced to have a propensity for disengagement in lessons as was the case with the subjects of this critical incident, will have a positive effect on their self-confidence as confident individuals. The use of positive reinforcement also meets the Welsh Government standard of 'celebrating success, recognising excellence and sharing both' under the education improvement plan, *Qualified for Life*.¹⁸ By gaining confidence in their academic abilities, this will boost a student's self-esteem and self confidence in general because they are being recognised for their successes

¹⁵ Donaldson, G., (2015), *Successful Futures: Looking at the Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*, p.3. Available at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/successful-futures-a-summary-of-professor-graham-donaldsons-report.pdf> (Accessed on 12/10/2020)

¹⁶ Donaldson, G., (2015), *Successful Futures: Looking at the Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*, pp.29-30. Available at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/successful-futures.pdf> (Accessed on 12/10/2020)

¹⁷ Donaldson, G., *Successful Futures: Looking at the Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*, p.31

¹⁸ Welsh Government, (2014), *Qualified for Life*, p.7. Available at: https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/21054/1/141001-qualified-for-life-en_Redacted.pdf#:~:text=Qualified%20for%20life%20the%20Welsh%20Government%E2%80%99s%20plan%20for,2012%2C%20set%20out%20our%20reform%20journey%20to%202015. (Accessed on 12/10/2020)

and achievements from a figure of authority. When the teacher chooses to make praises in front of these pupils' peers too, it further aids their self-confidence, emotional and social development because they can receive positive admiration and feedback from those they want to be accepted by, their peers.

By furthering their self-confidence and raising self esteem through praise for good practice, it also subsequently impacts their ability as 'capable, ambitious learners' under another of Donaldson's purposes (Donaldson, 2015).¹⁹ As learners are rewarded for good academic practice with high praise, it allows them to establish higher standards for themselves in future learning because they have received the positive acknowledgment of their abilities and skills. By using phrases such as 'that's right, your pronunciation is perfect' and 'I've been so impressed by your work the last few lessons, I'll make sure to pass it on to your head of year' as the teacher in the observation did, it demonstrates to the pupil that their efforts are being acknowledged (Appendix 1.2).^{20 21} It also demonstrated that their answers were academically correct, which in turn allows them to continue to challenge themselves further academically as learners. This demonstrates the importance of developing ambitious learners, as it will allow more children to positively engage with a subject and push themselves for greater academic achievement. Hopefully, as a consequence, this will further their attainment in that subject.

¹⁹ Donaldson, G., *Successful Futures: Looking at the Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*, p.29

²⁰ Appendix 1.2

²¹ Appendix 1.2

Literature Review

By focusing on this critical incident, a number of different research areas have been identified in order to explore their impact further. The first key area is behaviour management. In this critical incident example, positive reinforcement became a behaviour management technique because the teacher's praise gained a positive reaction from the targeted students and resulted in their behaviour becoming more settled and focused immediately thereafter. The use of praise and positive reinforcement in the classroom has been the subject of many studies, with most looking into its positive effects on behaviour management. Elliott and Busse wrote extensively on how positive reinforcement aids in decreasing misbehaviour, increasing pupil engagement and helping create a supportive learning atmosphere for both pupils and teachers (Elliott and Busse, 1991).²² Evertson and Weinstein focused on how creating a nurturing environment for student's academic and social-emotional learning was a strong classroom behaviour management technique (Evertson and Weinstein, 2006).²³ One of the key actions in order to create this environment is providing appropriate interventions to students with behaviour management issues because this in turn has an effect on positive classroom management. An example of an appropriate intervention is the use of positive reinforcement.

While not seen as a traditional behaviour management technique, The American Educational Research Association links positive reinforcement to several key areas of classroom management including as a teacher disciplinary technique, refining the interaction between students and teachers, improving student self-discipline and developing students' social-emotional development (Korpershoek, et al., 2016).²⁴ The technique of using rewards and punishments to control pupils behaviour was popularised under Skinner's behaviourist theory (Pritchard, 2013).²⁵ Pritchard noted how positive reinforcement is a form of operant

²² Elliott, S. N., and Busse, R. T., (1991), 'Social Skills Assessment and Intervention with Children and Adolescents: Guidelines for Assessment and Training Procedures', *School Psychology International*, 12(1-2), pp. 63-83

²³ Evertson, C.M, and Weinstein, C.S., (Eds) *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice and contemporary issues* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006), pp.3-15

²⁴ Korpershoek, Hanke, et al. (2016), 'A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Classroom Management Strategies and Classroom Management Programs on Students' Academic, Behavioral, Emotional, and Motivational Outcomes', *Review of Educational Research*, 86(3), p.646

²⁵ Pritchard, A., *Ways of Learning: Learning Theories and Learning Styles in the Classroom*, (London: Routledge, 2013), Ch. 2

conditioning within education, as pupils voluntarily choose the behaviours they undertake by associating it with a consequence (Pritchard, 2013).²⁶ It involves shaping pupils throughout the education system and outside, in their homes or workplaces, into recognising and learning the accepted norms of behaviour in society. When pupils perform these desired behaviours, they can receive a variety of positive reinforcement rewards such as praise, points or attention, which reinforce and condition them to continue the cycle of accepted behaviours. This works in the opposite effect too, where pupils behaving outside the socially accepted standards of behaviour, are met with negative consequences such as punishments or warnings. There is also the behaviourist idea that students learn from past experience, a form of classical conditioning. Watson popularised the use of classical conditioning theory in humans, where it linked emotions with natural human responses to an incident (Rilling, 2000).²⁷ For example, a pupil with a dysfunctional home life may associate a teacher shouting with a violence outcome and react poorly out of a natural fear response. Skinner argued that children with negative past experiences within education, are those most likely to benefit from positive reinforcement techniques in order to further their self confidence in their academic capabilities (Pritchard, 2013).²⁸

Bennett describes behaviour as a curriculum with ‘a combination of skills, aptitudes, habits, inclinations, values and knowledge’ which can be taught to students (Bennett, 2020).²⁹ When considering how effective positive reinforcement can be on improving classroom behaviour, Bennett divides the contributing factors into two categories. Firstly, factors of the student that can affect behaviour include their home environment, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), peer pressure and academic ability. On the other hand, teacher-based factors led that can affect pupil behaviour may include undemanding or too demanding content, transition between key stages, unclear instruction and too much teacher led activity (Bennett, 2020).³⁰ These contributing factors can all be identified upon a teacher’s critical reflection into the hidden curriculum, which describes the deeper structures that produced the incident (Tripp, 1993) or, as Tripp would also champion, their evaluation of ‘non-events’ as it can be just as

²⁶ Pritchard, A., *Ways of Learning: Learning Theories and Learning Styles in the Classroom*, Ch.2

²⁷ Rilling, M., (2000). ‘How the Challenge of Explaining Learning Influenced the Origins and Development of John B. Watson’s Behaviorism’, *The American Journal of Psychology*, 113(2), pp. 275-301

²⁸ Pritchard, A., *Ways of Learning: Learning Theories and Learning Styles in the Classroom*, Ch.2

²⁹ Bennett, T., *Running the Room: The teacher’s guide to behaviour* (London: Routledge, 2020), p.26

³⁰ Bennett, T., *Running the Room: The teacher’s guide to behaviour*, p.26

important to identify why certain reactions did not occur within a classroom as the ones that did (Tripp, 2012).^{31 32} By evaluating why certain events did not occur, using an example of pupil disruption escalating from the critical incident, it allows the observer to better understand what behaviour management techniques are successful and help develop a pedagogy for future practice.

The second area for investigation is the impact of positive reinforcement on a student's emotional wellbeing. Howard stated how 'mental health is the foundation of healthy development' in children and this suggests that having a healthy self-image and strong mental health is essential in order for children to develop throughout childhood and adolescence, with mental health often directly impacting their progress within education (Howard, 2017).³³ The promotion of children as healthy, confident individuals has become a core concept within the new curriculum, as one of the Four Purposes is developing students into 'healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society' (Donaldson, 2015).³⁴ This new curriculum focus works to aid children to develop the skills and tools to support themselves in life after education, as well as within the school system. This involves 'building their mental and emotional well-being by developing confidence, resilience and empathy' and a technique staff can use to support this is through positive reinforcement (Donaldson, 2015).³⁵ Yeager and Dweck found that students who were taught that their intellectual and social capabilities were qualities that could be developed in school, were more likely to have higher educational attainment and better mental health resilience in regards to their handling of stress and set-backs (Yeager and Dweck, 2012).³⁶ An effective method for teachers to instil these beliefs into pupils is evidently positive reinforcement, using tangible qualities, through rewards and intangible, in the form of praise.

³¹ Tripp, D., *Critical Incidents in Teaching: Developing Professional Judgement*, p.8

³² Tripp, D., *Critical Incidents in Teaching (Classic Edition): Developing Professional Judgement*, p.45

³³ Howard, C., et al, *Children's Mental Health & Emotional Well-being in Primary Schools*, (London: SAGE Publications, 2017), p.3

³⁴ Donaldson, G., *Successful Futures: Looking at the Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*, pp.29-31

³⁵ Donaldson, G., *Successful Futures: Looking at the Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*, pp.29-31

³⁶ Yeager, D., and Dweck, C., (2012) 'Mindsets that promote resilience: when students believe that personal characteristics can be developed', *Educational Psychologist*, 47(4), pp.302-314

Positive reinforcement is a pattern tool used by educators, where a reward is given to a student after they display an adherence to desired behaviour patterns and in turn, make this behaviour more likely to occur in the future. Skinner's work noted how this type of teaching technique was particularly useful to children who lack confidence in their academic capabilities, potentially due to past failures or a perceived inability (Pritchard, 2013).³⁷ Especially where classes are of mixed ability and the number of children with recognised ALN continues to rise, it is understandable how students may compare themselves to their immediate peers. As a consequence, their self-confidence and overall mental well-being within the school environment is particularly fragile. Therefore, the mental health and self-esteem of pupils is a primary concern of secondary schools in Wales, particularly given its explicit references within the new 2022 curriculum. By singling out pupils for individualised, consistent positive reinforcement, this will directly boost their confidence in their abilities. Observational studies have demonstrated that by teachers focusing on mistakes or undertaking repeated negative reinforcement, pupils are more likely to disengage and undertake problematic behaviour because of their perceived reaffirmations of their own inabilities through this negative reinforcement (Schieltz, et al., 2017).³⁸ Tripp argues that while a pupil's behaviour may be interpreted as negative, in reality, using the example of pupil "bad behaviour", if the wider context is considered then it may have been an appropriate response for the pupil; it has the potential to be 'an understandable response to an underlying problem ... (a) symptom of a problem, not the problem itself' (Tripp, 2012).³⁹ Furthermore, a critical incident involving negative behaviour can be interpreted as a positive experience when on reflection, it can be a learning experience for the teacher involved and others considering the incident second hand.

³⁷ Pritchard, A., *Ways of Learning: Learning Theories and Learning Styles in the Classroom*, Ch.2

³⁸ Schieltz, K.M., Wacker, D.P. and Roamni, P.W., (2017), 'Effects of Signaled Positive Reinforcement on Problem Behavior Maintained by Negative Reinforcement', *Journal of Behavioral Education*, 26(2), pp. 137-150

³⁹ Tripp, D., *Critical Incidents in Teaching (Classic Edition): Developing Professional Judgement*, pp.29-30

Reflection

To undertake reflection is important for future teaching practice, as Pollard points out it can allow teachers to progress and improve the quality of their teaching because they can reflect on how they behaved in a situation, both for the good and the bad (Pollard, 2008).⁴⁰ It also allows a consideration of an incident once removed from the moment, where the emotion or surrounding context is no longer present and reflection can be more considered and level. Brookfield notes how that for teachers developing a rationale for their decisions and practices through reflection, it can positively impact their own personal emotional well-being, as well as that of the pupils under their care (Brookfield, 2017).⁴¹ Schon identified two types of reflection in professional education practice as “in action” and “on action”. Reflection-in-action involves the educator reshaping an ongoing situation while it is unfolding and test different approaches to generate different responses from pupils to see which produces the best outcome (Schon, 1983).⁴² This is in comparison with a reflection-on-action approach, which allows the teacher to reflect on how a situation played out after it has occurred (Schon, 1983).⁴³ In this critical incident it would appear the teacher would have undertaken reflection-in-action by using her past experiences to judge what would be the best approach to ending this negative pupil behaviour. As the observer, I undertook reflection-on-action by reflecting on the teacher’s actions within this critical incident in order to determine how effective this approach could be to my own future pedagogy and teaching practice.

The way the teacher handled this critical incident resulted in a positive outcome for both herself, the pupils directly involved and the wider class because all were able to engage with the subsequent lesson tasks with little to no further disruption. Mohammed analyses how when a student refuses to undertake a lesson activity – as the example here was both students being disengaged with an independent question and answer task and consequently, began attempting to disrupt others undertaking the task – it makes the teacher reflect on their teaching style (Mohammed, 2016).⁴⁴ This could be for example, analysing and weighing

⁴⁰ Pollard, A., *Reflective Teaching in Schools*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2008) (5th edn), pp.75-100

⁴¹ Brookfield, S., *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*, (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), pp.79-96

⁴² Schon, D., *The Reflective Practitioner: How professionals think in action*, (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1983), pp.21-75

⁴³ Schon, D., *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*, pp.267-285

⁴⁴ Mohammed, R., (May 2016) ‘Critical incident analysis: reflections of a teacher educator’ *University of East London*, 6(1), pp.25-29

up the appropriateness of independent learning in comparison with other forms such as group or paired tasks, for an exercise such as this. While the use of positive reinforcement gained a positive outcome in this particular example, as the pupils were evidenced visually and audibly to appreciate the teachers comments and subsequently became engaged with the rest of the lesson in a respectful and focused manner, this was not the only response the teacher could have taken.

As stated, the positive reinforcement technique used by the teacher in this critical incident was evidently successful. However, this does not mean that other behaviour management techniques could not have also been utilised and would have potentially produced the same end result of the rest of the lesson continuing unproblematically. Using Brookfield's lenses for critically reflective practice, we can examine the incident through an autobiographical standpoint, the pupil's eyes, a colleague's viewpoint or using theoretical literature (Brookfield, 1998).⁴⁵ Using an autobiographical or colleagues lens, I can theorise what I would do if the incident arose during my teaching practice and any potential alternative approaches I may undertake. By learning from their own personal experiences, a teacher will be cautious not to facilitate a negative cycle, with Brookfield using the example of a teacher that was underestimated as a pupil will be careful not to do the same to their own pupils and as a consequence, will be more likely to give the benefit of the doubt or provide second chances (Brookfield, 1998).⁴⁶

While ignoring mildly disruptive behaviour is an established classroom management technique amongst professionals, in this critical incident by ignoring the behaviour it would likely have only escalated into higher levels of disruption and begun to affect other members of the class' learning experience. However, an alternative approach could have been to make the task a paired or group activity. The pupils who were disengaging with the work were those who had been observed to have a pattern of disengaging from lesson tasks quicker than other pupils in the class, during other lessons throughout the day. Given this evidence, a potential solution to avoiding the disengagement and disruption would have been to have the pupils work together collaboratively, as potentially, a reason for this disengagement could have

⁴⁵ Brookfield, S., (1998) 'Critically Reflective Practice', *The Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*, (18), pp.197-205

⁴⁶ Brookfield, S., 'Critically Reflective Practice', p.198

been that the task was too challenging. It is unknown whether there were any underlying Additional Learning Needs of these pupils but if so, this should be factored into account in the planning of lesson tasks that require prolonged independent study. Under an autobiographical reflective model, the pupils being disengaged with the work could have been because it was either too challenging or not challenging enough for them. Therefore, by having a background knowledge of the capabilities of each pupil, in fitting with Tripp's hidden curriculum theory, a teacher will be able to assess whether this is a task that would allow the majority of class pupils to engage better if it was a shared task with other students such as a paired exercise or through an interactive activity (Tripp, 1993).⁴⁷ This requires in depth lesson planning and a knowledge of the pupils academic abilities within each class.

This critical incident will inform my own teaching practice as it has been demonstrated how effective the use of direct, individualised praise and positive reinforcement can be on diffusing a disruptive situation. After the use of positive reinforcement about their academic capabilities in this subject, in reference to both previous and ongoing work, the pupil's disruption quickly dissipated, and they engaged with the remainder of the work and subsequent lesson tasks. The use of the praise and positive reinforcement also gained a visible positive response from the pupil's, who felt they had the respect of the class teacher and in turn, were willing to provide her with respect also. This commendation of the abilities and mutual feeling of respect was likely the causation of the pupil's choice to focus. If we assume Brookfield's lens of reflecting through the learner's eyes, this response would have potentially made the task feel easier or more within the pupil's range because of the encouragement they received from the teacher (Brookfield, 2013).⁴⁸ However, this is assumption as under the observation, the participants opinions and feelings on the incident were not recorded and their reflections not accounted for. This incident is an excellent showcase of an effective classroom behaviour management technique in practice.

⁴⁷ Tripp, D., *Critical Incidents in Teaching: Developing Professional Judgement*, pp.7-8

⁴⁸ Brookfield, S., 'Critically Reflective Practice', pp.197-205

Conclusion

In conclusion, critical incident reflections allow teachers to gain a number of insights into their practice. As stated, Brookfield suggests critical reflection allows teachers to take informed actions and develop a rationale for their practice, which in turn betters both the practice of their teaching and positively impacts their mental and emotional wellbeing as individuals (Brookfield, 2017).⁴⁹ This critical incident observation met 'The Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership' as it enabled reflection and allowed me to identify areas for further professional development such as behaviour management.⁵⁰ It showcased an effective form of behaviour management in the face of a potentially highly disruptive classroom incident and also, a way in which to develop the emotional well-being of the pupils involved by praising their academic abilities and thus, boosting their self-confidence. Without semi-structured observation and critical reflection, this incident may not have registered as an important example of effective classroom management. Here, the situation did not become highly disruptive as the teacher never allowed it to get to that point because the use of positive reinforcement halted the behaviour before it escalated into a highly negative critical incident.

⁴⁹ Brookfield, S., *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*, pp.79-96

⁵⁰ Welsh Government, (2020), *Professional Standards*, p.6. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/460a740a-7bf1-4c7b-b4ae-348ae380879b/professional-standards-further-education-teachers-work-based-learning-practitioners-wales.pdf> (Accessed on 20/10/2020)

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Appendices

1

What is the purpose of the 'case study' and 'critical incident' bridging activity?

You will recall that a 'case study' can be thought of as 'an instance in action' according to Nisbet and Watt (1984 p.72 (in Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2006 p.253) and that Tripp (2012) observes that deep analysis of 'critical incidents' can inform teacher judgement and practice and although they can be serious in nature, they may also be observed moments that are 'funny, sad, witty....boring, good' or possibly even 'trivial.' For Tripp, observation and deeper analysis of the implications of the observed incident offers rare opportunity for deeper understanding of your development and pedagogy.

By the end of the test phase, you will have identified a small handful of incidents that hold the potential to open up deeper reflection and study (for the assignment) in relation to two or three areas that have been highlighted at university in the module content. In this way, it is you as the researcher that makes the incident 'critical.' You will have observed up to three lessons recalling the central importance of maintaining the respect, dignity and anonymity of all participants (staff and pupils) at all times (BERA 2018).

The form below can be used as a framework for observing learners and learning experiences. As is often advised (Cohen Manion and Morrison 2006), you may wish to make short notes only during the observation in case you miss an important element of a potential 'incident' whilst writing. Researchers are advised to make detailed notes as soon as is practically possible following the observation.

IMPORTANT:

Use the forms below for your observations and to record incidents. You will need to observe four teaching episodes and identify four potential incidents. It is a requirement of the assignment that these be included with the appendices to your research assignment. You will be able to access copies of these forms on Moodle.

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date and time, year group: 29/09 (Year 8) - 12:40
Lesson details: (Context and focus - /AoLE/subject- is it near start of end of unit of study? Indoors/outdoors? Ability range? Any particularly relevant information). → Spanish - mixed ability class right at the beginning of the course / beginners → Lesson focus: numbers and pronunciation
Classroom culture (What is the classroom 'vibe.'? What do attitudes, dispositions, behaviours towards learning seem like at this point in time?) → positive atmosphere - plenty of positive reinforcement → pupils initially excitable and unfocused - lesson straight after 45 min lunch break - but this lessened quickly once teacher engaged class with objectives of the lesson

1.1**Objectives**

(What happens in the environment that communicates the purpose of the experiences?
What can be observed regarding the way lesson activities relate to these purposes?)

- lesson objective: learn + identify numbers 1-15 in Spanish and use to answer questions about their age in conversation
- identifying numbers, pronunciation and conversation skills

Direction

(What can be observed that helps learners understand what they are engaging in?
What in the environment helps them understand how to achieve well?)

- Clear 3 point success criteria provided at the start of lesson
- allows structure and to understand lesson targets

Access and challenge

(What can be observed in the environment that enables engagement of learners? What can be observed regarding levels of challenge?)

- interactive quizzes
- partner work - practicing conversation skills
- Challenging as beginning to learn a new language (all)
- short tasks throughout lesson which utilised different skills (writing, verbal conversation, identification) - shorter tasks as teacher aware the class is more likely to disengage on long, similar tasks - individualised learning to each class

Assessment

(Can anything be observed about how student's existing knowledge is used? Can anything be observed regarding the development of knowledge during or after the experience?)

- individual pupil to teacher question and answer session at the end of the lesson - this allowed teacher to assess knowledge & pronunciation of terms learnt in the lesson
- Class quiz - identifying terms of the lesson (1-15) on a teacher picked basis

Specifics / Critical Incidents

(Are there moments which cause you to consider aspects of practice when you come across them in future teaching?)

1.2

CRITICAL INCIDENT IDENTIFICATION RECORD	
Details relevant to the research context. Date/time. Age/Stage of group. People involved. Contextual information from field notes.	29/09 (Year 8) • SPANISH • Mixed ability - beginners • Class of 25 • AoLE: Languages, Literacy and Communication
What happened? A detailed description of what you observed and what thoughts on pedagogy and practice occurred to you as a result, looking towards your research.	Teacher continually provided praise/positive reinforcement to the class as a whole. Teacher also focused individual praise on certain pupils (who had been observed to behave in a disruptive manner in other lessons) - examples included 'I've been so impressed by your work in the last few lessons' and 'That's right, your pronunciation is perfect.' This continued positive reinforcement gained positive verbal feedback from the pupils about the teacher, 'I like how she respects us so we respect her back then.' Their behaviour was notably more disciplined after this praise than at the beginning of the lesson, where ~~at the beginning~~ a group (3-4) of pupils were initially very unsettled - link to it being the lesson straight after a 45 min lunch break? → Pedagogy: the effectiveness of positive reinforcement/praise as a method of behaviour management - aids healthy, confident individuals purpose by boosting pupil's self confidence in their academic abilities through praise (Donaldson)

1.3

CRITICAL INCIDENT IDENTIFICATION RECORD	
Details relevant to the research context. Date/time. Age/Stage of group. People involved. Contextual information from field notes.	29/09 (Year 8) • SPANISH • Mixed ability – beginners to language • Class of 25 • Lesson task – identifying, pronouncing and conversing using numbers 1–15.
What happened? A detailed description of what you observed and what thoughts on pedagogy and practice occurred to you as a result, looking towards your research.	Teacher asked 'Who needs the task back on the whiteboard?', where one pupil responded loudly, 'Well me because I'm dyslexic obviously.' This admission gained no verbal acknowledgement from the teacher but was met with laughter by members of the class. However, the teacher did put the task back onto the whiteboard and continued the lesson. → Pedagogy: the teacher chose not to draw further attention to the pupil's omission and did not join in the laughter of the pupil's; instead choosing to non-verbally acknowledge the pupil's request by putting the task back on the whiteboard - Four Purposes: (Healthy, confident individuals) By not joining in the class laughter at the pupil's expense, the teacher would have boosted the pupil's self confidence / self esteem.

You will recall that a 'case study' can be thought of as 'an instance in action' according to Nisbet and Watt (1984 p.72 (in Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2006 p.253) and that Tripp (2012) observes that deep analysis of 'critical incidents' can inform teacher judgement and practice and although they can be serious in nature, they may also be observed moments that are 'funny, sad, witty....boring, good' or possibly even 'trivial.' For Tripp, observation and deeper analysis of the implications of the observed incident offers rare opportunity for deeper understanding of your development and pedagogy.

By the end of the test phase, you will have identified a small handful of incidents that hold the potential to open up deeper reflection and study (for the assignment) in relation to two or three areas that have been highlighted at university in the module content. In this way, it is you as the researcher that makes the incident 'critical.' You will have observed up to three lessons recalling the central importance of maintaining the respect, dignity and anonymity of all participants (staff and pupils) at all times (BERA 2018).

The form below can be used as a framework for observing learners and learning experiences. As is often advised (Cohen Manion and Morrison 2006), you may wish to make short notes only during the observation in case you miss an important element of a potential 'incident' whilst writing. Researchers are advised to make detailed notes as soon as is practically possible following the observation.

IMPORTANT:

Use the forms below for your observations and to record incidents. You will need to observe four teaching episodes and identify four potential incidents. It is a requirement of the assignment that these be included with the appendices to your research assignment. You will be able to access copies of these forms on Moodle.

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date and time, year group:	29/09 at 11:00 AM (Year 8)
Lesson details: (Context and focus -/AoLE/subject- is it near start of end of unit of study? Indoors/outdoors? Ability range? Any particularly relevant information).	→ Mixed ability → ICT → Lesson focus: Presentation styles to appropriate audiences → Indoor lesson on school laptops (individual) → Task: Choosing different fonts for different audiences (info poster)
Classroom culture (What is the classroom 'vibe.'? What do attitudes, dispositions, behaviours towards learning seem like at this point in time?)	→ Lesson after ^{break} lunch so pupils are excitable and less focused (initially) - because of their time outside the classroom → However, pupils appear to be looking forward to the lesson and enjoy the scheme of work - creative, independent learning
Objectives (What happens in the environment that communicates the purpose of the experiences?)	

What can be observed regarding the way lesson activities relate to these purposes?

- Students given the majority of the lesson to undertake independent learning - creating their own fonts, applying them to their posters and continuing to add information onto them

Direction

(What can be observed that helps learners understand what they are engaging in? What in the environment helps them understand how to achieve well?)

- Examples provided on the whiteboard - remained on screen throughout the lesson
- Positive encouragement / references back to previous examples of strong work
- Success criteria verbally provided - create own font, apply it to their posters and continue to add information onto them

Access and challenge

(What can be observed in the environment that enables engagement of learners? What can be observed regarding levels of challenge?)

- IT resources proved a challenge - online resources were restricted
- All learners were able to engage with the tasks (some quicker than others) - no set time to complete tasks so children allowed to go at their own pace

Assessment

(Can anything be observed about how student's existing knowledge is used? Can anything be observed regarding the development of knowledge during or after the experience?)

- References back to previous lessons in terms of websites to access, how to transfer data and save it on the online learning space (HWB).
- Told the work will be assessed by next lesson

Specifics / Critical Incidents

(Are there moments which cause you to consider aspects of practice when you come across them in future teaching?)

- Behaviour post breaktime - how to engage / focus pupils after they have taken an extended break

2.2

CRITICAL INCIDENT IDENTIFICATION RECORD

Details relevant to the research context. Date/time. Age/Stage of group. People involved. Contextual information from field notes.	29/09/20 - 11:00 AM • Year 8 (12-13y10) • Class of 25 • ICT lesson (3rd lesson / after break) • Lesson focus: presentation fonts to appropriate audiences
What happened? A detailed description of what you observed and what thoughts on pedagogy and practice occurred to you as a result, looking towards your research.	Teacher asked an individual question to pupil and was met with no response. Teacher waited approx 10 seconds before re-phrasing the question to be more specific. Pupil quickly produced the correct answer as a consequence and was met with positive encouragement/comendation by the teacher. The pupil continued to engage with the tasks set and completed the success criteria. → Pedagogy: Donaldson's Four Purposes - • Ambitious, capable learners - pupil demonstrating their academic abilities in individual learning tasks • Healthy, confident individuals - by rephrasing the question and allowing a significant amount of time for the pupil to answer, it encouraged the pupil to answer and boost their self-confidence in their academic ability - this was aided further by the positive reinforcement of the teacher

What is the purpose of the 'case study' and 'critical incident' bridging activity?

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By the end of the test phase, you will have identified a small handful of incidents that hold the potential to open up deeper reflection and study (for the assignment) in relation to two or three areas that have been highlighted at university in the module content. In this way, it is you as the researcher that makes the incident 'critical.' You will have observed up to three lessons recalling the central importance of maintaining the respect, dignity and anonymity of all participants (staff and pupils) at all times (BERA 2018).

The form below can be used as a framework for observing learners and learning experiences. As is often advised (Cohen Manion and Morrison 2006), you may wish to make short notes only during the observation in case you miss an important element of a potential 'incident' whilst writing. Researchers are advised to make detailed notes as soon as is practically possible following the observation.

IMPORTANT:

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OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date and time, year group: 29/09 - Year 8 (9:45 AM)
Lesson details: (Context and focus -/AoLE/subject- is it near start of end of unit of study? Indoors/outdoors? Ability range? Any particularly relevant information). → Music → Indoors → Mixed ability class → Lesson topic: Identifying musical notes
Classroom culture (What is the classroom 'vibe.'? What do attitudes, dispositions, behaviours towards learning seem like at this point in time?) → Willing to engage but frustrations evident in pupils at limitations to music lessons that COVID posed (no singing)

3.1

Objectives (What happens in the environment that communicates the purpose of the experiences? What can be observed regarding the way lesson activities relate to these purposes?) → Teacher uses sheet music of popular songs to demonstrate how different notes interact → Clear instructions + success criteria given
Direction (What can be observed that helps learners understand what they are engaging in? What in the environment helps them understand how to achieve well?) → Teachers has class do example first, all together, which allowed them to understand the method needed for their independent work - identifying musical notes
Access and challenge (What can be observed in the environment that enables engagement of learners? What can be observed regarding levels of challenge?) → Linking with popular, current culture (songs of recent times) will engage students
Assessment (Can anything be observed about how student's existing knowledge is used? Can anything be observed regarding the development of knowledge during or after the experience?) → Learning musical notes and how to identify them visually throughout lesson
Specifics / Critical Incidents (Are there moments which cause you to consider aspects of practice when you come across them in future teaching?)

3.2

CRITICAL INCIDENT IDENTIFICATION RECORD

Details relevant to the research context. Date/time. Age/Stage of group. People involved. Contextual information from field notes.	29/09 (Year 8) • 9:45 AM - MUSIC (2nd lesson of the day) • Mixed ability - start of topic • Class of 25 • ~~Identifying~~ - identifying musical notes - Lesson focus
What happened? A detailed description of what you observed and what thoughts on pedagogy and practice occurred to you as a result, looking towards your research.	One pupil (who presented no issues of behaviour in lesson 1) was not engaging with the lesson task (identifying music notes in individual workbooks). The pupil was not engaging with the work and proceeded to be disruptive; this included shouting out, distracting others and eventually leaving the classroom without permission. The teacher provided several verbal and written warnings to pupil - after unauthorised exit, SLT were called to speak to pupil by teacher. This appeared to settle pupil's disruptive behaviour and lesson continued uninterrupted. → pedagogy: behaviour management - the need for clear & consistent boundaries within the classroom. A set number of warnings and a consistent set of levels to these warnings (verbal, written, SLT etc) is necessary in order to promote the concept of consequences - fit within Donaldson's Four Purposes (Healthy, confident individuals - in order to be valued members of society, the students must understand & learn that unacceptable behaviour will not be allowed in a school or wider society.)

What is the purpose of the 'case study' and 'critical incident' bridging activity?

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OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date and time, year group: 29/09 (Year 8) - 2:00

Lesson details: (Context and focus - /AoLE/subject- is it near start of end of unit of study? Indoors/outdoors? Ability range? Any particularly relevant information).

→ History - mixed ability class

→ Lesson focus: Source work - identifying different types of sources and discussing their pros/cons

→ Last lesson of the day

Classroom culture

(What is the classroom 'vibe.'? What do attitudes, dispositions, behaviours towards learning seem like at this point in time?)

→ Last lesson of the day / Straight after lunch - increased + higher levels of disengagement than previous lessons

→ Poor pupil behaviour linked to topic disengagement, extended break time and it being near the end of the day

4.1

Objectives (What happens in the environment that communicates the purpose of the experiences? What can be observed regarding the way lesson activities relate to these purposes?) → clear success criteria →
Direction (What can be observed that helps learners understand what they are engaging in? What in the environment helps them understand how to achieve well?) → clear success criteria to refer back to → Lesson recaps from previous sourcework lesson
Access and challenge (What can be observed in the environment that enables engagement of learners? What can be observed regarding levels of challenge?) → mixture of individual, paired and group work
Assessment (Can anything be observed about how student's existing knowledge is used? Can anything be observed regarding the development of knowledge during or after the experience?) → Recaps back to skills & knowledge accessed in previous lesson on source analysis
Specifics / Critical Incidents (Are there moments which cause you to consider aspects of practice when you come across them in future teaching?) → Post lunchtime deterioration in pupil behaviour - how to re-engage pupils after an extended break