

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.

Word Count = 4,175

Introduction

The introduction of the Welsh Government's new digital competence framework (DCF) is one of the most significant changes in the new Welsh curriculum (Donaldson, 2015). When the framework was launched in 2016 Kirsty Williams, Education Secretary, said "*this radical new approach is about embedding digital skills and knowledge in everything our pupils do as they progress through school*" (Welsh Government, 2016). However, present research into the benefits of computer use in school remains mixed, with many studies identifying negative outcomes with increased computer use (OECD, 2015).

This research examines a critical incident observed in a Year 8 lesson in a school in South Wales, where laptops were used by learners for activities unrelated to the task. This non-productive activity subsequently impacted on the quality of learning in the lesson.

The critical incident has been reflected upon by the researcher, alongside detailed analysis of academic literature in order to identify potential next steps for teaching and learning. This reflective approach has been widely recognised as being an important component of effective teaching, with reflection forming a key part of the new professional standards for teaching and leadership in Wales (Hwb, 2019a).

The approach of using a critical incident as the focus of detailed research was pioneered by Tripp (2012) and provides the researcher with well-defined topic areas to complete further research. The critical incident selected has been reflected upon using the Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) model (see Appendix 2). The capture and subsequent structured reflection of critical incidents assisted the researcher in identifying potential causes of the critical incident and further areas for evaluation.

As well as the impact that digital technology can have in the classroom, this assignment also examines how classroom seating arrangements can impact learning; and the use of assessment for learning. In the *Conclusion* section, this assignment proposes some potential ideas which could be beneficial in future lessons.

Observation

School and Class Context

The lesson observations discussed within this assignment were conducted at a large secondary school located in a city in South Wales. This is a mixed gender English medium school that provides key stage 3, 4 and 5 education with an age range of 11-19 years. The pupil population in the school is approximately 1700, including around 350 in the sixth form.

According to mylocalschool.gov.wales (2019), in 2018, 6.5 % of the pupils in the school were eligible for free school meal, which is well below the national average for Wales of 16.6 %.

In the most recent Estyn Report (Estyn, 2018) the school was judged to be Excellent in all five inspection areas. The school is also in the GREEN support category and is a pioneer school, working with Welsh Government, and other schools, to develop the new curriculum in Wales.

For the purposes of this assignment, the placement school will be referred to as school x in accordance with good practice guidance for the completion of educational research (BERA, 2018).

Methodology

This research has been completed following the observation of Year 8 lessons at school x. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) provide much detail regarding the benefits of observation as a method of gathering information. By capturing what is taking place *in situ*, rather than relying on second-hand accounts from participants, observation can be considered more reliable. Observations in an educational environment allows the researcher to capture information on the physical setting; the learners' behaviour; how learners interact between themselves and with the teacher; and the pedagogical approach used by the teacher.

Observations can be classified as being structured or unstructured (or anywhere in between on this continuum). A structured observation will have pre-defined areas of focus. In structured observations, a hypothesis is already decided, and the observation focuses on this predetermined area. A potential pitfall of structured observation is that there is a risk that conscious or unconscious bias can impact the results, when the researcher already has a hypothesis in mind. In contrast, an unstructured observation is considerably less clear about what is being looked for. Unstructured observations can be considered "*hypothesis generating*" whereas structured observations are "*hypothesis testing*". (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011)

The researcher for this assignment used a predominantly unstructured observation approach where the areas for deeper research appeared through completing the observations themselves.

In conducting this research, the observations completed have identified critical incidents for further analysis. Tripp (2012) advocates the critical incident approach to analysing classroom observations. A critical incident does not need to be a significant or unsafe event, but it should be important or relevant. It can refer to an event that impacts a number of learners or one individual. The identification, deep reflection and analysis of critical incidents provides increased understanding of the learning, and allows for development of a response strategy to improve learning in the future.

Observations for this research have been completed using an observation field notes template that has been adapted from the work completed by Fletcher Wood (2016). These field notes provide a step by step pro-forma to focus on classroom culture; lesson objectives; direction; access and challenge; assessment; and capturing critical incidents / moments during a lesson. This simple approach to lesson observation was considered appropriate for this study where the researcher had limited previous experience of classroom observation.

Following the lesson observation, the researcher reflected on the critical incidents identified. It is important that reflections following observations are completed systematically in order to be able to plan an appropriate response (Tripp, 2012). Therefore, the Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model (see Appendix 2) of reflection has been used in this work to further analyse the identified critical incidents. This activity allowed the researcher to confirm the aspects of the critical incident that would be examined in more detail. Further detail on this approach to reflection can be found in the *Reflection, Evaluation & Next Steps* section of this assignment.

The observations completed for this assignment were predominantly completed as non-participant observation. This observation technique involves the researcher watching the participants of the study without taking an active role in the lesson. This approach was preferred in order to capture the behaviours of the participants as they would normally behave. Whilst the non-participant approach should limit any change in behaviour, a risk remains that the mere presence of the observer can result in participants behaving differently. This effect is known as the Hawthorne effect (Payne & Payne, 2004). It may be possible to lessen this effect by observing via an unobtrusive video camera. However, for this research this was not practical and could still potentially result in a change of behaviour in the participants.

It is recognised that other observation strategies could have been utilised for this research and in this section these strategies will be briefly discussed.

Classroom dynamics can be assessed and analysed through the construction of a sociogram. This technique provides a graphical representation showing pupil's interactions and friendship groups. They can be particularly useful to test a perception that a particular child is isolated in the class. However, this technique can provide only limited evidence of the social relationships in a class. Whilst a sociogram may show which children are interacting, it does not provide any information on the quality of those interactions. In addition, this approach can be unreliable as children's friendships frequently change (Papatheodorou, Luff and Gill, 2011). The construction of a sociogram can be considered a structured observation method (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). To produce an accurate sociogram the researcher would need to decide on this approach before entering the lesson. This can lead to the researcher missing potentially other interesting activity during the observation. Therefore, this approach was not used for this assignment.

Furthermore, another alternative observation and reflection method considered was the use of Vignettes. Vignettes are an effective method of assessing beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and norms within social science. Finch (1987), describes Vignettes as short stories, in written or pictorial form, about hypothetical characters on which participants can offer opinion or comment. For the purposes of this assignment, the use of Vignettes to capture information was not deemed appropriate.

Critical incident linked to Donaldson's Four Purposes

The critical incident that is evaluated and analysed within this assignment occurred in a Year 8, classroom based, Physical Education (P.E.) lesson. The topic being covered in the lesson was hydration. In the lesson, the main task for pupils was to work in small groups to first, prepare a script, and then record this script as a video. This required the use of laptops to conduct research; produce the script; and to film the final video.

The classroom was set up with a series of tables which each sat 4-5 pupils. The way in which the learners were sat resulted in approximately half of the class having their back to the teacher whilst he was addressing the whole class.

At the start of the lesson the learners were asked to each retrieve a laptop and to log-on to the system. The teacher then proceeded to explain the task to the class. However, many of the learners were primarily focussed on the laptops, whilst the teacher was explaining the task. When the task commenced it became clear that the majority of learners did not understand

what was required to be completed and made little progress in the lesson. Throughout the lesson a number of learners continued to use the laptops for online activities which did not relate to the task.

In order to demonstrate the potential criticality of this incident, I will demonstrate how it links to one of the four purposes detailed in the Welsh Government Successful Futures report (Donaldson, 2015).

- Ambitious, capable learners who:
 - use digital technologies creatively to communicate, find and analyse information
 - undertake research and evaluate critically what they find

The lesson where the critical incident occurred had the potential to improve the learners' skills in using digital technology and to undertake research.

Literature Review

The critical incident described above has a number of areas that could be considered for potential further analysis and research. This review will focus on the following three areas in detail:

- The use of digital technology.
- Appropriate seating arrangements.
- Assessment for learning – making sure that the learners understand the task.

The use of digital technology

The critical incident under review occurred in a class where all learners were using laptops throughout the lesson.

In Successful Futures, Donaldson (2015) repeatedly returns to the importance of embedding digital technology into the learning. In fact, the word “digital” appears 68 times within the document, making it the sixth most common word used. This demonstrates the increasing focus that there will be in Wales in this area. Figure 1 shows a word cloud created to show the most commonly used 36 words in Successful Futures. Word cloud software can review a text and create an image where the more a word appears in the source text, the bigger it will appear in the cloud.

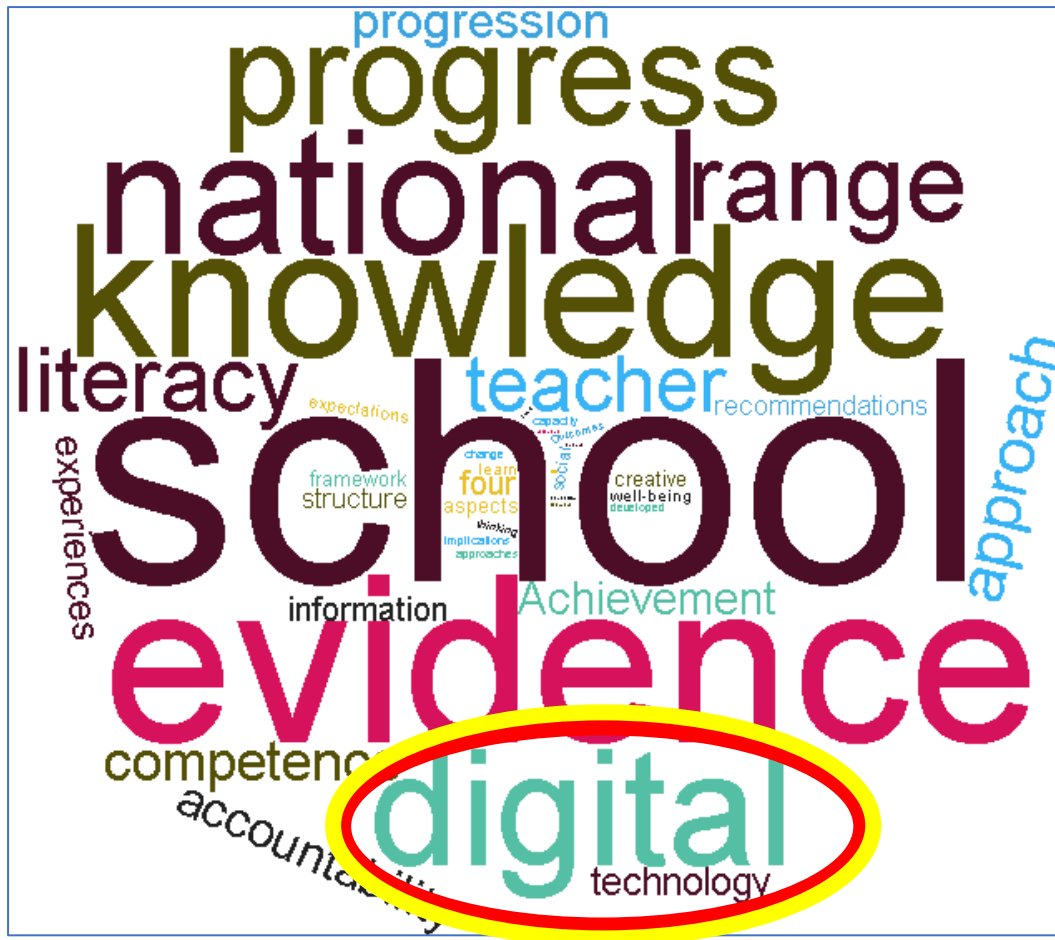


Figure 1 – Word Cloud created to show most common words used in Successful Futures
(created using www.wordclouds.com)

Research regarding the benefits of increasing the use of digital technology in the classroom does not currently provide conclusive answers.

Extensive work by Underwood (2009) demonstrated that the integrated use of technology in education can lead to measurable positive outcomes including 14 additional GCSE points. In addition, Waghid and Waghid (2016) state that using digital technology in the classroom can serve to bring improved levels of excitement, interaction and sharing amongst learners.

However, there are also a number of studies which suggest that increased use of digital devices in the classroom can lead to potentially negative effects. The most thorough study to date was completed by the OECD (2015). This international comparison showed that whilst moderate computer use in school resulted in marginally improved outcomes, more frequent use led to learners doing a lot worse in most learning outcomes.

Hembrooke & Gay (2003) studied two groups of university students who received the same lectures where one group could use their laptops during lectures and the other group had to

keep their laptops closed. This showed that students with open laptops during lectures achieved lower scores in subsequent testing compared to students who kept the laptops closed. Other research has found similar results suggesting that a higher frequency of computer use can result in suppressed test scores (Wainer et al, 2008). In both of these studies, learners were free to use their computers as they wanted which could result in use that had no educational benefit (e.g. using social media).

Jalil & Sabir (2019) researched mobile phone usage during higher education lectures. The use of mobile phones was found to be causing significant distraction to learning with over half of students sending text messages and a sixth playing online games during lectures. This research again demonstrates that the uncontrolled use of technology can lead to learners spending time distracted from their studies. This is further demonstrated by research by Aaron & Lipton (2018) who found that learner performance decreases when devices are used for non-educational purposes during lessons.

The review of literature suggests that whilst the use of digital technology in education can yield positive effects, these effects will be diminished, or lost altogether, if lessons are not structured in a way that ensures that learners are using technology productively. In the critical incident being examined, the temptation of using the laptops for non-educational purposes proved to be too much of a distraction for the learners to properly listen to the teacher when he was explaining the task for the lesson.

It is argued by Seemiller (2017) that a “*no-devices policy*” in the classroom, except where the technology is being used as part of a learning task, reduces distraction and enhances learning. When considering the critical incident under review in this assignment, there may have been an opportunity to avoid any use of digital devices in the period before they were required for the learning task.

Finally, what is being taught in terms of digital competence needs to be considered. It is not possible to know what new technology may appear in the coming decades, but history tells us that becoming competent in today’s technology will not necessarily prepare learners for tomorrow’s. Larry Sanger (2011), co-founder of Wikipedia, has commented that in 1985, when he was 17 years old, he spent a large amount of time being taught how to use BASIC programming language and WordPerfect word processing. However, by 1991 when Singer entered employment both BASIC and WordPerfect had been superseded.

It could be argued that it is therefore important that the DCF focusses on skills and knowledge that will likely stand the test of time. This means focussing more on areas such as living in an

online world, and staying safe on social media. Focussing on improving young learners' ability on today's software, may prove to be of limited value by the time the learners enter employment.

A significant proportion of the "elements" in the current iteration of the DCF (Hwb, 2019b) do focus on skills that will likely impact learners, and the wider public, for the foreseeable future. The "*Citizenship*" and "*Interacting and Collaborating*" elements provide an excellent basis to equip learners with the knowledge to navigate the digital world. However, there remain some parts of the "*Producing*" and "*Data and computational thinking*" elements that focus on developing skills, using current software, that are perhaps unlikely to be as relevant to employers in ten years time.

Finally, the findings of this literature review may also pose some further questions for schools in terms of how "wearable" devices should be managed in the future to avoid digital distraction. Globally, sales of smartwatches are currently doubling every year (Statistica, 2019) and whilst not an imminent risk, when we look further into the future, it is forecast that "smartglasses" will become more prevalent. In 5-10 years it may be difficult to ascertain whether a learner is wearing normal eyeglasses, or glasses than offer online connectivity.



Figure 2 – Intel Vaunt smartglasses which allow connectivity to Mobile Phone notifications (The Verge, 2018)

Appropriate seating arrangements

The critical incident under review occurred in a class where the seating arrangements resulted in almost half of the learners having their back to the teacher when he was addressing the class.

Rogers (2007) states that seating arrangements in a classroom are often a contributory factor to classroom noise level and the amount of time learners spend focussed on the task. The classroom is primarily a learning community and getting the seating arrangements right can improve levels of attainment.

Furthermore, research by Walder (2018) surveying teachers found that 63 % of teachers find a structured seating plan to be an effective technique to managing learners. The majority of these teachers stated that they always ensured that nobody had their back to them when they were addressing the whole class. Figure 3 below shows a plan of the classroom where the critical incident took place. Eleven learners had their back to the teacher with an additional seven being side on to teacher. The teacher remained generally static when addressing the whole class.

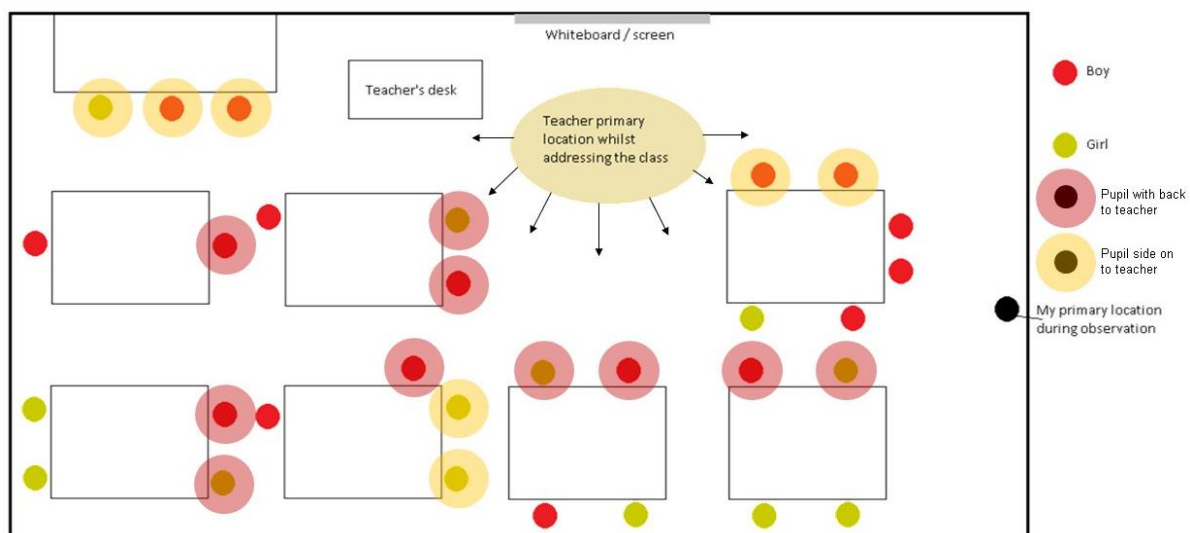


Figure 3 – plan of classroom showing seats where learners not facing the teacher

Other literature suggests that there are benefits in situating learners in an orientation where they face each other. It is argued that this can help to encourage peer interaction supporting the development of communication, problem solving and collaboration skills (Oliver & Kostouro, 2014)

Therefore, the best style of seating plan, proposed by Bennett (2013), which ensures that all learners are facing the teacher when required but also facilitates group work, could be to sit learners in rows facing the front. All learners are naturally facing the teacher when direct teaching is taking place, but it is also easy for learners to turn around and work in groups with the learners behind them.

Assessment for learning – making sure that the learners understand the task

In the critical incident under review, many of the learners did not fully understand the task set for them to complete. This led to delays in the learners making any progress in the lesson.

Assessment for learning (also known as formative assessment) is the process that teachers and learners use to identify the progress being made in learning. This information is then used to respond in order to enhance learning further (Cowie & Bell, 1999)

One of the key actions associated with an approach that embraces an assessment for learning approach is to use assessment to understand what the learners are actually learning, with a view to adapting the teaching methods used (Wiliam, 2018).

Wiliam (2018) demonstrates the benefits of “*minute-by-minute*” assessment for learning which can result in substantial improvements in learner achievement. He goes on to describe the importance of understanding and clarifying the learning intentions and success criteria for a lesson or topic. One approach suggested is to develop the learning intentions through “*co-construction*” with the learners. This approach can provide the teacher with greater certainty that the learners understand what it is that they need to do next.

Hattie (2009) found that the quality of instruction was the second most powerful teaching factor. Through checking understanding and clarifying and reiterating the requirements, teachers can ensure that all learners understand the task and can get on with it.

Finally, Cowley (2010) discusses the importance of being highly specific about every action that is expected from the learners in a lesson. Without giving exact details of what is required, and checking back that the learners understand the requirements, learners will end up having to work out the requirements on their own.

In the critical incident being discussed in this assignment, the approaches described above were not witnessed. This may explain why many of the learners lacked clarity on what they needed to do when that main lesson task commenced.

Reflection / Evaluation & Next Steps

As discussed in the *Observation* section of this assignment, the critical incidents identified during the observations were subsequently reflected upon in detail.

It is important that reflections are completed in a structured and timely manner to ensure maximum recall of any events that took place. Maksimovic & Osmanovic (2018) state that

reflective practice, and taking subsequent action on the conclusions, is a critical factor in improving teaching quality.

Gibbs (1988), described reflection as a never-ending cyclic process where continuous improvement can be delivered through continuous review and reflection. Figure 4 below shows a representation of this cycle detailing the five key steps to improvement.

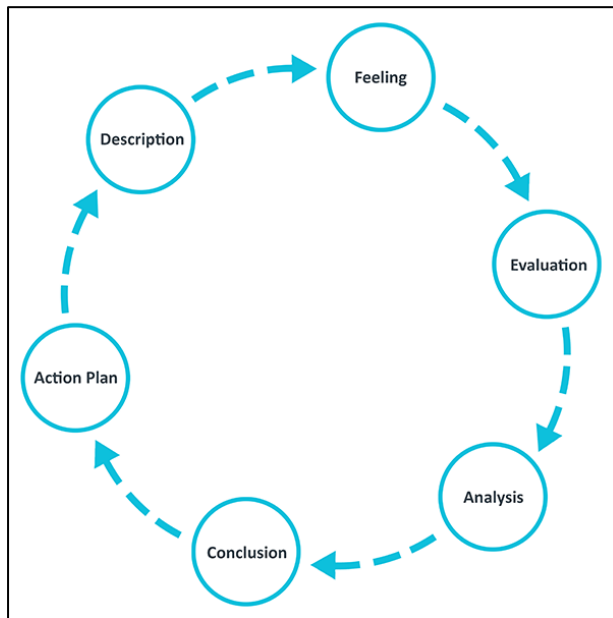


Figure 4 – Graphical representation of Gibbs reflective cycle (University of Edinburgh, 2019)

For this research the ARC model of reflection was utilised (see Appendix 2). This approach allows the observer to follow a simple process to evaluate a critical incident. The five key steps in this reflective process are as follows:

- Describing the critical incident.
- Describing how the experience made the observer feel.
- Assessing the context.
- Evaluating and analysing the critical incident.
- Summarising the learning from the analysis completed and identifying potential next steps.

The ARC model provides a platform for observers to focus in on individual critical incidents and quickly identify actions that could be implemented to improve.

Completed copies of the observation field notes and ARC reflection sheets from four observed lessons can be found in the Appendices 1 & 2.

Brookfield (2017) describes an alternative approach to reflection where teachers can reflect on their practice through four different lenses as described below:

- Students Eyes.
- Colleagues Perceptions.
- Personal Experience.
- Theory.

The Brookfield four lenses, described above provides an excellent framework for existing teachers to reflect, analyse and improve on their teaching. Whilst not directly aligned for use by a non-participant observer, as part of this research, the critical incident has also been reviewed using the four lenses approach. See Appendix 3.

Following detailed reflection and review of the theoretical literature, this research has identified some areas where increased effectiveness may be possible through the implementation of the following suggestions. It is noted that this research is based upon a very small snapshot of time of the Year 8 education at school x. Therefore if any of these suggestions were to be taken forward it would be prudent to complete further observations to confirm the conclusions of this research.

Suggestion 1 – utilisation of digital devices

As discussed in the *Literature Review* section, allowing access to digital devices at a time when learners are supposed to be listening to their teacher can lead to a reduction in learner focus and understanding. In the future, it may be beneficial to ensure that all digital devices are switched off / laptop screens closed when the teacher requires the attention of the class. This could greatly increase the likelihood of learners giving their undivided attention to the teacher when he/she is addressing the whole class.

In addition, school x, and the wider secondary school community in Wales, may want to consider the preferred approach to managing the increasing prevalence and functionality associated with wearable digital devices (watches, glasses etc).

Suggestion 2 – seating plan review

The seating plan in the class where the critical incident occurred resulted in multiple learners having their back to the teacher when he was addressing the whole class. Whilst the seating plan did potentially facilitate group working, it may be helpful to review the layout of the seating plan to ensure that when required, learners can all face the teacher.

Suggestion 3 – Confirming and Clarifying the Task

Another aspect of the critical incident was that many of the learners did not understand what the task for the lesson was. The reasons for distraction are discussed within suggestions 1 and 2, but there may have been an opportunity for the teacher to spend some time confirming and clarifying the task with the whole class before letting the main task commence. In future, it may be advantageous to use Assessment for Learning techniques to test the learners understanding of the task before they commence the work.

Conclusion

This research utilised unstructured, non-participant observations to identify a critical incident for further reflection, analysis and evaluation. The key areas examined were:

- The use of digital technology.
- Appropriate seating arrangements.
- Assessment for learning – making sure that the learners understand the task.

For each of these three areas, reflection alongside review of the academic literature has allowed for the development of suggested alternative approaches that could prove successful in future. This research and learning has been highly beneficial to the author of this assignment and has provoked much deeper thought into the best approach to take in teaching and learning.

The new professional standards for teaching and leadership in Wales were published in September 2017. A significant element of these professional standards are to allow practitioners to reflect on their practice (Hwb, 2019a). This assignment has provided the researcher with the opportunity to begin to hone their knowledge and skills related to reflective practice before commencing on the first Professional Teaching Experience placement. These skills will undoubtedly prove highly useful in the coming months and also for the rest of my career in teaching.

References

Aaron, L & Lipton, T (2018) 'Digital distraction: shedding light on the 21st century college classroom' *Journal of Educational Technology Systems* Vol 46 (3), pp. 363-378

Bennett, T (2013) *Seating Plans* Available at: <https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/seating-plans-6344141> (Accessed: 10th October 2019)

Brookfield, S (2017) *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* 2nd Ed. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons Inc.

Cohen, L, Manion, L & Morrison, K (2011) *Research Methods in Education* Abingdon: Routledge

Cowie, B & Bell, B (1999) 'A model of formative assessment in science education' *Assessment in Education: Principles, policy and practice* Vol 6 (1), pp. 101-116

Cowley, S (2010) *Getting the Buggers to Behave* London: Continuum International Publishing

Donaldson, G. (2015). *Successful Futures: Independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government

Estyn (2018) *A Report on [REDACTED]*. Date of Inspection: February 2018 Available at [https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/www.estyn.gov.wales/files/documents/\[REDACTED\]](https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/www.estyn.gov.wales/files/documents/[REDACTED]) (Accessed 30th September 2019)

Finch, J (1987) 'The Vignette Technique in Survey Research' *Sociology* Vol 21 (1), pp. 105-115

Fletcher-Wood, H (2016) *Ticked Off* Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing

Gibb, G (1988) *Learning by doing: a guide to teaching and learning method* London: FEU

Hattie, J (2009) *Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. New York: Routledge

Hembrooke, H & Gay, G (2003) 'The laptop and the lecture: the effects of multitasking in learning environments' *Journal of Computing in Higher Education* Vol 15 (1), pp. 46-54

Hwb (2019a) *Information on professional standards that apply to practitioners in Wales*.

Available at <https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-development/professional-standards/#new-professional-standards-for-all-school-practitioners> (Accessed: 14th October 2019)

Hwb (2019b) *digital-competence-framework-draft-curriculum-for-wales-2022-version (1)*

Available at <https://hwb.gov.wales/draft-curriculum-for-wales-2022/digital-competence-framework-draft-curriculum-for-wales-2022-version> (Accessed: 16th October 2019)

Jalil, J & Sabir, S (2019) 'Mobile phone usage and distraction in learning sessions' *Pakistan Armed Forces Medical Journal* Vol. 69 (1), pp.54-59

Maksimović, J. and Osmanović, J. (2018) 'Reflective Practice as a Changing Factor of Teaching Quality', *Research in Pedagogy*, 8(2), pp. 172–189

mylocalschool.gov.wales (2019) *Sharing Information about Local Schools* Available at <http://mylocalschool.gov.wales/School/██████████lang=en> (Accessed: 30th September 2019)

OECD (2015) *Students, computers and learning: Making the Connection* OECD Publishing

Oliver, S G & Kostouros, P (2014) 'Desks in Rows' *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching & Learning Journal* Vol 7 (3), pp. 1-12

Papatheodorou, T. Luff, P. and Gill, J (2011) *Child Observation for Learning and Research* Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd

Payne, G & Payne, J (2004) *Key Concepts in Social Research* London: Sage Publications

Rogers, B (2007) *Cracking the hard class: strategies for managing the harder than average class* London: Sage Publications Ltd

Sanger, L (2011) *An example of educational anti-intellectualism* Available at <https://larrysanger.org/2011/12/an-example-of-educational-anti-intellectualism/> (Accessed 16th October 2019)

Seemiller, C (2017) 'Curbing Digital Distractions in the Classroom' *Contemporary Educational Technology* Vol 8 (3), pp. 214-231

Statista (2019) *Smartwatch unit sales worldwide from 2014 to 2017 (in millions)* Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/538237/global-smartwatch-unit-sales/> (Accessed: 10th October 2019)

Tripp, D. (2012) *Critical Incidents in Teaching* Abingdon: Routledge

Underwood, J. (2009) *The impact of digital technology: A review of the evidence of the impact of digital technologies on formal education*. Coventry: Becta.

University of Edinburgh *Gibbs Reflective Cycle* Available at <https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection/reflectors-toolkit/reflecting-on-experience/gibbs-reflective-cycle> (Accessed 11th October 2019)

The Verge (2018) *Exclusive: Intel's new smart glasses hands-on* Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnfwClgheF0> (Accessed: 10th October 2019)

Waghid, Z. and Waghid, F (2016) 'Examining Digital Technology for (Higher) Education through Action Research and Critical Discourse Analysis', *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 30(1), pp. 1–19.

Wainer, J. et al (2008) 'Too much computer and internet use is bad for your grades, especially if you are young and poor: results from the 2001 Brazilian SAEB' *Computers & Education* Vol. 54, Issue 4, Pp. 1417-1429

Walder, A. (2018) 'Effective strategies for managing young learners in class', *Modern English Teacher*, Vol 27(3), pp. 20–23

Wiliam, D (2018) *Embedded Formative Assessment* Indiana: Solution Tree Press



OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date: 2 nd Hydref 2019
Lesson details: First lesson of the day. Classroom based PE lesson. Focus of the lesson is on hydration. Main task requires use of Google Chromebooks to complete research, formulate vlog script and record a vlog.
Classroom culture Seating plan is in place (teacher requested that learners sit “in your usual seats”) albeit the seating arrangement results in a lot of learners (14 out of 30) having their back to the teacher when he is addressing the class (see diagram overleaf). The classroom is also quite small for 30 learners making room quite tight. A lot of talking at the start of the lesson whilst the teacher attempts to get the attention of the class. Chromebooks causing a lot of distraction from teacher. Teacher uses 3-2-1 command to gain silence in the classroom. For the majority of the lesson I was a non-participant observer. However, during the main task I did circulate amongst the class and discuss the work with the learners.
Objectives Teacher projects starter onto whiteboard - recalling previous knowledge on hydration from previous lessons. After completion of this activity the teacher explains the main task of the lesson albeit there appear to around 50 % of the class are not listening to these instructions.
Direction For the starter the learners were supposed to be discussing with their partner / group what they could remember about hydration. It isn't clear whether the learners understood that this was the task but the table adjacent to where I was observing from were playing on online games on the Chromebook, not discussing hydration. For the main task it became clear once the work time had commenced that a lot (circa 50%) did not understand the task and the teacher had to repeatedly explain what they were supposed to be doing. The main task could be completed in groups of three, pairs or on your own. There was no plenary at the end of this lesson.
Access and challenge This is a very interesting lesson if learners engage with it and there are some who are making good progress and working towards creating an informative vlog. Unfortunately, a lot of the learners continue to play with the Chromebooks. A number of the groups are quite skilled at positioning themselves so that screens are not visible to the teacher so whilst they may appear busy, they are not working on the task. The level of challenge is good, and the more able and talented learners are able to identify additional material to include in their vlog. At the end of the lesson the learners were told that they needed to complete the vlog and upload it as homework. However, I did not witness any learners capturing this requirement within their planner books. It was also unclear how the groups would complete this work at home because some of the groups reported that they lived several miles away from each other.

Assessment

How does the teacher assess student understanding before, during and after the lesson? How is this used in their teaching?

The teacher did not spend much time reviewing what the learners could remember from the previous lesson (hands up and ask two of the brighter / keener learners for feedback). Similarly, after explaining the main task there was no questioning of the class to ensure understanding of the task.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

The impact of the Google Chromebooks during the starter activity and when the teacher was explaining the main task for the lesson. The Chromebooks were logged in and on the desk whilst the learners were completing the starter and "listening" to the teacher explain the main task. There was no requirement for any of the learners to be touching the Chromebooks for this period but almost all (90 %) were doing something on the Chromebook at some point during these periods. The table closest to me during the observation used this time to play a series of online games. This table struggled when the main task work commenced and only after 20 minutes of completing no work did the teacher identify that they did not know what the task was.

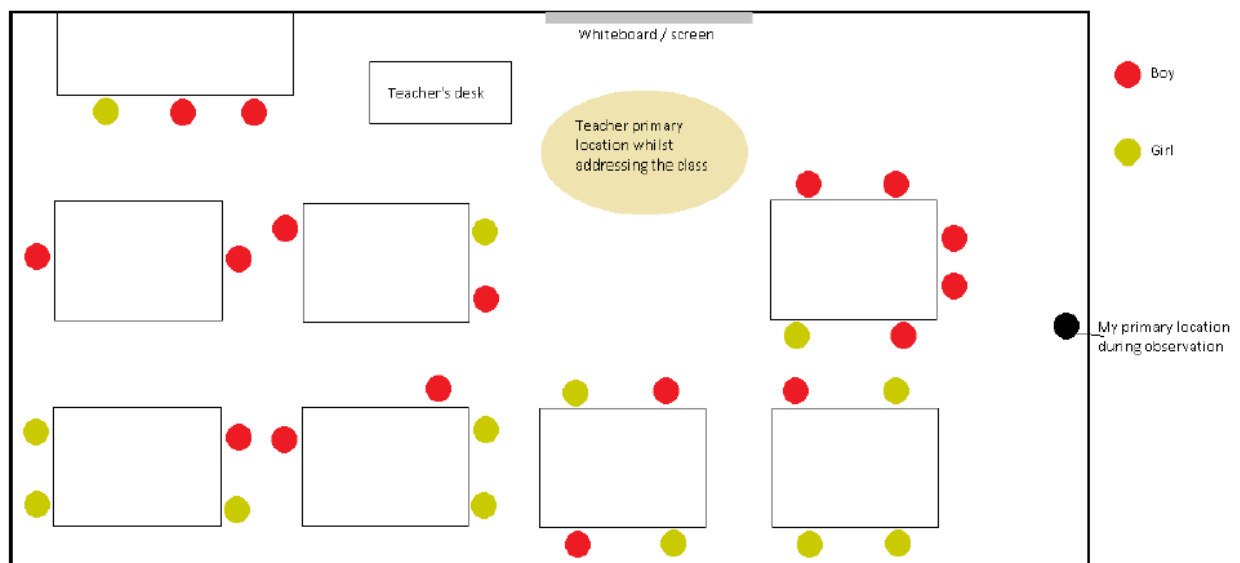


Diagram of classroom layout / seating plan



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Yr Athrofa
Addysg a'r Dyniaethau
Education and Humanities

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date: 2nd Hydref 2019

Lesson details:

Year 8 Pupil Trail (trailing form class 8LF). Second lesson of the day (before first breaktime). iThink (Humanities) lesson. The lesson was a continuation of a previous lesson. In previous lessons, learners had each created a PowerPoint presentation detailing a charity that they wanted to create and build. The learners took turns (guided by the teacher) to present. The teacher then questioned the rest of the class for feedback where they had to provide information on:

- What they liked
- What could be changed to make it even better
- A question about the presentation

There was no starter as this was a continuation of the previous lesson. Similarly there was no plenary because this work would continue and complete in the next iThink lesson.

I was a non-participant observer in this lesson.

Classroom culture

Class settled into their seats very quickly. Appears to be seating plan (all sat in boy-girl formation). Excellent attention from the class. All listening intently to their peers' presentations. The teacher questioned apparently randomly selected learners to provide feedback following each peer presentation. In all examples the selected learner had prepared feedback for the presentation.

About half way through the lesson the teacher opened up a more wide ranging class discussion where he questioned learners opinions on things and again brought different learners into the discussion. Hands up was not used for questioning.

Classroom environment was good (size, temperature etc)

Objectives

Purpose was clear to all learners. They were continuing on with previous work but it was clear from teacher questioning that they all understood what was required during the presentation and when giving feedback.

Direction

As above - all clear on what they should be doing.

Access and challenge

All students were able to engage in the lesson. The presentations demonstrated the range of ability in the class, but it appeared that all learners had put effort into their presentations.

The more able and talented pupils had created more detailed and creative PowerPoint presentations whereas some presentations were more basic.

Assessment

A lot of teacher questioning to the class and to individual learners. All learners appear to be aware that they may be questioned at any moment so they appeared to remain engaged throughout the lesson.



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Yr Athrofa
Addysg a'r Dyniaethau
Education and Humanities

Specifics / Critical Incidents

Teacher questioning. Some excellent examples of how teacher questioning can keep a whole class engaged.

Teacher led discussion. About halfway through the lesson, perhaps when some learners were becoming a little bored of watching peer presentations, the teacher led a class discussion. The topic of this discussion was directed by the class and seemed to have all learners interested. This was a very interesting and effective technique to keep the class engaged. Subjects covered included recycling; the national minimum wage and living wage and free range eggs vs caged eggs.



Yr Athrofa
Addysg a'r Dyniaethau
Education and Humanities

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date: 2nd Hydref 2019

Lesson details:

Year 8 Pupil Trail (trailing form class 8LF). Third lesson of the day (after first breaktime). iDiscover (Science) lesson.

The Science teacher for this lesson was absent from school so the lesson was being covered by a Cover Teacher. The Cover Teacher was a Modern Foreign Languages specialist so did not have in depth knowledge of the task for the class (creating a poster regarding the rock cycle).

It took some time to identify what work had been left for the class. They were instructed to complete the work that they had been doing in the previous lesson (in groups create a poster detailing how they would construct their model of the rock cycle). Some of learners complained that they had been working on that for the last two lessons and there wasn't anything left. However, with no other information the Cover Teacher had to persevere with this task

There was no starter or plenary.

I was a participant observer throughout this lesson to try and support the Cover Teacher.

Classroom culture

The learners were not very engaged in the learning. It appeared that they considered a lesson with a Cover Teacher to be an opportunity to do less. Coupled with the fact that the work left was not challenging or sufficient to keep the class busy throughout the lesson.

The teacher had to repeatedly stop the whole class from working to tell them to work more quietly and to complete some work.

Objectives

The purpose of the lesson was not very clear because the work left for the class was a continuation of work that some learners had already completed in the previous lesson

Direction

There was some confusion about what the students should be doing and it was difficult for the teacher to field questions about the subject matter as he was not a subject matter expert.

Access and challenge

Limited engagement and nobody was challenged by this work.

Assessment

The teacher explained the (limited) task to the class and moved around the class to check that the learners knew what they had to do. Unfortunately, the instructions from the absent teacher were not sufficient to cover all details of the work that the learners should have been completing.



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Yr Athrofa
Addysg a'r Dyniaethau
Education and Humanities

Specifics / Critical Incidents

The classes reaction to having a Cover Teacher. Behaviour and respectfulness seemed to change as soon as they entered the class and saw that they had a cover teacher. Some learners knew that they were going to have a Cover Teacher for this lesson and this was the only lesson of the day on the pupil trail where a lot of learners arrived very late to the lesson.

The challenge with the task left was minimal.

Working in groups of up to 5 to produce a single poster poses a challenge in terms of making sure all learners are involved in the task.



Yr Athrofa
Addysg a'r Dyniaethau
Education and Humanities

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date: 2 nd Hydref 2019
Lesson details: Year 8 Pupil Trail (iCalculate where classes are set so no longer trailing the whole form class). Fourth lesson of the day (last lesson before lunchtime). iCalculate (Maths) lesson. The lesson was focussed on calculating area and perimeter of shapes with circles / semi-circles within them. There was a starter question handed out as the learners arrived at the lesson. This was an initial question on the topic for this lesson. After 5-10 minutes the teacher went through the starter question on the interactive whiteboard explaining the principles of the work. The teacher then handed out a worksheet with further questions on them on this topic for the class to work through. Anyone who completed this worksheet was given an extension task with further questions. This extension task formed the homework for anyone who did not finish it in class. No plenary at the end of the lesson.
Classroom culture Class arrived and settled into work quite quickly. Teacher circulated around the class to ensure learners understood what they were doing and to make sure that learners were working hard. A significant proportion (approx. a quarter) did not have the correct equipment (calculator) but the teacher had spares so this did not cause significant impact to the lesson. There was low level chatter whilst completing the task but this mostly appeared to not be impeding the learners from completing the work. If the volume increased then the teacher quickly quietened the class down again. Teacher used "hands up" to get answers to questions but did encourage others to put their hands up when it became clear that the same pupils were volunteering for every question.
Objectives Objective of the speedy starter and main task were clearly explained by the teacher and she tested the learners understanding of the task by getting them to explain it back to her.
Direction The teacher continued to circulate around the class to help learners who were struggling and to maintain a good working environment.

**Access and challenge**

The classes are set for Maths so the differentiation in ability was less in this class. However, there were extension questions for the learners who quickly completed the main task

Assessment

The starter and first 3 questions completed were marked self assessment marking. He teacher had planned to go through the entire worksheet but ran out of time so was not able to.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

Hands up approach to teacher questioning risks some learners not engaging in teacher questioning and the teacher being unable to assess that child's learning in the lesson.

Pacing - the lesson ended in a rush with the teacher unable to go through the self-assessment marking answers and no plenary.

Appendix 2

Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model

Date: 2nd Hydref 2019

Critical incident (focus): The impact of the Google Chromebooks during the starter activity and when the teacher was explaining the main task for the lesson - distraction - Lesson objective not understood by many of the learners

<i>Experience</i>	
<i>Feelings</i> "What are your feelings regarding the experience?"	Feeling frustrated that the learners are not listening and not being respectful (playing online games on Chromebooks). Feeling that Chromebooks in a lesson are a bad idea! Questioning the focus on Digital Competency Framework in Successful Futures. Learners did not understand the task which resulted in a chaotic period where the task had started but lots of learners didn't know what they were doing.
<i>Remember and Understand</i> "Can you list the aspects of the learning experience that went well?" "What were the elements of the learning experience that were disappointing?"	What Went Well? The work was being completed in groups. Some of the groups were making good progress and understood what they should be doing after listening to the teachers explanation but these groups were in a significant minority. What didn't go well? The learners' inability / decision not to listen attentively when the teacher was explaining the task. The class were quiet whilst the teacher was talking but many of them were engaged on online gaming or internet browsing whilst the teacher was talking. It became apparent when the task started that the learners were not able to multi-task (i.e. play on Chromebooks and listen to the teacher). Throughout the lesson the learners struggled to fight the temptation to revert back to online games / irrelevant internet searching when they should have been working on the task. Another factor that impacted the learning was the classroom environment, and in particular the seating plan in the room which resulted in almost 50 % of the class having their back to the teacher whilst he was talking to them. There was no plenary in this lesson. It may have been useful to calmly sum up the lesson with the class at the end of the lesson and explain what the next steps would be after a lesson where behavior and effort was not very good from many of the learners. Following on from the first half of the main task (write a script) the learners had to get this checked by the teacher before they could move onto the next part – filming. This caused some disruption as the learner groups all followed the teacher around and had to wait some time before their work could be reviewed. The learners did not have much information about how much detail should be in the script so most had to go and add more text which caused further delays

<i>Evaluate and analyse</i> "What will you keep the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?" "What was the cause of the most important disappointing element?"	The lesson content itself had the potential to be a really exciting and interesting lesson so I would keep this as it is. The cause of the most disappointing element was that the learners were using the Chromebooks for non-relevant tasks which severely hampered their ability to learn.
<i>Conclusions and actions</i> "What are your possible solutions to the disappointing issues identified?" "What will you do next?"	Possible solutions: • Chuck out the Chromebooks! • Lock down Chromebooks so that they can only access relevant sites • Ensure that Chromebooks are on standby and screens closed whilst the learners are completing tasks that do not require the Chromebooks and when the teacher is talking to the class. • Review and amend seating plan • Provide more detail on the board of what was required in the vlog script to avoid repeated checks by the teacher which resulted in delays for the groups completing the task.
<i>Transformed experience</i>	

Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model

Date: 2^{il} Hydref 2019

Critical incident (focus): An excellent lesson where there was little to be critical about.
Lack of plenary and teacher questioning focussed on in this reflection.

<i>Experience</i>	
<i>Feelings</i> "What are your feelings regarding the experience?"	Feeling impressed by the teacher. The same form class behaved very differently in this class compared to lesson 1. Teacher is does not appear to be an authoritarian teacher but has complete control and attention from the class – wow! Impressed with the level of effort that the learners have put into their presentations.
<i>Remember and Understand</i> "Can you list the aspects of the learning experience that went well?" "What were the elements of the learning experience that were disappointing?"	What Went Well? Quickly settled down and ready to start the lesson Learners listened attentively to their peers giving presentations All had prepared feedback for each presentation Teacher questioning (randomly selected) kept all learners engaged and ready to answer questions. Teacher led discussion midway through the lesson to keep everyone engaged worked really well and it was clear that all were interested in the discussion. Most feedback to the presenters was from their peers but the teacher also questioned the presenters where appropriate. What didn't go well? No plenary albeit that is because these lessons will straddle three lessons and this was the second of the three.
<i>Evaluate and analyse</i> "What will you keep the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?" "What was the cause of the most important disappointing element?"	The lesson was a very exciting and interesting lesson so I would try and keep almost everything the same. Perhaps, there would be a benefit in having some form of plenary at the end of the lesson to review what they had listened to and discussed in this lesson and to gain some feedback from the learners about how they had found the lesson.
<i>Conclusions and actions</i> "What are your possible solutions to the disappointing issues identified?" "What will you do next?"	Possible solutions: • Hold a plenary at the end of the lesson to review the learning from the lesson and gain feedback from the learners to ascertain what they had gained from today's lesson (albeit questioning throughout the lesson somewhat achieved this goal). • From a personal point of view, emulating this teachers approach to questioning would benefit my teaching significantly.
<i>Transformed experience</i>	

Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model

Date: 2nd Hydref 2019

Critical incident (focus): Classes reaction to having a Cover Teacher. Lack of challenge in the task. Group working on a task where it is difficult to involve all group members throughout

<i>Experience</i>	
<i>Feelings</i> "What are your feelings regarding the experience?"	Feeling sorry for the Cover Teacher. Work left provides very little challenge to the learners. I feel like it would be much better if the task was completed individually as it is very difficult for a group of 5 to all engage in making a poster.
<i>Remember and Understand</i> "Can you list the aspects of the learning experience that went well?" "What were the elements of the learning experience that were disappointing?"	What Went Well? The teacher was clear with the learners what the task for the lesson was. What didn't go well? Behavior deteriorated in the lesson. It appeared that the learners perception was that there were limited consequences to poor behavior with a Cover Teacher leading the lesson. Lack of challenge in the task that was left. Lack of clarity about how the task left should be completed. The task required the learners to work in groups of up to 5. This group size resulted in some group members being completely disengaged whilst other group members completed the task.
<i>Evaluate and analyse</i> "What will you keep the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?" "What was the cause of the most important disappointing element?"	I don't think that I would keep anything the same from this lesson. The task should have been more challenging and been explained more clearly (this was not the fault of the Cover Teacher who had been left one sentence describing what the class should be doing). Another issue was the presence of a Cover Teacher appeared to give the learners the perception that they could put less effort into the lesson. Perhaps if the Cover Teacher had started the lesson by explaining that this was a full and normal science lesson and that he could, and would, use sanctions if behavior and effort was not acceptable (N.B. at the end of the lesson he informed one learner that he would be recording negative behavior on SIMS and it came as a shock to the learner that the Cover Teacher could do this).



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Yr Athrofa
Addysg a'r Dyniaethau
Education and Humanities

<i>Conclusions and actions</i> <i>"What are your possible solutions to the disappointing issues identified?"</i> <i>"What will you do next?"</i>	Possible solutions: • Start the lesson with the Cover Teacher explaining clearly to the class that this is a full, normal lesson and that behavior norms should continue. Also explain that as a Cover Teacher he had the same option of utilizing the various behavior policy sanctions available to him and that he would also be reporting back to the absent teacher about the classes effort and behavior. • For the department, it would be good if they had some protocols about what work gets left for Cover Teachers so that they can ensure that there is sufficient detail and and level of challenge to keep the class engaged for the full lesson.
<i>Transformed experience</i>	

Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model

Date: 2^{il} Hydref 2019

Critical incident (focus): Using “hands up” approach to teacher questioning and lesson pacing.

<i>Experience</i>	
<i>Feelings</i> “What are your feelings regarding the experience?”	Feel like the learners made good progress in this lesson and have learnt some new skills and had these new skills reinforced through repetition.
<i>Remember and Understand</i> “Can you list the aspects of the learning experience that went well?” “What were the elements of the learning experience that were disappointing?”	What Went Well? Speedy starter got the entire class off to quick start and working immediately after arriving and unpacking. Routine of trying one question and then the teacher going through how to answer that question before handing out the main task worked well. Good resources prepared and printed out so learners quickly ready to get on with learning. What didn't go well? Hands up approach to questioning resulted in the learners who were struggling with the concept not voicing their concerns and potentially the teacher incorrectly surmising that the whole class understood the concept and moving on. The lesson ended quite abruptly before the teacher could finish working through the answers which were being marked via self-assessment. It wasn't made clear that finishing off the worksheet and extension worksheet was homework although that was the intention so some learners may not complete this work.
<i>Evaluate and analyse</i> “What will you keep the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?” “What was the cause of the most important disappointing element?”	I would keep the general structure of the lesson the same. The cause of the critical incidents being reviewed were the learner questioning style which did not accurately demonstrate progress by all the learners in the class (albeit all those who put their hands up understood the work) Also, pacing of the lesson. The teacher could have considered telling the class to stop work earlier so that she could work through the worksheet to complete the self-assessment marking section. She may also then have had the time to clearly explain to the class what the homework task was following this lesson.
<i>Conclusions and actions</i> “What are your possible solutions to the disappointing issues identified?” “What will you do next?”	Possible solutions: • Use random questioning / whiteboards / other AFL techniques to ensure learning and progress is being made across the breadth of the class. • Consider planning on what time the main task would finish and the plenary / self assessment marking would start to avoid the rushed end of the lesson.
<i>Transformed experience</i>	

Appendix 3 - Brookfield Four Lenses

Reflection upon critical incident in Year 8 Classroom based PE class

Incident description:

The impact of the Google Chromebooks during the starter activity and when the teacher was explaining the main task for the lesson – distraction – Lesson objective not understood by many of the learners

