

ECAD6007

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.

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This assignment will demonstrate a critical understanding of key learning practices and theories, associated with an observed critical incident, involving an individual learner in a classroom setting. Looking specifically at theories surrounding Behaviour, Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Reflective Practice, the report will reflect upon the actions of the child, and the response of the teacher, in relation to the outcome of the incident. Adhering to Tripp's analysis, a critical incident is presented as 'an interpretation of the significance of an event.' (Tripp, 2011, p.8) It is in this way that the incident will be contextualised throughout the essay, upholding the idea that 'commonplace events occur in routine professional practice' which are typical in the classroom environment but become critical through analysis, when they are thought about in terms of their consequences. (Tripp, 2011, p.25) Thinking about an event in this context, means that you must comment on what the incident means, moving it outside of its immediate classroom context which is also 'contextualised by the school system...local district... [and the] wider national society.' (Tripp, 2011, p.25). A critical stance will be presented, regarding the role of the teacher as a professional, in relation to meeting the diverse and varying needs of a range of young learners, with assumptions challenged and barriers to learning and child development addressed. An awareness of the four purposes within the curriculum for Wales will be presented in terms of the learner, and the importance of the role of reflection in professional teaching practice and personal development will be discussed. 'School X' will be used to discuss the context of the critical incident which was observed, adhering to the BERA anonymity guidelines.

The role of reflection is of undeniable importance in the development of personal teaching practice. The concept of reflective practice in teaching was first introduced by John Dewey, who maintained that 'education is the most complex, intricate and subtle of all human enterprises.' (Dewey et al., 2008, p.255) Because of its complexity, Dewey proposed that to be effective practitioners, teachers should actively question all aspects of their work, suggesting that teachers must consider the 'how' and 'why' in every scenario, before it happens, so that we can 'direct our actions with foresight, [and] know what we are about when we act.' (The Open University). In a teaching context, this could be planning for the lesson ahead, in terms of the knowledge and theory, but also for any misconceptions that could arise, making the information useful and applicable to the students.

Dewey's reflective model looks specifically at the teacher and their duty within this position, to use their experience and knowledge to handle situations, arguing that 'every school and class must be a genuine society where the behaviours wanted tomorrow are practiced in a meaningful context today,' and the teacher has a responsibility to provide one 'ethical set of principles,' that can be

mirrored both outside of school and inside the classroom.’ (Dewey & Hinchey, 2019, p.xi). This links to educational reforms in Wales, under the new curriculum, introduced in practice from September 2022. The curriculum allows schools to have more autonomy, there is no prescribed syllabus, but they must ‘enable their learners to develop towards the four purposes,’ which are the ‘starting point and aspiration for every child and young person in Wales.’ (Hwb, n.d) Developed from Graham Donaldson’s *Successful Futures*, (an independent review of the assessment arrangements and old curriculum) the four purposes strive for all pupils to be ‘ambitious capable learners, enterprising, creative contributors, ethical, informed citizens and healthy, confident individuals.’ (Donaldson, 2015) In many ways, this echoes Dewey’s reflective approach, as teachers must now reflect by asking themselves, ‘what should we teach and why, how should we teach it, and how will this support our learners to realise the four purposes?’ (Hwb) Dewey’s stance can particularly link to the purposes, as schools are to provide ‘real opportunities for children to contribute and receive,’ and for teachers to ‘teach, learn, lead and follow,’ arguing that individuals who experience such education will ‘enter their adult roles having already adopted prosocial and effective habits of thinking and acting, and that society will simultaneously improve.’ (Dewey & Hinchey, 2019, p.xi).

Schon (1983) is also a forerunner in the field of reflective practice, who presents a slightly different view to Dewey, which will be explored in greater depth later. In the same way that it is the school’s responsibility to shape ‘ethically, informed citizens,’ Schon has noted that teachers are faced with ‘frequently embroiled conflicts and pressures,’ with varying demands such as departmental budgets, good grades and ensuring that they ‘teach the basics,’ practitioners must also ‘encourage creativity, build citizenship and help students to examine their values.’ (Schön, 2016). These are anxieties that could arguably be echoed today, with teachers implementing the four purposes, and the fact that subject teachers such as History are now part of a wider Area of Learning and Experience (AOLE), therefore, they need some competencies within the other Humanities subjects, namely Geography, Religious Values and Ethics and Business Studies. Teachers are therefore responsible for more than just presenting knowledge and creating a safe environment by handling behaviour, they are required to reflect on all aspects of learning for not only their professional development, but ultimately so that they can ensure the pupils are getting the best and most relevant education. Tripp argued that the art of reflection is essential to the teaching profession, through the development of ‘professional judgement’ which requires reflection to ‘challenge and critique’ our own actions, rather than ‘reinforcing existing patterns and tendencies,’ therefore, reflection allows for an ‘informed view of the world’ to be presented, echoed in ‘culture, values and experiences.’ (Tripp, 2011, p.12)

The case study within this assignment will focus on School X, a comprehensive school for 11- to 18-year-olds, 'categorised as English-medium with significant Welsh,' with 65% of pupils having undertaken primary education through First Language Welsh, and 'forty-two percent of pupils speak[ing] Welsh fluently.' (A Report on Ysgol [REDACTED] 2019, p.1) Pupils in attendance come from three neighbouring rural counties in West Wales, and the school receives pupils from the 'full range of ability, with just over 20% of pupils hav[ing] an additional learning need,' and the free school meals eligibility figure is close to the national average, sitting at 16.7%. (A Report on Ysgol [REDACTED], 2019, p.1)

Linking to the four purposes, pupils develop and make 'strong progress in their knowledge and skills' throughout their time at the school, with many presenting the ability to 'recall prior learning accurately,' in order to develop their understanding of key concepts within subjects. (A Report on Ysgol [REDACTED], 2019, p.1) Pupils are described as 'competent readers' with the ability to infer, analyse and communicate ideas coherently, 'redrafting their work beneficially, taking note of teachers' advice,' therefore, students are aware of the importance of feedback and reflection, presenting themselves as ambitious, capable learners. (A Report on Ysgol [REDACTED], 2019, p.1)

Upon my observation and bridging days at School X, a critical incident was observed, within the context of a Year 7 English classroom, during the last lesson of the day (14:30pm on the 28th September 2022). The teacher announced that the pupils were to leave their coats and bags at their desks and make their way quietly down the hall to the library, where they would spend the final hour reading a book of their choice. Having followed instructions by standing quietly behind their chairs, students were dismissed and directed towards the library. One student remained behind with their full-time Learning Support Assistant (LSA), and it was clear they appeared distressed and unhappy. The pupil had a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and signs of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and was uncomfortable with the idea of leaving their belongings behind, unattended, out of sight. The teacher dealt with the situation calmly, responding that they could take their belongings, if the bag remained by the library door, enabling the student fully to become engaged with the set task, just like the other pupils. This act of compromise resulted in the child's full participation in the library lesson as instructed, and demonstrated the teacher's understanding of ASD, which enabled her to comprehend the issue and concern that the pupil felt regarding her instruction, allowing her to present an effective and supportive resolution. This flexibility has been noted as an integral part of the understanding of Additional Learning Needs (ALN), as you need to be ready to 'change the level of demands you make on the child, so that this

matches their level of tolerance at all times.’ (Cobbe, 2019, p.43). Cobbe has stated that by ‘reducing the demands when you know [they’re] anxious and increasing them when you know [they] seem more amenable,’ the learner is more likely to respond positively to you as a practitioner in other scenarios, as you have demonstrated to them that you can be flexible and consider their needs, as ‘children on the spectrum are more responsive to consistency.’ (Cobbe, 2019, p.43). If the teacher had responded in a different way, this may have resulted in the student completely disengaging with or refusing to complete the set task. Tripp has maintained that a critical incident can leave a ‘serious incident of doubt in a young student’s mind, marking a turning point in [their] biography,’ therefore, it is undeniably important as a teacher to understand the needs of your pupils, so that any incidents have a positive impact on their ‘social and intellectual development.’ (Tripp, 2011, p.9)

On the back of this incident, the student has demonstrated elements of the four purposes, that they are ‘ambitious and capable,’ in that they presented their ability to question, communicate effectively, explain their ideas coherently, and are ready to learn. (Donaldson, 2015) This can also link to the ‘healthy, confident individuals’ element, as they presented ‘secure values and established ethical beliefs, are building their mental and emotional well-being by developing confidence, resilience and empathy,’ and the student made a ‘measured decision and managed risk, hav[ing] the confidence to participate’ in the lesson, forming a ‘positive relationship based upon trust and mutual respect’ with the teacher. (Donaldson, 2015) In this critical incident, the student displayed that they had the ‘skills and knowledge to manage everyday life as independently as they [could],’ and they are ‘ready to lead fulfilling lives as [a] valued member of society.’ (Donaldson, 2015)

As aforementioned, Schon also studied reflection, but saw it as having two separate aspects, that of reflection-in-action, and reflection-on-action. The former is a hands on, in the moment approach, which can be presented in a classroom context. He argues that it is the duty of the teacher to find the problem and respond to it quickly. This could be viewed in the same way as Dewey, where it is the role of the teacher to prepare for misconceptions, however, Schon takes it a step further, as he implies that it is his duty to reflect upon the scenario, after the event, to take something from the experience.

An artful teacher sees a child’s difficulty in learning to read not as a defect in the child but as a defect of his own instruction. So he must find a way of explaining what is bothering the pupil. Because the child’s difficulties may be unique, the teacher cannot assume that his repertoire of explanations will suffice... he must be ready to

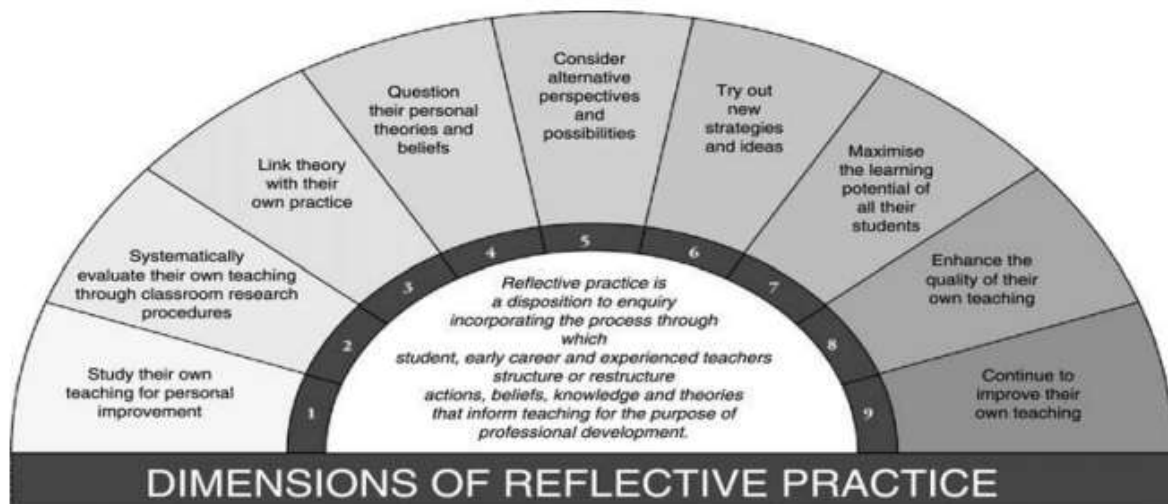
invest new methods and must endeavour to develop in himself the ability to discovering them. (Schön, 2016)

Viewing this in terms of the critical incident, the teacher's knowledge about her students allowed her to plan for any issues that might arise, and she was therefore able to use reflection-in-action to provide a compromise, but also reflection-on-action, to look back at the situation and interpret why it worked well, based on existing knowledge of theories and experience. Critical incidents can be grouped with reflection, as noted by Tripp, 'some phenomenon is observed and noted, which produced a description of what happened and why,' therefore, the way we look at an incident is when we look back on it, presenting a 'value judgement' upon it, describing the 'deeper structures that produce that kind of incident.' (Tripp, 2011, pp. 8,9,25).

Kolb describes learning as 'the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience,' and again, 'stresses the role of formal education in lifelong learning and development of individuals to their full potential as citizens and human beings.' (Kolb, 2015, pp.47,20) Like Schon, Kolb's reflective theory has stages, but he views learning as 'experiential,' arguing that there are four phases (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation), forming a process, that educators must 'touch all the bases' in order to 'reflect, assimilate and distil abstract concepts,' to be 'actively tested and serve as guides in creating new experiences.' (Kolb, 2015, p. 48) Zwozdiak-Myers commented on this, stating that teachers must use this reflective model and place each of the phases 'within the context of past and future actions and experiences,' which can 'expand or overlap,' depending on the problem, and she agreed with Dewey, that 'the ultimate goal is to find a solution to improve the effectiveness of your teaching to enhance pupil learning.' (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2012, p.35)

Gibb's (1988) Reflective Cycle Model is made up of 6 steps which include, description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and finally an action plan. By breaking incidents down in this way, the teacher is able to look at each part individually, 'separating which one is good experience and which is not,' allowing an improvement plan to be put in place. (Ratnaningsih, 2017)

Myers Dimensions of Reflective Practice Model (Figure 1), presents a 9 phases approach to reflection, based on the progress and continual learning and development of the teacher.



(Figure 1 – Myers, taken from Ratnaningsih, 2017)

This provides an all-encompassing view, which can be used throughout all stages of teaching practice, from training to career teachers.

It can therefore be stated that although various theories exist, they have all been developed from the same foundations, on the basis that whether it is at the time, or after the event, teachers must reflect on their practice, to develop and progress as effective practitioners, offering their students the best and most useful experience possible.

Good teaching demands that we progressively become better educated people ourselves, as well as grow in our understanding of our fields... teachers are cultivators of thinking people, we do not simply implement the plans of others; we have to think for ourselves. People who genuinely understand teaching realise it entails considerably more than having knowledge of subject matter, pedagogy, and being gifted, much time is required to discover, test and apply the reflective and reliable. (Simpson et al., 2005, pp. 4-8)

When we think of incidents as being the effect, they must have an underlying cause, and this stance can be applied to behaviour. It has been noted that for new teachers, a 'major preoccupation is how to manage behaviour in the classroom,' raising questions about school policies and discipline.

(Orchard & Winch, 2015, p.23). It is undeniable that some children and young people will demonstrate features of emotional and behavioural difficulties. They may be withdrawn or isolated, disruptive, and disturbing, hyperactive, or lacking concentration; they may have under-developed social skills; or present challenging behaviours. (Welsh Government, 2021, p. 45) There are many different behaviour models and theories, such as Assertive Discipline, developed in the 1970s by Lee Canter, and expanded upon by Marlene Canter's (1979) own work with children with problematic

behaviours. Focusing mostly on 'catching students being good,' their model uses a system of 'rewards and punishments,' to provide 'feedback and reinforcement.' (Malmgren et al., 2005, p.36)

The Logical Consequences model, produced by Rudolf Dreikurs (1968) is based on the notion that 'students' misbehaviour is an outgrowth of their unmet needs,' and the desire and need for 'social recognition,' and bad behaviour occurs when their needs are unfulfilled. (Malmgren et al., 2005, p.37) His model is about helping students 'in meeting their innate need to gain recognition and acceptance,' for the teacher to create an environment of safety and recognition, with an 'emphasis on preventing misbehaviour' by using logical consequences for their actions and 'developing positive relationships with students so they feel accepted.' (Malmgren et al., 2005, p.37) This element of teaching practice was echoed in the critical incident, where the teacher 'avoided a power struggle with the student,' and instead looked for a way that the student could 'feel powerful and consequently valued and recognised,' so by providing a logical alternative, they were able to get on with the task. (Malmgren et al., 2005, p.37)

The final model for exploration is Teacher Effectiveness Training, which was a form of classroom management, introduced by Thomas Gordon (1977). Gordon 'conceptualises the effective management of a classroom [by] shifting the responsibility from teacher to students,' by 'promoting the ways the teacher can empower the students, teaching them how to solve problems themselves.' (Malmgren et al., 2005, p.38) This is similar to Dreikurs, in terms of responsibility and the importance of building relationships, but contrasts Canters, which emphasises the role of the teacher.

'ASD is a behavioural diagnosis,' and

Flexibility is required when social situations do not go as planned or anticipated, or stray away from the familiar areas...in these cases, what is happening does not match the picture the person with ASD had in their head of how things would go...new territory can pose a real challenge. (Cashin, 2020, p.5.)

This explanation links perfectly to the critical incident, as the pupil was 'uncomfortable with the unpredictability associated with change,' to leave his belongings behind was not something he had considered or was used to doing, therefore, the teacher had to present an increased flexibility in thinking, where the pupil was portraying 'reduced flexibility in thinking.' (Cashin, 2020, p.6.) Children with ADH problems are at 'greater risk of school failure and academic difficulties,' expressing 'poor relations with peers,' and they are the most 'frequently found of all disruptive behaviours.' (Van Leir et al., 2004, p. 467) It has been noted that young people are 'well aware of differences in levels of

disruptive behaviour in their peers,’ and argued that sometimes, peers almost ‘reinforce’ such behaviours, by letting them continue, and children with such disorders therefore ‘believe that their behaviour has positive consequences,’ with their peers frequently rejecting them in social settings. (Van Leir et al., 2004, p. 468) It is therefore the duty of the teacher to be aware not only behaviour in the classroom, but also the range of abilities and personalities.

Within this context, Additional Learning Needs (ALN) will be defined as the following -

A child of compulsory school age or person over that age has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she—

(a) has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or

(b) has a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities for education or training of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream maintained schools or mainstream institutions in the further education sector. (Welsh Government, 2021, p. 38)

It is the responsibility of schools in Wales to identify any pupils with ALN and they must deliver Additional Learning Provisions (ALP) to support those they identify as needing additional support. Mainstream schools are also required to ‘designate a person or persons who will have responsibility for coordinating provisions for learners with ALN, known as an additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo).’ (Welsh Government, 2021, p. 81). ALNCos have the responsibility of designating LSAs and Teaching Assistants (TAs), and they must prepare for, create the content of, and review Individual Development Plans (IDPs), which are statutory plans, ‘setting out a description of a child or young person’s ALN, the [necessary] ALP, and other associated information’. (Welsh Government, 2020) In 2018, the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (Wales) ‘unified legislative framework for children and young people across the broader range of 0-25 years,’ reform which set to establish a ‘fairer, integrated and more efficient system for assessment, planning and monitoring provision for learners with ALN.’ (Welsh Government, 2018).

It is the duty of the teaching practitioner as an individual to ‘undertake regular learning in relation to ALN,’ as they will all be involved in ‘teaching and supporting learners’ and have a responsibility to provide the best form of care possible. (Welsh Government, 2021, p. 29) ALP can ‘include support that takes place inside or outside of the mainstream classroom’, but it is important to remember that inclusivity is paramount, and the ‘majority of young people with ALN are supported to participate fully in mainstream education and a whole setting approach is taken to meeting the needs of learners with ALN.’ (Welsh Government, 2021, pp.40, 47) Looking specifically at the critical

incident which forms the basis of this study, the student with ALN had a one-to-one LSA with them during all lesson times within the school. This meant that they were able to participate fully in all lessons, demonstrating their ability and achieving the targets set for them, just like the other pupils in the class. Differentiation is a key element of teacher planning, and as part of the 'whole school strategy', the teacher must also identify the more able and talented (MAT) learners, to be able to develop appropriate resources and provisions. 'Schools need to demonstrate a wide range of assessment strategies to ensure that all types of abilities are recognised and talents identified.' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2013, p. 17). Differentiated tasks can take the form of a worksheet, with the same or similar information on it so that the same outcomes can be achieved, but for MAT learners, there might be more challenging language and inference may be required, and for those who need additional support, there may be less block text and a glossary of terms with their meanings for example. Another working example of this are inference grids, which can be used in all subjects, but they encourage the learner to break things down in sections. The main aspect of the task is in the middle, and they are asked to simply state what they already know/ what the piece of information tells us. Pupils then have the opportunity to challenge themselves by using inference to read between the lines, questioning what's not explicitly stated, and also encouraging them to question what they don't know and need to find out to expand their answers. Differentiated planning is about supporting pupils regardless of their level, to achieve the best outcome possible. It is undeniably important however to recognise those who, 'for various reasons, may not be fulfilling their potential,' and to meet this standard, 'schools have to demonstrate not only that the progress of MAT pupils, but also clear procedures to identify underachievement.' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2013, p. 18) It's about developing strategies to boost those who need increased support, but also providing the differentiated materials to challenge those who are excelling. The term 'effective inclusion' has been used to describe the actions of teachers who 'see themselves as capable of meeting the needs' of the range of learners in their classroom, and are able to 'adopt an inclusive pedagogical approach for all learners, [addressing] structural and cultural barriers to learning.' (Conn and Hutt, 2020, p. 2).

The curriculum reform from Key Stages to Progression Steps allows individuals to work and progress at their own level, to 'access the curriculum where they are, and they're aware of what they need to do for their next steps.' (Conn and Hutt, 2020, p. 7). More emphasis is now put on the 'quality in assessment and teacher reflection' on their own practice than about having to teach specific things, which have been 'seen to benefit learners, including those with ALN.' (Conn and Hutt, 2020, p. 7).

It is undeniable that reflection is one of the most important parts of teaching, and it is their duty to 'review seriously what they have done in the past, with a view to improving their practice in the future.' (Winch et al., 2013, p.4). This practice will enable Dewey's ideal of the ultimate goal to come into fruition, where we are continually developing our practice to positively enhance pupil learning. The fact that no two lessons will be the same, in terms of the time of day, the particular children involved, and various factors that can be of influence, maintains that even though the same material may be being shared, 'good teacher create bespoke lessons to suit the particular needs of their own classes,' based on their ability to build positive relationships with the children, their experience, combined with their knowledge of theories and models, which they apply and 'set in the context in which their work is situated.' (Orchard & Winch, 2015, p.11).

In conclusion, the role of the teacher is so much more than just being an educator or specialist within a subject and relaying knowledge, it is about knowing your students as individuals, so that you know what works for them and what can bring the best academic outcomes for them. It requires a continual working knowledge of educational theories and ideas which can be tried and tested in the classroom, such as the behaviour and reflective models referred to in the literature review. Teachers must forge their own identity and style, based on the foundations set for them by the professors and theorists, and they must combine elements of each of them, in a process of trial and error, to find what makes them the best teacher they can possibly be. 'Children spend a considerable amount of time within educational settings, so to underestimate the impact of this environment would be foolish.' (Karim et al. 2014, p. 260). Students are shaped by their environment, and their morals are based on what's presented to them as acceptable, therefore the teacher must reflect on all elements of their thinking, practice, and ethos at all times, in order to encourage positive pupils who are striving to achieve the best of their abilities not only in the classroom but in all aspects of their lives.

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