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

Introduction

A critical incident is defined by Tripp as those which "appear to be 'typical' rather than 'critical' at first sight, but are rendered critical through analysis." By applying critical judgement to routine incidents in education, Tripp argues that insight can be gleaned into the "underlying trends, motives and structures" which shape the experience of classroom learning (1993, p. 25). A method valued for its promotion of reflexive teaching, critical incidents often reveal aspects of one's teaching which had previously gone unnoticed: these areas are then ripe for re-consideration and self-critique. It is crucial that the reflective aspect of teaching be authentic, and considered an integral part of continuing professional development. As Galea cautions, reflective practice in teaching is liable to become a concept "engulfed in systems of performativity", without meaningful engagement with modifying practice (2012, p. 248). This assignment will identify one critical incident and use it as an impetus to explore the merits and limitations of Assessment for Learning (AfL), as well as the tension between constructivist theories of inquiry-based learning and direct instruction.

School Context

School A is an English medium comprehensive school with around 1,500 pupils, around 300 of which attend the Sixth Form. 4% of pupils at School A are eligible for free school meals, significantly lower than the 16.4% national average. Around 8% of pupils have an additional learning need, again lower than the national average of 19.2%. The majority of pupils who attend School A are from a white British background, and very few speak Welsh at home (Estyn, 2019). The school is situated in an affluent area, with a local reputation of high achievement and success. The observed class was around thirty Year Eight pupils of mixed ability participating in a Welsh lesson. The class had been observed in several lessons prior to the resulting critical incident and demeanour varied greatly depending on the culture created by each teacher; in some lessons they worked in silence, while in others there was

conversation and movement around the classroom. In the Welsh lesson referenced in Appendices C and G pupils were talkative, lively, and active.

Methodology

Research methods, far from being merely a functional tool, are "concerned with understanding the world," and contribute to determining what is "deemed valuable" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 3). Therefore, the merits and limitations of critical incident methodology were carefully considered and found to be germane to the aims of the research at School A. The critical incident or case study method is popularly used in educational research as a means of analysing classroom incidents. Both critical incidents and case studies are qualitative methods which explore events bounded by time and activity: they are discrete instances which focus on a particular event. Various methods of data collection are used when undertaking a case study – in this case non-participatory observations were conducted during which field notes were taken. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines outline that "confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research." (BERA, p. 21) This principle of confidentiality was adhered to strictly throughout the execution of the observations the resulting research.

Case studies and critical incidents are useful tools when engaging with phenomena embedded in complex structures. While similar, the case study is somewhat wider in breadth than the critical incident and often deals with a larger set of data. In contrast, the critical incident, at least at the point of its inception, is concentrated on a single occurrence. Critical incidents can also be highly useful because of the richness of detail they allow for; locating a critical incident within its various contexts can facilitate fertile research. Deep analysis of a topic, as Tripp explains, can occur either through focus: the "clarification of the whole picture by increasing the definition of the existing details to make it all clearer" or through enlargement: "changing the size of the things in the picture so we see more of the picture in less detail, or less of the picture in more" (2012, p. 33). Creswell definitively describes a case study as "a single instance of a bounded system" (1994, p. 12). Therein lies both its advantage and disadvantage: through a single instance one can glimpse the working of systems in motion – equally, one must refrain from making assured statements about exactly how the "system" operates, based only on the evidence of a "single instance." Furthermore, case studies cannot predict how situations are likely to develop, nor can they examine perceptions of a given topic in the way a survey might. Ultimately, one must acknowledge that though case studies and critical incidents can be somewhat limited in scope and difficult to derive generalised precepts from, they nevertheless lend themselves to detailed analysis such as will be undertaken here.

Critical Incident

If the first of the Four Purposes of Professor Donaldson's "Successful Futures" is to be achieved, namely that Welsh children and young people become ambitious, capable learners, then effective assessment is paramount (Donaldson, 2015). The critical incident which serves as the catalyst for this research was observed on the 26th September 2019 in School A, during a Welsh lesson with Year Eight pupils of mixed ability. The lesson's task had been to complete an extended writing piece on television programmes in Welsh. Upon completion of this writing task pupils were asked to peer assess their work. Sheets involving tick lists of questions such as "Have words been spelt correctly?" and "Have a variety of tenses been used?" were used to facilitate the peer assessment. As these sheets were distributed Pupil X expressed to her table that she disliked them, referring to them as "teacher sheets". This made clear her opinion that feedback is expected or preferred to come from the teacher. Subsequently, Pupil X shouted to the class teacher "Sir, what if you don't *know* whether things are spelt correctly?!" The teacher responded that the sheet should be filled out to the best of the pupils' knowledge. The pertinent question posed by Pupil X reveals the tension inherent to peer assessment: it necessitates the teacher's assumption that pupils have enough knowledge to make accurate judgements about their peers' work, which may not always be the case. This initiated a consideration of the benefits and limitations of peer assessment and of AfL techniques more generally. It is important to note at the outset is that the issue at hand is not a dearth of success criteria; as noted in Appendix C, the pupils were provided an extensive checklist outlining the features of a successful piece of writing in this instance.

The second addition to first 'purpose' as outlined in Successful Futures is that pupils are to build up both a body of knowledge and the skills to connect and apply that knowledge in different contexts (Donaldson, 2015). The obstacle on this occasion was that the pupils lacked a large enough body of knowledge about the Welsh language needed to implement the criteria and make the correct judgements. They appeared insufficiently secure in their ability to recognise different tenses in Welsh, or whether words were spelt correctly. This appeared to detract from the usefulness of the activity as the pupils themselves were aware that the feedback they were to receive was likely incorrect: someone whose knowledge of Welsh was similarly insufficient was providing it. In addition, the teacher had received no valuable information about the pupils' mastery of expressing opinions or using different tenses in Welsh through the activity. Successful Futures' pedagogical principle number seven reads "good teaching and learning means employing assessment for learning principles." The section outlines how peer feedback is used with a view to providing a "safe environment to articulate and test ideas." (Donaldson, 2015, p. 68) Being embedded into the thinking of the new

curriculum in this way, it is important to engage with the benefits and difficulties of implementing AfL in the classroom.

Literature Review

The observed critical incident is an example of peer assessment in action, a technique influenced by Piaget's calls for a more active learning style in the 1970s. Some go as far to label it a "manifestation of social constructivism", because it conceives of learning as occurring jointly through collaboration in the vein of Vygotsky's thought (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000). Peer assessment involves the pupil taking on the role of marker and assessor, and so certainly has constructivist characteristics. It falls under one of the five key strategies of formative assessment: "activating learners as instructional resources for one another." (Wiliam, 2018, p. 2) Formative assessment, once distinct from AfL but now largely synonymous, is defined by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam as:

> All those activities undertaken by teachers – and by their students in assessing themselves – that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities. (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p.2)

Wiliam makes the distinction that an assessment is never formative nor summative in nature in isolation; the teacher's use of the data provided from assessments renders it formative or summative. An assessment is formative to the extent that data is "elicited, interpreted, and used…to make decisions about the next steps in instruction" which are better founded than ones that would have been made without said data (Wiliam, 2017). A popular and widely adopted teaching theory, AfL is considered by many to be an essential tool for effective teaching in Wales.

Despite its seemingly successful integration into many schools, AfL has received substantial critiques of both its theory and implementation. Perhaps the most notable of these comes from David Didau, a popular author in the field of education research. Didau defends his main concern with the concept of AfL: its predication on the notion that teachers can assess what pupils have learnt in one lesson and adjust their subsequent lessons accordingly. Didau disagrees that this is possible because teachers are at best able to view only performance, with true learning remaining invisible and undetectable (Didau, 2014). One therefore cannot conclude that successful performance in one lesson equates to learning having taken place, nor that learning having taken place in one lesson equates to mastery of that topic. Learning for Didau is conceived of as the movement of information from the short-term memory to the long-term memory, which happens over time and therefore cannot be measured during the time frame of a lesson.

It would appear, however, that Wiliam confronts this issue while first outlining his case. He outlines the, in his opinion, erroneous view that in order to be truly formative, assessments must produce data which improves learning compared with the learning which would have occurred in its absence. Wiliam takes this to be entirely too limiting of a definition: because "learning is just too unpredictable for us to ever guarantee that learning will take place on a particular occasion." (He also goes on to characterise this definition as limiting because it is impossible to prove that the learning which *did* occur as a result of the evidence gleaned from the assessment is better than that which *would have* occurred without it – because this simply did not occur) (Wiliam, 2017, p. 49). Wiliam's case is that outcomes are *likely* to be improved if areas rife with misconceptions are revisited, or if an English teacher moves onto the next topic only after verifying that her pupils can give various examples of adjectives. This is unchallenged by Didau and seems a wholly reasonable position. Therefore, Wiliam and Didau seem in fact to be in agreement that learning is illusive. Both clearly appreciate the nuances of how pupils learn and understand that often the best teachers can do is infer based on approximations. A comprehensive meta-analysis on the subject found that peer assessment is best conducted in very small groups, and should focus on an overall mark using well-understood criteria rather than several individual dimensions, involve the pupils in a discussion of the criteria, and avoid using the extent of agreement between teacher and pupil marks as a measure of validity (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000). Perhaps peer assessment, and other strategies for "activating students as resources for one another" should be implemented with great care and awareness of the large number of caveats associated with them (Leahy and Wiliam, 2015, p.3). If the stipulations outlined in research are not considered, the strategy's value risks becoming outweighed by the time it takes to complete.

Aside from its attempts to measure the unmeasurable, it appears Didau's real contention with AfL techniques lies with the fact that they are too pupil-centred, and can be unreliable and time consuming when compared with methods such as direct teaching. Inquiry learning (also discovery learning, minimally guided learning, problem-based learning, or experiential learning) refers to a teaching style wherein pupils, instead of being told essential information, endeavour to 'construct' or 'discover' this information. The contributions of cognitive science regarding memory are of vital importance to this issue. Willingham asserts that "memory is the residue of thought", therefore what pupils spend time thinking about, they tend to remember (Willingham, p. 54). Any activity during which pupils are not directly engaging with the content they need to learn is of little to no value. During the peer assessment task, it would not be a leap to venture that the pupils spent their time wondering if words were spelt correctly, and guessing what the past tense looks like in Welsh. If one follows Willingham's line of reasoning, this time would be better spent reviewing words they have learnt to spell, or practicing using

the past tense in sentences. Considering whether success criteria has been met without the large body of knowledge needed to recognise the success criteria is difficult to regard as a useful activity - pupils must have, at some point, been taught successfully and be secure in their grasp of how to express opinions in Welsh.

Cognitive science also teaches us that long-term memory is “the central, dominant structure of human cognition.” (Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark, 2006, p. 76) The information stored in the long-term memory is vitally important to every action completed and every thought entertained. It follows, therefore, that the more information stored in the long-term memory about a topic, the more skilled one is in that area: the more facts one knows about Welsh grammar, the more adept one becomes at spotting the past tense. The issue arises when inquiry-based tasks are implemented in the form of a group project or task. The working memory, which can hold only a very small amount of information, is coping with the burden of having to search for solutions to the problems presented, and as such “it is not available and cannot be used to learn.” (Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark, 2006, p. 77) Having pupils tackle projects with minimal guidance is found to overload the working memory and many take this as evidence of the fact that such approaches are not conductive to learning. Many studies have drawn attention to the fact that inquiry learning involves severe limitations. To answer this, evidence is often cited suggesting that when pupils generate knowledge themselves, they consider its meaning more deeply and therefore retain it. What goes unconsidered, however, is that pupils retain incorrect knowledge they ‘discover’ just as readily as correct knowledge (Willingham, 2003). If a pupil guesses incorrectly that it a word is spelt correctly and ticks the corresponding box, the pupil who receives that assessment back has no way of knowing that their spelling needs addressing unless and until the teacher intervenes.

Perhaps the most relevant contribution of cognitive science to this area is its qualitative distinctions between the mental patterns of novices and of experts, which are well-documented. Experts are found to thrive when given projects and offered minimal guidance, because they have the vast amount of knowledge required stored in their long-term memory and can select and employ this with ease. Novices, in contrast, have yet to build this knowledge, and so naturally struggle and often fail to make educational gains under minimal guidance. Despite this, minimally guided projects remain an ever-popular method. Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark characterise this phenomenon as an “improper use of inquiry as a paradigm on which to base an instructional strategy.” (2006, p. 79) Teaching pupils to emulate the ways experts learn by having them work on real-life projects is proven to be an unsuccessful method in shaping pupils into experts themselves. Considering these findings, the issue with peer assessment may not be the way in which it is implemented, but where it is placed within a sequence of learning. Had Pupil X not been a novice in basic Welsh but an expert, as Appendix

G notes, it would have likely been quite a useful tool to for pupils to gauge which aspects of their work needed developing.

Another difficulty for inquiry learning recognised by Daisy Christodoulou is that any activity which requires background knowledge without teaching it is inherently inequitable. Assigning projects or tasks without providing the corresponding guidance automatically benefits those pupils with large amounts of knowledge gained elsewhere, likely from home. These pupils tend to be more economically and socially privileged than others which only serves to widen the gap between those who possess knowledge and those who do not. In the current critical incident this problem did not arise, but had there been a pupil in the class whose parents encouraged their learning of Welsh they would have had a significant advantage over the rest of the class in completing the peer assessment. They would have then reaped the benefits of solidifying the success criteria for extended Welsh writing in their minds, while their peer received accurate and helpful feedback: all benefits unavailable to the others in the class.

Christodoulou takes the issue with inquiry-based learning to be a confusion of aims and methods. The aim of education is for pupils to engage with real-world problems and discover solutions to them; this does not, however, require that the methods used to reach this goal should only consist of repeated attempts to discover solutions to real-world problems (Christodoulou, 2013). A particularly illuminating example of Christodoulou's is an example of an art lesson wherein pupils were taught to daydream as a means of acting like a designer. She follows persuasively that the task of an art lesson should not be to instruct pupils how best to daydream, but to equip pupils with a body of artistic knowledge vast enough that their daydreams have value. It is not the act of daydreaming which facilitates successful design, but the knowledge of colour, shape, line etc. (Christodoulou, 2014).

The consensus is clear; minimally guided approaches to teaching wherein the pupils are constructors of knowledge work in opposition to what cognitive science teaches us about how we learn, and are therefore ineffective until a high level of mastery is reached. The superiority of guided learning over minimally guided learning does not imply that constructivist leaning AfL techniques such as peer assessment are wholly ineffectual; it does, however, imply that these techniques must be considered carefully before being implemented, and evaluated seriously against the usefulness of more direct methods.

Reflection and Evaluation

After reflecting on the critical incident at School A and the issue raised by Pupil X's argument, it seems as though peer assessment and related AfL strategies require consideration as to their goals. If the activity is intended to measure mastery of a topic, I might question whether my pupils have in fact been taught this information thoroughly and successfully at a previous stage. Do the pupils understand not only what the elements of the success criteria are, but how to use them in their own work and identify them confidently in others'? Perhaps other formative assessment tools would be helpful prior to peer assessment, allowing the teacher to confirm that pupils have the necessary knowledge before assessing work. The Professional Teaching Standards for Wales state in the chapter on pedagogy that assessment should be used to "pinpoint learning needs for all learners." (Welsh Government, 2017) In the true spirit of AfL, this refers to identifying areas of weakness as the learning is occurring. However, in the case of peer assessment I may consider placing it towards the end of units of work or when I feel that knowledge is strong, as that is when the research suggests the benefits of the activity are fully accessible.

As Successful Futures is refined and developed, I feel as though all education professionals can benefit from appreciating the nuances of the techniques being recommended to them; the appropriateness of the method for the learning should be of paramount importance. Evaluating the literature surrounding AfL and inquiry learning has impressed upon me that no technique is beneficial in and of itself. Working creatively, using whiteboards or peer marking are devoid of value unless they contribute positively to learning. This also speaks to the overarching need for teaching to be based firmly in scientific research as opposed to which methods feel appealing or which are currently widely adopted. Ultimately, the appropriateness of any technique can only be gauged by the teacher and pupils engaging in the learning, and so recommendations, whether from government guidelines or scientific publications, always require a certain level of interpretation and adaptation.

The reluctance to use directed teaching for fear of pupils lapsing into passivity has plainly led to pupils being set tasks either with no guidance, or with a cursory introduction to the area of study. Furthermore, sharing and analysing success criteria cannot be considered an adequate substitute for the teaching of core knowledge. In the example of Pupil X's task, she understood fully what the success criteria would have her look for, but nevertheless could not identify them because she lacked the relevant specific knowledge. In the absence of direct teaching methods teaching the grammar of the Welsh language, correct sentence structure, and substantial amounts of vocabulary, having pupils mark the implementation of these features may be of little value. It might be added that this is not a symptom of poor-quality

teaching: the critical incident occurred in a school in which pupils regularly achieve outstanding grades at GCSE and A-Level. This tells me that the over-reliance on techniques which de-emphasise the transference of knowledge from teacher to pupil is not confined to poorly performing schools.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the use of non-participatory observation successfully revealed a critical incident suitable for further analysis. There are challenges associated with observations that gladly were not detrimental in this case; the Hawthorne effect tells us that any form of observation tends to alter the subject of the observation. Despite this, the environments observed were largely naturalistic, with the critical incident being a protestation which felt unheeded by the presence of an observer in the classroom. The Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership detail the importance of both learners and teachers being able to “see, map and reflect upon learning” (Welsh Government, 2017). Just as learners are expected to reflect on their learning in order to better it, teachers must reflect upon their practice using methods like the critical incident in order to continue moving forward in their professional development. The incident highlighted some difficulties which can occur with AfL in the classroom, and led to an evaluation of the debate which suggests a disparity between AfL and directed teaching. Through an assessment of the key authors in the field it became clear that the considered strategies, like so many others, are not universally effective but situationally, and require great research and experimentation in order to be successful in the classroom.

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Appendix A

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: Thursday 26th September 2019
Lesson details: History, history of medicine focusing on Hippocrates and Galen. The pupils were to research Hippocrates and Galen using iPads, answering questions which were displayed on the board. The teacher then read a passage from the information booklets, and the pupils filled in any information they had missed.
Classroom culture (Are the students focused on learning?) The pupils are on the whole completely focused on learning. The classroom culture was very quiet, with only whispering going on between pairs, which seemed to be concerned with the task at hand. One incident of a boy using the front-facing camera on his iPad to look at himself and make funny faces. It is clear that the iPads are easily misused by a very small number of pupils.
Objectives (Is there a clear purpose to the lesson? How do the lesson activities promote that purpose?) There were no lesson objectives displayed or discussed, apart from reference to the fact that they were to learn about Hippocrates and Galen. The main task was already displayed on the board as the children came in and settled down.
Direction (Are the students clear about what they are doing and how to do it well?) The pupils seemed very clear about what they were doing. They were given examples of good websites to use to gather information. There was one question which a number of pupils were unable to answer. The issue seemed to be that the questions were quite specific, and it is difficult to research a topic you know nothing about: you do not know what to search for because you do not yet know what the topic entails. This was addressed when the teacher went through the answers after the task.
Access and challenge (Are all students able to engage in the lesson? Are all students challenged?) There was an extra question at the bottom of the board to answer if the pupils finished before others. The teacher made reference to the fact that they were all working at different levels. The ICT was an issue: some pupil's iPads were not working, and therefore some well-behaved boys were selected to go and work on computers outside the classroom. At the beginning it hindered some pupil's ability to access the task, but after moving some pupils to computers everyone was able to research using ICT.

Assessment How does the teacher assess student understanding before, during and after the lesson? How is this used in their teaching? The teacher moved around the classroom offering help and checking that the pupils had understood the task. Hands-up method used for questioning, with very short wait times after posing the question before accepting a hand.
Specifics / Critical Incidents Are there particular telling moments and examples which it would be helpful to discuss? Perhaps the boy on the camera of the iPad, focusing on classroom management when using ICT.

Appendix B

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: Thursday 26th September 2019
Lesson details: Ethics & Philosophy – The Nativity The pupils had a spelling test as a bell task, using words related to their topic of study. They then watched a BBC adaptation of the nativity story, making detailed notes concerning the events and teachings related to them.
Classroom culture (Are the students focused on learning?) The pupils were largely totally focused on learning. They were silent while watching the film, and asked relevant questions during and after it was shown. There was one boy who seemed to be less engaged with the potential to become disruptive. The behaviour was largely ignored and the boy later volunteered to answer questions.
Objectives (Is there a clear purpose to the lesson? How do the lesson activities promote that purpose?) I don't believe there were Lesson Objectives displayed, but the pupils seemed aware that they were learning about the nativity story in order to be able to answer an exam-style question on it.
Direction (Are the students clear about what they are doing and how to do it well?) The pupils seemed to understand fully that they were to make notes as the film was shown. After specific instructions the teacher asked a random pupil (cold-calling) what she had just said to do, thus ensuring that the entire class heard again what was expected of them.
Access and challenge (Are all students able to engage in the lesson? Are all students challenged?) It seemed as though the vast majority of pupils were engaged and challenged by the content of the lesson. The teacher was pausing the film to ask questions and check for understanding.
Assessment How does the teacher assess student understanding before, during and after the lesson? How is this used in their teaching? The teacher was pausing the film to ask questions and check for understanding. The plenary of the lesson was to give the teacher a word associated with the nativity before they could leave the classroom. The pupils were all able to do so, proving that they had absorbed the information from the film and from the teacher and were able to recall it easily.

Specifics / Critical Incidents Are there particular telling moments and examples which it would be helpful to discuss? A pupil pronounced a word incorrectly and was not corrected. He was chewing a pen lid while asking a question and the teacher said that she would speak to him after he removed the pen lid from his mouth. The pronunciation could be linked to oracy and the other to behaviour management strategies.

Appendix C

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: Thursday 26th September 2019
Lesson details: Cymraeg The pupils were to continue writing a letter in Welsh to a friend on the topic of television programmes. Upon completion the letters were to be peer assessed.
Classroom culture (Are the students focused on learning?) Generally, the letters were being written but the pupils were not focused on learning. As the topic of the letters was television, there was much discussion, not in Welsh, of different programmes. The atmosphere was friendly and chatty, with questions about Welsh phrases being posed.
Objectives (Is there a clear purpose to the lesson? How do the lesson activities promote that purpose?) The Learning Objectives were delivered orally. The teacher explained at the front of the class what the task was and why it was important to complete it.
Direction (Are the students clear about what they are doing and how to do it well?) This was done particularly well: the task was explained orally, then displayed on the board where it was broken down into key things that the letter should include. The pupils put their hands up or shouted for the teacher to ask questions when they were unsure of vocabulary.
Access and challenge (Are all students able to engage in the lesson? Are all students challenged?) All pupils were able to write their letters, asking for support when they needed it, either from peers or the teacher. As a task, it was well suited to differentiation as some students had written short letters using limited vocabulary, while others had written extended pieces.
Assessment How does the teacher assess student understanding before, during and after the lesson? How is this used in their teaching? There was little use of questioning by the teacher. When the letters were complete, they were peer assessed using marking sheets. The pupils marked another random pupil's work, ticking off criteria such as if things were spelt correctly, if a variety of opinions had been expressed, and if different tenses had been used.

Specifics / Critical Incidents Are there particular telling moments and examples which it would be helpful to discuss? A pupil upon being given her peer marking sheet exclaimed that she didn't like those sheets because they were "teacher sheets." She then later asked "what if you don't *know* if things are spelt right!?" in response to the peer assessment questions. This could be explored in terms of the limits of AfL.

Appendix D

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: Wednesday 2nd October 2019
Lesson details: Art, sketching spheres and using inks to create light & shadow. The pupils were to sketch spheres in their sketchbooks, then using yellow ink add colour to their sphere, focusing on creating light and shadow.
Classroom culture (Are the students focused on learning?) The pupils were wholly focused on learning, they seemed keen to perform well in the task and listened carefully while the teacher explained. They performed the task quietly.
Objectives (Is there a clear purpose to the lesson? How do the lesson activities promote that purpose?) There were no lesson objectives displayed, but the teacher showed the pupils an example of the work they were expected to produce by the end of the lesson, so it appeared clear what the objective of the lesson was.
Direction (Are the students clear about what they are doing and how to do it well?) The pupils seemed very clear about what they were to do. The teacher used a visualiser at the beginning of the lesson to model how to best sketch the sphere and how to use the ink well. The teacher went over common mistakes made when using ink, despite this a few pupils still made these errors. I believe this is because working with ink is particularly difficult, and not because of a lack of attention payed to the explanation.
Access and challenge (Are all students able to engage in the lesson? Are all students challenged?) All the pupils seemed happy to engage with the lesson's task. There did not seem to be issues with some pupils being incapable while others found it too easy: the task was easily differentiable – less artistically inclined pupils worked at emulating the teacher's example while more artistic pupils focused on the detail of their shading, making their work as skilled as possible. All pupils ended up with the same outcome.
Assessment How does the teacher assess student understanding before, during and after the lesson? How is this used in their teaching? The teacher checked for understanding, asking pupils if there were any questions and if they all understood. She then moved among the classroom offering advice based off the work which was being produced.

Specifics / Critical Incidents Are there particular telling moments and examples which it would be helpful to discuss? There was a pupil in the class with a reputation for being somewhat disruptive, and the teacher made a point of asking if he was okay and checking if he was listening. This can be seen as an attempt to keep him on track and engaged with the task at hand.

Appendix E

Prifysgol Cymru
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Yr Athrofa
Addysg a'r Dyniaethau
Education and Humanities

Model Beirniad Wedi Adfyfyrio (BWA)
Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model

Dyddiad/*Date*: Thursday 26th September 2019

Digwyddiad critigol (Ffocws)/*Critical incident (focus)*: Pupil distracted while using iPad for research

Profiad/ *Experience*	
Teimladau/ *Feelings* *Beth yw eich teimladau ynghylch y profiad?* *"What are your feelings regarding the experience?"*	I felt concerned that the teacher was unaware that a pupil was entirely distracted. I could also empathize with the pupil – it is difficult not to become distracted when you are given a long time to complete an open-ended task.
Cofio a Deall/ *Remember and Understand* *"Allwch chi restru elfennau'r achos yng nghyd-destun y dysgu?"* *"Can you list the aspects of the incident in the context of learning?"*	The pupils were completing a research task on iPads researching historical figures and answering specific questions which were displayed on the board. The time given was around half an hour, and after a while I observed that one boy was using the front facing camera of the iPad to look at himself and make funny faces. The class was otherwise very focused, and he proceeded to return to his research.
Gwerthuso a dadansoddi/ *Evaluate and analyse* *"Beth y gellid ei gadw yr un fath i sicrhau addysgu a dysgu effeithiol yn y dyfodol?"* *"What could be kept the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?"*	The pupils were granted much independence in their learning, which they seemed to respond well to. The teacher was offering support with their task, which they took as needed. The discussion held after the research activity was largely directed teaching, which seemed to be effective. The pupils listened attentively and made notes as appropriate. Perhaps the research task should have taken place over a shorter period of time with a longer discussion.
Casgliadau a chamau gweithredu/ *Conclusions and actions* *"Beth yw eich atebion posibl i'r mater a nodwyd?"* *"Beth y gellid ei wneud nesaf?"* *"What are your possible solutions to the issue identified?"* *"What could be done next?"*	The research activity could have been more of a starter, with there being 5 minutes for searching each question, then come together as a class to discuss. This might have kept the pupil's attention on the task at hand rather than having long periods of time when no-one checks if they are on task.
Y profiad newydd / *Transformed experience*	

Appendix F

Prifysgol Cymru
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Yr Athrofa
Addysg a'r Dyniaethau
Education and Humanities

Model Beirniad Wedi Adfyfyrio (BWA)
Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model

Dyddiad/*Date*: Thursday 26th September 2019

Digwyddiad critigol (Ffocws)/*Critical incident (focus)*: Uncorrected pronunciation

Profiad/ *Experience*	
Teimladau/ *Feelings* *Beth yw eich teimladau ynghylch y profiad?* *"What are your feelings regarding the experience?"*	I was feeling curious regarding whether the pronunciation had gone unheard or just uncorrected. I was also wondering why the pupil was visibly less engaged then the entire rest of the class.
Cofio a Deall/ *Remember and Understand* *"Allwch chi restru elfennau'r achos yng nghyd-destun y dysgu?"* *"Can you list the aspects of the incident in the context of learning?"*	A pupil pronounced a word incorrectly and was not corrected. He was chewing a pen lid while asking a question and the teacher said that she would speak to him after he removed the pen lid from his mouth. He did so, and later asked and responded to questions voluntarily.
Gwerthuso a dadansoddi/ *Evaluate and analyse* *"Beth y gellid ei gadw yr un fath i sicrhau addysgu a dysgu effeithiol yn y dyfodol?"* *"What could be kept the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?"*	The incident reinforced the expectations of behavior that the school has for its pupils, which the pupil responded to successfully. The teacher impressed upon the pupil that his behavior was not living up to the expectations and he subsequently removed the item he was chewing from his mouth.
Casgliadau a chamau gweithredu/ *Conclusions and actions* *"Beth yw eich atebion posibl i'r mater a nodwyd?"* *"Beth y gellid ei wneud nesaf?"* *"What are your possible solutions to the issue identified?"* *"What could be done next?"*	Perhaps the situation could have been noticed and commented upon sooner, with the teacher considering why the pupil seemed unengaged enough to require the stimulus of the pen lid in his mouth. Perhaps he had completed the work before others and had tired of waiting, or perhaps he had not understood the task in the first place and the chewing of the item was an effect of anxiety.
Y profiad newydd / *Transformed experience*	

Appendix G

Prifysgol Cymru
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Yr Athrofa
Addysg a'r Dyniaethau
Education and Humanities

Model Beirniad Wedi Adfyfyrio (BWA)
Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model

Dyddiad/*Date*: Thursday 26th September 2019

Digwyddiad critigol (Ffocws)/*Critical incident (focus)*: Peer assessment problem

Profiad/ *Experience*	
Teimladau/ *Feelings* *Beth yw eich teimladau ynghylch y profiad?* *"What are your feelings regarding the experience?"*	I felt mostly sympathetic towards the pupil who had expressed exasperation with the peer marking, as she clearly felt insufficiently confident in her Welsh to assess other's work.
Cofio a Deall/ *Remember and Understand* *"Allwch chi restru elfennau'r achos yng nghyd-destun y dysgu?"* *"Can you list the aspects of the incident in the context of learning?"*	A pupil upon being given her peer marking sheet exclaimed that she didn't like those sheets because they were "teacher sheets." She then later asked "what if you don't *know* if things are spelt right!?" in response to the peer assessment questions.
Gwerthuso a dadansoddi/ *Evaluate and analyse* *"Beth y gellid ei gadw yr un fath i sicrhau addysgu a dysgu effeithiol yn y dyfodol?"* *"What could be kept the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?"*	Peer assessment is an established method of AfL and clearly is an effective tool in most settings. The ability to see and learn from other's work is valuable and should continue. The reflection which was taking place, if the pupils' knowledge matched the task, would have been valuable for pupils to see which elements of their work needed improving.
Casgliadau a chamau gweithredu/ *Conclusions and actions* *"Beth yw eich atebion posibl i'r mater a nodwyd?"* *"Beth y gellid ei wneud nesaf?"* *"What are your possible solutions to the issue identified?"* *"What could be done next?"*	The pupil in this instance was expressing the frustration which she felt came from the fact that she was doing the teacher's job – marking. Perhaps a further explanation of the benefits of peer assessing, or more support with the actual process could have benefitted the pupil and others. Or perhaps peer assessment was simply not the right strategy to implement at that moment, another AfL strategy may have been more appropriate.
Y profiad newydd / *Transformed experience*	

Appendix H

Prifysgol Cymru
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Yr Athrofa
Addysg a'r Dyniaethau
Education and Humanities

Model Beirniad Wedi Adfyfyrio (BWA)
Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model

Dyddiad/*Date*: 2nd October 2019

Digwyddiad critigol (Ffocws)/*Critical incident (focus):* Behaviour Management

Profiad/ *Experience*	
Teimladau/ *Feelings* *Beth yw eich teimladau ynghylch y profiad?* *"What are your feelings regarding the experience?"*	I felt encouraged that the teacher was aware that the pupil required extra consideration, and that she was using means that were not punitive or humiliating but nevertheless reminding him of the behavior expected of him.
Cofio a Deall/ *Remember and Understand* *"Allwch chi restru elfennau'r achos yng nghyd-destun y dysgu?"* *"Can you list the aspects of the incident in the context of learning?"*	The pupil in question was moving around the classroom and talking to others while everyone else was near-silent. The teacher would routinely stop and ask if he was okay, or if he needed anything, or ask that he just listen for a moment more. The pupil responded well to these reminders, changing his behavior accordingly.
Gwerthuso a dadansoddi/ *Evaluate and analyse* *"Beth y gellid ei gadw yr un fath i sicrhau addysgu a dysgu effeithiol yn y dyfodol?"* *"What could be kept the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?"*	It seemed effective to use reminders and check-ins rather than to allow the behavior to escalate and then telling the pupil off. This method seemed to acknowledge that this pupil was always going to be over-stimulated and was always going to talk when others were silent, and that that was okay and reminders would be available for him when needed.
Casgliadau a chamau gweithredu/ *Conclusions and actions* *"Beth yw eich atebion posibl i'r mater a nodwyd?"* *"Beth y gellid ei wneud nesaf?"* *"What are your possible solutions to the issue identified?"* *"What could be done next?"*	I think encouraging teachers to remind pupils of what they should be doing rather than what they should not be doing is largely an effective strategy. It characterizes interactions between teachers and pupils as forward-looking, rather than giving out rows. This undoubtedly is a more effective strategy for behavior management.
Y profiad newydd / *Transformed experience*	