

LEVEL 6 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

Student name:	Luke Gareth Kinsey	Student ID number:	1703089
Programme:	Primary		
Module:	Principles of Pedagogy		
Module code:	M6X01438/C	Contribution to Overall Module Assessment (%):	100%
Lecturer:	Siân Brooks	Internal Verifier:	Siân Brooks
Assignment Title:	'Describe a learning event which has happened during your recent school experience. Reflect upon what took place, connecting events to theories of learning and teaching. Make recommendations about how you could improve your own practice in the light of this. Produce a poster to illustrate how you would develop the elements of an effective learning environment.'	Word count (or equivalent):	5,000 or equivalent.
Submission deadline:	17/10/18 (23.59)	Return date of provisional marks & written feedback:	14/11/18
Submission method:	All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.) Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark. Penalties for late submission: Up to one week late, maximum mark of 40%. Over one week late, 0%. Only the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve a change to submission dates.		
Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.		

Module Learning Outcomes (from module syllabus)
1. understand, synthesise and evaluate the main theories that underpinning learning, behaviour and assessment in the primary school 2. reflect critically on how learning theories inform the planning and provision of high quality learning environments, demonstrating a clear understanding of how theory and practice are interrelated 3. organise knowledge and learning through the use of a range of information sources, and present work appropriately.

STUDENT FEEDBACK FORM

This section details the *extent* to which the assessment criteria are demonstrated by you, which in turn determines your mark. The marks available for each category of skill are shown. Lecturers will use the space provided to comment on the achievement of the task(s), including those areas in which you have performed well and areas that would benefit from development/improvement.

Generic Assessment Criteria	Marks available	Marks awarded
1. Engagement with Literature Skills		
2. Knowledge and Understanding Skills		
3. Cognitive and Intellectual Skills		
4. Practical Application Skills		
5. Transferable Skills for Life and Professional Practice		

Assessment Mark (Assessment marks are subject to ratification at the Exam Board. These comments and marks are to give feedback on module work and are for guidance only until they are confirmed.)	Late Submission Penalties (tick if appropriate)		%
	Up to 1 week late (40% Max)		
	Over 1 week late (0%)		

‘Describe a learning event which has happened during your recent school experience. Reflect upon what took place, connecting events to theories of learning and teaching. Make recommendations about how you could improve your own practice in the light of this. Produce a poster to illustrate how you would develop the elements of an effective learning environment.’

Introduction:

During this assignment, I will detail a learning event that took place whilst I was on a recent school visit. I will then analyse the learning theories adopted during this particular event. The main theories that will be analysed will be the ‘social constructivists’ theory, made famous from the ideas that came from Vygotsky (1978), and ‘behaviourist’ theory. Finally, I will describe my ideal learning environment and the benefits it would have upon my future teaching.

The setting that I visited was a large Primary School within South Wales. It caters for pupils aged 3-11 years old and the average percentage of pupils that qualify for ‘free school meals’ is 33.6%. Whilst I was observing around the school and within classrooms I made sure I adhered to the ethical guidelines proposed by BERA (2018). In accordance to this, the pupil I observed will be named ‘Child X’ and I will use the pseudonym ‘Teacher A’ to refer to the classroom teacher.

Part 1 – Observation:

I was given the opportunity to observe pupils within a mixed aged class, with age ranges between seven and nine years old. The specific observation technique that I chose to adopt was ‘Target Child’ (Papatheodorou, 2013) (Please see Appendix 1 for observation notes). I chose this specific approach as it allowed me to concentrate fully on the pupil’s behaviour and actions that I was interested in observing (Papatheodorou, 2013). After the observation I used one of the lenses proposed by Brookfield (1995) to reflect upon my chosen technique. I felt that although it did allow

me to draw my whole attention to Child X, it did prove difficult to apply the codes whilst trying to listen to everything that Child X was saying (Papatheodorou, 2013). I feel that this was still the best technique for me to use, however I would need more practice before using it again in a formal observation.

My observation began when Teacher A asked all pupils to come to the carpet to start their numeracy lesson. The topic was 'place value' and Teacher A put up a random number on the interactive white board and proposed the question "What is the biggest number you can make with these digits?" (The number on the screen was 5098). Once this question was asked, Teacher A told the pupils to think for a couple of minutes on their own about what the correct answer could be. I watched Child X concentrate on the screen and scan across the digits five times. I saw Child X point their finger towards the screen and mimic moving the digits into place. Teacher A then praised the whole class for their "Quiet thinking time" and then asked them to "Turn to your partners and discuss what you think is the biggest number". Child X turned to their right and started discussing what they thought could be the correct answer to the question. I heard Child X say, "I think '9' should go at the start because it is the biggest number", their partner agreed. Child X then asked their partner "Do you think that '8' should go next because it's the next biggest number?", their partner nodded and approved. Child X and their partner then discussed which order the last two digits should go in. After three minutes of discussion, Teacher A observed that the majority of the pupils had finished their discussions and used a countdown of 'Tri, Dau, Un' to quieten all the pupils and bring their attention to the interactive white board. Teacher A then asked, "Who thinks they know what the biggest number is?". Child X put their hand up along with 8 other pupils in the class. Teacher A chose Child X to answer, and Child X said, "Nine thousand, eight hundred and fifty". Teacher A praised Child X for giving the correct answer and put a 'Dojo Point' on Child X's avatar on the class 'Dojo' website.

I specifically chose this part of the lesson to observe because I feel that questioning is an essential part of a teacher's role (Black *et al.*, 2003). I was also intrigued to observe the notion of 'wait time' that was discussed in Rowe (1974). In her study she found that on average pupils were given 0.9 seconds of 'thinking time' before the class teacher interfered and chose a pupil to answer the question. She then

concluded that if teachers give their pupils sufficient time to deliberate on the question then more pupils were engaged, and more were willing to get involved in answering the questions (Rowe, 1974). I felt as though the pupils in the situation that I observed were given appropriate time to think about the question.

I was very interested to see that Teacher A adopted a 'think-pair-share' approach to answering the question. I was also interested in how the pupils were going to respond to this method. Kagan (2009) identified this approach as having five distinct properties in making it a success. The First stage of the model is that the teacher needs to divide the class into pairs randomly. Then a question is proposed or asked by the teacher to the whole class. The question needs to have several possible answers to initiate higher level thinking. Pupils are then given time to answer the question on their own (better known as the 'think' segment of the approach). The fourth element is the 'pair' part of the model, where pupils discuss the question in the pairs the teacher chose in stage one. The final stage is the 'share' section of the approach, this is where the teacher gives the learners chance to feedback to the whole class with their answer to the original question. From my observations during the learning event, I feel that the teacher followed most of the stages correctly. The pupils were very engaged during the whole process. My only critique of Teacher A's approach would be that they did not follow stage one to its entirety - the pupils were not specifically allocated into random pairs. However, as I was coming into the class a month after the school term began, Teacher A may have already assigned their random pairings beforehand.

Although the benefits of using the 'think-pair-share' approach are mostly linked to pupils learning development, teachers can still profit from use of the strategy (Sugiarto and Sumarsono, 2014). Sugiarto and Sumarsono (2014) believed that using the approach, switches the teacher's role from being the person with all the information and knowledge, to a facilitator. Teachers can also assess the whole class's understanding through use of the 'think-pair-share' model alongside open-ended questions. This links very closely to Black *et al.*'s (2003) book 'Assessment for Learning'. In their book they discuss the importance of open ended questions and how they can impact on the teacher's assessment of the learners. They suggest that the question the teacher asks needs to encourage deeper thought and potentially allow

for conversation if the teacher wants to have a more in-depth response from their learners (Black *et al.*, 2003). These two elements link back to stages two and four of the 'think-pair-share' strategy (Kagan, 2009). It is the conversation element that I feel is most important. Black *et al.* (2003) found that when students were given the chance to converse with one another when trying to answer questions, the responsibility began to be shared amongst the whole class. This shared responsibility, supported pupils in becoming more confident in answering questions, as they felt if they made a mistake their peers would aid them in finding the correct answer. The 'share' aspect (stage five) of the 'think-pair-share' model (Kagan, 2009) can allow the teacher to "*plan the next steps in learning*" (Black *et al.*, 2003, pp. 41). This is because the teacher can use the answers given by the pupil/s as a form of formative assessment (Black *et al.*, 2003).

To summarise, I feel that the use of the 'think-pair-share' approach worked very well in getting the pupils to answer Teacher A's question. Teacher A followed the steps detailed by Kagan (2009) correctly and was able to formatively assess the pupils with the answers that were given. More specifically, Teacher A gave the pupils time to interact with each other and to come up with an answer to the question. This chance to interact is underpinned by a specific learning theory called 'Social Constructivism'.

Part 2 – Connection to Theory:

The purpose of this section will be to analyse the two main learning theories that were used during the learning event which I observed. These theories will be critiqued in terms of their appropriateness for learning development.

It was stated earlier, that conversation is vital in learners developing. This thought has previously been discussed by Vygotsky (1978) who felt that learning is completed through social interaction with others. Vygotsky has been described as a social constructivist after he created a model which allows a teacher to identify what the learner can do independently and what the learner has not yet learnt (Grigg, 2010). The gap between these two known variables is the 'zone of proximal development'

(Vygotsky, 1978). In this zone, it is important that an adult or another pupil is involved to aid learning. It is also important that the teacher sets out a structure or framework of support for the learner (Grigg, 2010). This framework allows the learner to have all the help that they need to get through the zone (Harland, 2003). Harland (2003) suggests that more support should be given at the beginning of the zone, with less provision occurring near the end of the zone to resemble independence. Linking this back to the learning event that occurred in the primary school, Teacher A gave the pupils chance to talk to each other which could have aided in Child X getting through the 'zone of proximal development'.

There are many advantages that come from teachers using a social constructivist approach to child development. Beck and Kosnik (2006) state, that when teachers allow their environments to be relaxed and secure, pupils tend to feel more included and equal, leading to them engaging more in discussions. In addition, the approach can be used as a good indicator in formatively assessing pupils. This is because teachers can listen to discussions that learners have with their peers, thus gaining an understanding of what they have learnt (Black *et al.*, 2003). The theory moves away from the traditional approach that the adult in the classroom has all the answers. It draws upon previous learning that the pupil has gone through and promotes the learner to come up with their own answers (Grigg, 2010). Furthermore, it allows pupils to take ownership of their learning instead of relying on significant others giving them information (Grigg, 2010).

As well as its advantages, the social constructivists theory does contain its negatives. The approach relies on a learner working with someone that is of a higher intellect (Grigg, 2010). This could cause issues during learning, if pupils are grouped at the same ability. The approach allows for pupils to learn at different paces and is very individual to their specific learning needs. This in theory is a positive but if the support within the 'zone of proximal development' is similar for all learners then the approach will be less effective (Grigg, 2010). In addition, the pupil is at the heart of the learning. This could have a negative effect upon the children if too much pressure is put onto them for having responsibility for learning. Moreover, the theory is very time consuming to get correct (Bartlett and Burton, 2012). First the teacher needs to individually plan the support frameworks for the individual needs of the pupils.

Secondly, the learners need to practise and have a lot of experience in having high quality discussions so that the teacher can fully trust the children in having responsibility for their own learning (Bartlett and Burton, 2012). Overall, during the learning event that was observed, the pupils were very engaged when they could interact with their partner in working out a problem. This led to a high rate of participation (hands up) when the teacher asked the learners to respond to the original question. Later on in the same lesson, it was very apparent when Teacher A gave another problem to the class, but did not allow them to interact with their partner, only half as many pupils were confident enough to try and give an answer.

The other theory that was identified during the observation was the 'Behaviourists' approach. This theory focusses on modelling and shaping desirable behaviour (Bartlett and Burton, 2012). Thorndike (1911) was one of the first psychologists to investigate the importance of behaviour. He found that if a behaviour has a positive result, it will most likely be repeated (Pound, 2006). Thorndike's results led to other researchers to continue to test this theory. Pavlov (1927) is probably most famous for his experiment involving dogs. Whilst Pavlov (1927) was feeding his dogs, he would associate a sound with their food being delivered. It led to the dogs linking food to whenever the sound was played. One day the sound was played, and the food did not arrive, this led to Pavlov's dogs starting to salivate (Bartlett and Burton, 2012). Three decades later, a scientist by the name of Burrhus Skinner (1957) became one of the main researches in the field of behaviourist theory. He found that dividing tasks into smaller parts and including a reward at the end of each of these tasks, reinforces desired behaviour (Pound, 2006).

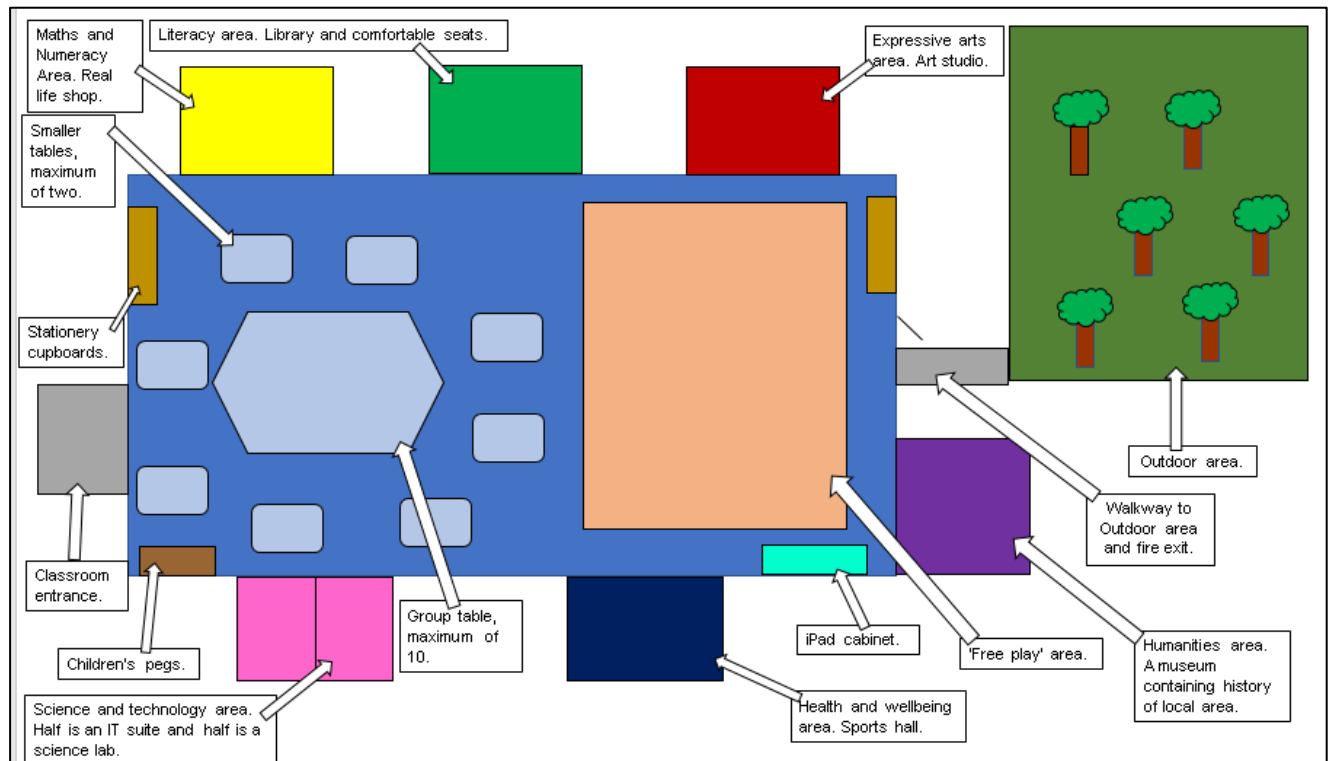
As with the social constructivists theory, the behaviourists theory has many positives. It works incredibly well to get children to learn anything that requires a lot of repetition, for example times tables (Pound, 2006). It has a focus of rewards which can engage learners into portraying a desired behaviour (Grigg, 2010). Additionally, It aids the teacher within their own classroom management, through the use of rules that pupils will be praised for sticking to and punished if they break (Pound, 2006). The approach can keep pupils motivated if they know that they will be praised and rewarded for good behaviour (Siochrú, 2018). It is a simplistic view that doesn't take

into account any complexities (Pound 2006), this in turn means that following this approach isn't as time-consuming as following a social constructivists approach.

As well as its advantages, there are authors who have criticised this theory. Grigg (2010) suggests that certain children may take part in activities for the love of the activity instead of the thought of a reward at the end of it. Furnham (2008) undertook a study that investigated the rates at which learner's work. They found that learners who are not rewarded end up working at a quicker rate than those who are rewarded. Some of the findings from the behaviourist theory founders must be viewed with slight caution. The reason for this is due to the fact that the majority of the studies experimented on animals to gain their results (Pound, 2006). The approach does not allow for all learning to take place, for example in pieces of work where learners are asked to use their imagination (Grigg, 2010). Although this method is far from perfection, it cannot be disregarded totally. In the learning event that was observed, behaviourist traits underpinned Teacher A's ability to keep the pupils on task. Teacher A used 'dojo points' to reinforce desired behaviour and it worked extremely well. Studies from Doll *et al.* (2013) has also found the importance of using 'dojo points' to impact learning behaviour. Once Child X was given a 'dojo' for getting the answer to Teacher A's 'place value' question correct, they were more engaged and willing to participate in later questions that Teacher A asked throughout the day.

With the information that has been gathered, in regard to the learning theories that were identified during the learning event, I feel that it would be beneficial to implement a mixture of learning theories into my practice. This is due to the evidence that social interaction and rewarding pupils both had a positive effect upon Child X. However, I would still approach both theories with caution and only apply the theories or theory that would work best with the pupils I work with in the future. With these pupils in mind, I will detail my ideal learning environment in the following part of the assignment.

Part 3 - My Ideal Learning Environment:



The year group I chose to base my ideal learning environment around was year 3. This was because I am very interested in the transition from Foundation Phase to Key Stage Two and feel that it is a very crucial time in pupil development. My environment has included the six areas of learning and experience (coloured squares around the outside of the main classroom) proposed by Donaldson (2015). With this in mind, my environment has taken on the four main purposes ('ambitious, capable learners', 'enterprising, creative contributors', 'ethical, informed citizens' and 'healthy and confident individuals') and these would be apparent within all learning that took place within it (Donaldson, 2015). The main areas I wish to discuss within my classroom are, health and well-being, the chance for cooperative learning, the use of the outdoors, and the importance of play. I will justify my reasons for these areas being vital for child development with previous research.

I have chosen to discuss play because it is an essential part for children learning and developing. It is heavily used throughout the 'Foundation Phase Framework' (Welsh Government, 2015) to assist and develop learning but does not seem as much of a priority within Key Stage Two. This does seem bizarre as it is every child's right that they have opportunity to engage themselves within "play and recreational activities" (United Nations: Article 31 pp. 10, 1989). What I feel is more important within Article 31 is that it emphasises that play must be "participated freely" (United Nations: Article 31 pp. 10, 1989). It is for that very reason that within my environment, there is half of the classroom size dedicated to 'free play' (Peach coloured area). Within this space pupils would have chance to role play as there would be costumes and props. Vygotsky (1978) also suggested that play has the potential for children to learn at their most optimum. This could be down to the fact that they would be improving their social and communication skills as well as their problem-solving skills. The benefits of play can also lead to pupils and learners developing better (Sheridan *et al.*, 1999). The areas they can develop are, physical, cognitive, emotional and linguistical. Through playing with objects or toys children can improve their gross and fine motor skills. When children play they use their creativity and imagination, which in turn develops logical reasoning. Through playing with others, pupils can improve empathy towards one-another. In addition, whilst playing, children will increase their language in many ways - such as declaring their opinions (Sheridan *et al.*, 1999). Sheridan *et al.* (1999) have even described play as being as important as food and shelter. Linking in the social constructivists approach, play allows the child to be in total control of the situation and the teacher merely needs to be a facilitator (Pound, 2006). This would be a view that I would want to take into the classroom. With this in mind, I would not restrict the learners just to the 'free play' area and they would be able to roam and use any space they wished. I would also follow some the advice given by Bruce (2011). These include putting no time constraints on play, I would join in but not take charge and I will be relaxed in my approach to play.

During my observation at the primary school I visited, I saw how well cooperative learning (think-pair-share strategy) can work. Within my environment the chance for pupils to learn and study collaboratively will be one of the main approaches I will take into my teaching. I have set up smaller group tables that are for no more than two children, and I have placed a larger group table in the middle that would cater

for a group size of no more than 10 pupils. The research has found that cooperative learning needs to be initiated in the correct way to get the best out of the approach. Slavin (2014) states that group learning should not include learners that are randomly placed together, and that the activity cannot be brief. It is the role of the teacher to assign pupils to groups that they feel is going to get the most out of the learning method (Slavin, 2014). This could include placing learners that are from different socio-economic backgrounds, different ethnic backgrounds and different intellectual levels. The reason for arranging groups in this way, especially with primary school children is to break down stereotypes, and aid in richer conversations due to different concrete experiences. It would also allow for the 'zone of proximal development' to be used in its optimal way as pupils who are at a higher level will be able to assist in their peers making their way through the zone. Another approach that can make cooperative learning a success is having a goal to aim for within the group. This gives all the learners an incentive and should result in a great depth of work being produced (Slavin, 2014). Although ability levels should differ within a group, it is very important that each member of the group has some sort of accountability towards the final piece of work (Slavin, 2014). This could be demonstrated by the teacher giving the team a goal that specifically needs all learners to contribute to the activity (Slavin, 2014). With the way that I have set out my ideal classroom I feel that it would work well for the think-pair-share approach that was observed in the school I went to. This is because the tables are specifically for the pairs to discuss their thoughts and then the group table could be used for all the groups coming together and sharing ideas.

The third area that I feel is incredibly important is health and well-being. This is partly due to its inclusion as an area of learning and experience within the forthcoming curriculum proposed by Donaldson (2015). More specifically, I feel that physical education as a subject can have a positive impact on a learner's health and well-being. Pickup *et al.* (2008) agrees with this statement and believes that physical education can have an impact on a child's self-esteem and confidence. Positive experiences within physical education can also contribute to children wanting to carry on with activities later on in their lives as part of a healthy lifestyle (Pickup *et al.*, 2008). It is the importance of a healthy lifestyle that children need to get accustomed to, due to the fact that sedentary lifestyles are within the top five causes of heart disease (Pickup *et al.*, 2008). Physical education also can work side by side with the other areas of

importance that have been discussed earlier. Learners' social skills, used during cooperative learning have been seen to be improved during physical education, more so than when collaborative learning is used in a normal class setting (Pickup *et al.*, 2008). Play can also be linked with physical education, as play allows children to use their imagination, which links directly to one of the 'habits of mind' proposed by Costa and Kallick (2008). This skill that learners develop through play can be used to help physical education lessons, where pupils are required to invent rules to activities they are taking part in. Within my learning environment I have included a fully equipped sports hall that is attached to the main classroom (Dark blue coloured square) to allow for high quality physical education lessons. In making sure that their physical education lessons would be successful, I would need to follow some of the guidance given from Pickup *et al.*, 2008. These include, making sure that the learners have a wide range of resources that they can access, and to constantly push the children to develop and create chances for the pupils to share ideas and challenge each other, to increase the development of the whole class.

The outdoors is the final area I will be discussing in this assignment. More specifically the use of forests and woods and how they can impact learner development. Forest and woods have been used by Scandinavian countries as a source to develop pupils physically, cognitively and socially for many years (Humberstone and Stan, 2011). It has also been suggested that the outdoors is so important, it can even be seen as an additional teacher (Bradshaw, 2018). The outdoors also allows the learner to take part in adventurous activities that they would most likely never experience indoors (Bradshaw, 2018). Whilst taking part in these type of activities, children develop their senses, as well as confidence and self-esteem (Bradshaw, 2018). The link between the outdoors, play and pupil well-being is remarkable. When children play in the outdoors, they tend to gain a greater understanding of body awareness and develop creative thinking (White, 2011). This is very apparent within the Foundation Phase Framework (Welsh Government, 2015), where children use a play approach to access learning. Pupils are also required to gain and understanding of pattern and shape. These elements can be found naturally within the outdoors, especially within forests. For example, pattern could be demonstrated by leaves and shape could be used in identifying trees. If pupils are getting these types of experiences within Foundation Phase, I feel that it shouldn't be

stopped or restricted within Key Stage Two. For this very reason, I have included a forest within my ideal learning environment (Dark green area with trees in it). I would make sure that the area would be used for pupils to play and explore. I would also use it at the forefront of a social constructivists approach and allow the learners chance to raise questions whilst they were discovering the areas within the forest and use those questions to base the class's learning on.

Conclusion:

To conclude this assignment, I feel that for a teacher to be successful they need to use a multiple of learning theories to develop learning within their classrooms. The social constructivists approach allows the teacher to scaffold learning to lead the student to become independent. This worked incredibly well during my observation when the teacher used a cooperative learning method to get pupils to discuss their ideas. I did also see how a behaviourist approach can be beneficial within a classroom, through the use of 'dojo points'. Giving learners one of these points really kept them on task. I will be keeping both these methods in mind while I am on my professional teaching experience. I have also been able to gain an understanding for the importance of different areas of learning, that have been briefly discussed in part three. What is most apparent from looking at these areas is that they all interlink and can be used in collaboration with one another. Probably the area that works best in linking all the areas together is the outdoors as it improves well-being and can be used as both an area for play and physical education. I will also make sure that while I am on my school placements that the outdoors will be used to its optimal potential.

Appendix 1 - Field Notes:

Time	Description	Language
10:00am	TC scans over the number on the interactive whiteboard 5 times.	TC thinking on own.
10:01am	TC mimics finger, moving the digits into place.	TC thinking on own.
10:02am	T tells TC to turn to partner and discuss.	T and TC.
10:02am	TC tells C that 9 should go first.	TC and C.
10:03am	TC tells C that 8 should go next	TC and C.
10:04am	C and TC discuss what order the last two number should go in.	C and TC.
10:05am	T asks pupils who can answer the question. TC puts hand up.	T and TC.
10:05am	TC says 9850 and get it right.	TC and T.
10:05am	T gives TC and dojo point.	T and TC.

Codes:

- TC – Child X.
- T – Teacher.
- C – Child X's partner.

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