

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

Word Count- 4290

Introduction

The following assignment will consist of a critical evaluation of an observed incident within a classroom setting, using Tripp's (1993) critical incident methodology. The purpose of this exercise was to start engaging with the significance of reflective practice through my own classroom-based experiences, to then be able to conclude next steps for future practice. The methodology used is derived from an understanding that incidents occur continuously during the school day and therefore, do not exist independently of the observer (Tripp, 2011). In considering this, it is stated that critical incidents are in fact "produced" by the way in which the observer interprets the significance of such events (Tripp, 2011, p.8). The frequency of incidents that could be observed within a school setting may also appear as 'typical' at first glance, but through critical reflection and analysis, a new significant meaning can then be attached to the incident in question (Tripp, 2011). In practicing this method of reflection within teaching practice, it enables educators to develop a diagnostic approach to be able to recognise, understand and explain the justifications of professional practice through the utilization of academic theory and profession specific knowledge (Tripp, 2011). The observation stage required the recording of at least three potential critical incidents, as evidenced in the appendices section, before deciding on one to take forward for further analysis. The following sections will delve deeper into theoretical concepts associated with reflective practice, and how this relates to the teaching profession. The chosen incident observation will be outlined and discussed in relation to the curriculum reform in Wales, following a brief description of the school context. A review of the literature will then aim to outline some key areas to better understand the relevance of the incident in question, before outlining my own reflection to indicate next steps for future practice.

Role of critical reflection

Reflective practice, more specifically to teacher education, involves observing and experiencing for the purpose of analysis to improve future practice (Belvis *et al.*, 2013). This can be further supported by Moon (1999) who highlights how reflection enables a deeper level of cognitive learning and understanding and is therefore integral to the enhancement of professional practice. It is argued that the absence of a reflective mindset within professional practice obstructs teachers from emerging as 'functional' practitioners, compared to one that seeks to challenge and learn from previous experiences to inform new modes of thinking and teaching (Galea, 2012, p.245). This is also supported by Bruster and Peterson (2013) who state that without the presence of reflection within a changing learning environment, practitioners are actively limiting their ability to make meaningful change to aid learners developmental needs.

Reflective practice has been advocated within the discourse surrounding initial teacher education and subsequent professional development for many decades (Griffiths, 2000; Edwards *et al.*, 2002; Zwozdiak-Myers, 2012). Theories regarding reflective practice have continued to expand, but it is through the lense of Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983) that teacher education has been viewed most frequently (Griffiths, 2000; Collin *et al.*, 2013). It is argued that the discourse surrounding reflective practice would not be as it is without acknowledging the early work of Dewey (1933) in particular (Sellars, 2017). His early theory distinguished reflective thinking from routine thinking that is bound by adherence to rules and tradition that influence an individual's 'impulsive' actions (Sellars, 2017,

p.3). Considering this, Dewey (1933) therefore stated that reflective thinking, prompted after an 'event', requires rationality to problem solve with the consideration of relevant field knowledge to establish meaning and build expertise within teaching (Sellars, 2017, p.5). This theory would require practitioners to look back and to reflect systematically about future action, to develop thorough professional growth (Farrell, 2012). This 'one-way' reflective process was subject to critique, which included the work of Schön (1983) who advocated for an additional level of reflection (Griffiths, 2000, p.541). His theory builds upon Dewey (1933) yet states that teachers are intuitive practitioners based on previous experience and theoretical knowledge and are therefore able to reflect in-action (Griffiths, 2000; Farrell, 2012). This level states that reflection must be more immediate and interactive during an ongoing situation, where a practitioner can draw upon previous experience to guide reflection-in-action (Wieringa, 2011).

Reflective practice is also something enshrined within the reformed curriculum and the Teaching Standards used for ITE in Wales (Furlong, 2020). The new Curriculum for Wales is pioneering within its desired vision for education and therefore, places more of a responsibility on professional and trainee practitioners to engage with the 'how, why and what' of education (Donaldson, 2015, p. 71). This changing direction for education indicates greater expectation for professional learning and development of 'sound pedagogy', which can be achieved through engagement with reflective practice (Donaldson, 2015, p.71).

School context

It is important, as the role of the observer or 'researcher' in this context, that the following sections align with BERA Guidelines regarding the treatment of the participants that have been observed. Therefore, the following sections will ensure that the data collected remains confidential and anonymous to adhere to the norm of educational research (BERA, 2018). This data includes the naming of the school, staff and pupils. It is also important within this section to recognise the length of time that has passed since the school last received an Estyn report, when considering certain pieces of data that have been used in the following section. The report has been referenced due to the lack of alternative credible sources for school information of this kind.

The allocated observation time took place in an English medium primary school based in the Swansea Local Authority. The school has 336 mixed-gender pupils on roll with an age range of 3-11 years old (Welsh Government, 2021). The foundation phase has a two-form entry for every year group, apart from Nursery, and the only mixed year group here is years 1 and 2. Key stage 2 is mixed throughout and has a three-form entry. The incidents recorded during the period of observation occurred within Key Stage 2 as opposed to the Foundation Phase. The last Estyn report identified around 52% of pupils having Additional Learning Needs (ALN) which vary in severity, with a small number of pupils being taught in a STF unit on site (Estyn, 2014). Based off a three-year average, 44.7% of pupils are eligible for free school meals (Welsh Government, 2021) This figure has noticeably increased since 2014, whilst also sitting well above the national average of 23.3% (Welsh Government, 2022).

The aims and visions of the school seem very encouraging, especially their commitment to embedding the new Curriculum for Wales whilst working towards the Four Purposes. The school also identifies as a 'Relationships First School' as well as adopting a 'Thrive' approach to support the pupil's social and emotional development.

Critical incident overview and the connection to Four Purposes

As previously outlined, the school-based observations highlighted various incidents that could be used for further reflection to inform next steps and future teaching practice. The chosen incident for this assignment, outlined in appendix A, occurred on the first day of the bridging experience in a year 5/6 class. The number of pupils in attendance was around 25, with one class teacher and a TA.

To put the incident in context, the pupils were all sat at their desks as the teacher finished taking the morning register and finalised lunch options. The teacher then instructed the pupils to move to the carpet and to form a circle, so they were all facing each other. It became apparent that this was to be a routinely wellbeing check in session. The teacher briefly reiterated the purpose of the session and encouraged the use of Welsh vocabulary if they could, before handing over to the Helpwr Heddiw's (HH) to begin the session. Two pupils (HH) oversaw the questioning using 'Sut wyt ti?' (How are you?) to each pupil in the circle. It was within this context that the incident was observed. I noticed one pupil (Child A) whose body language and lack of eye contact suggested they were withdrawn from the discussion. The children were responding to the questioning using as much Welsh vocabulary as possible, which included responses of 'hapus' (happy), 'drist' (sad), excited, 'wedi blino' (tired) and hungry. Many of the children chose to expand on their responses in English thus prompting a discussion, with some teacher involvement, around feeling certain emotions in-between questioning. In observing this over time, it was also evident that Child A seemed to be more comfortable listening to the discussion and began making more eye contact with peers. The questioning eventually involved Child A, who expressed that they were feeling sad (drist) due to a situation occurring at home. Throughout the discussion, some children were offering their support to fellow peers about feeling certain emotions through reassurance that similar feelings had been experienced, which also occurred in response to Child A. As a follow up to the check in session, the teacher was observed talking to Child A about their response to offer further provision to support wellbeing throughout the day. On approaching the teacher for further discussion regarding my observation, the teacher explained that concern had been noted on the school system regarding the response, and that Child (A) would continue to be monitored.

As well as beginning to engage with reflective practice through the use of observed incidents, it is also important to gain a wider understanding of the incident in relation to the 'Curriculum for Wales 2022' reform. This newly implemented curriculum has sought to 'reassert the fundamental purposes of education' to aid the development of well-rounded and resilient individuals (Donaldson, 2015, p.5). Producing individuals with such qualities is key to being able to meet the changing pressures and challenges facing Wales and the wider world today, and in the future (Donaldson, 2015). The delivery of the curriculum is to be driven by the four purposes that together, indicate what

education should now be providing to strive for achievement across Wales (Welsh Government, 2021).

Through engaging with the purposes in more detail, the observed incident can be linked to both promoting 'healthy and confident individuals and 'ambitious capable learners' (Donaldson, 2015, p.30). The key characteristics of these purposes are clearly indicated, with a selection of these linking closely with the observed incident. The predominant characteristic demonstrated was the strengthening of mental and emotional wellbeing by improving levels of confidence, resilience and empathy (Donaldson, 2015). The 'circle time' type discussion allowed pupils to articulate their own and listen to all kinds of emotions, which I feel reflects that empathetic component. The particular detail of the incident involving child A, who demonstrated signs of feeling nervous and unconfident to begin with, also resonates with this purpose as the scenario encouraged that confidence to eventually accept and express emotion. As aforementioned, the incident can also be linked to promoting the use of both English and Welsh for affective communication as part of becoming an ambitious, capable learner in practice. This was clearly visible as the incident unfolded through the use of child-led, bilingual questioning and answering.

Literature Review

The observed critical incident has highlighted some key areas that can be linked and discussed within a review of the literature. The following review will focus on theories surrounding wellbeing and the role of schools in supporting this, before discussing the concept of emotional literacy and how this can be strategically used within the school environment.

According to Ercaut and Whiting (2008, cited in Spratt, 2016, p.224), the term 'wellbeing' has been subject to a variety of different perspectives, which has led to a fragmented understanding of the term. Considering this, wellbeing, in its most universal form, is generally understood to be positive concept and a desired human goal that encompasses a combination of feeling good and functioning well (Huppert, 2014; Spratt, 2016). In terms of defining wellbeing through reference to emotion, Ryan and Deci (2001) and Layard (2011) suggest that wellbeing is at best subjective, that seeks those 'hedonic' happiness and contentment emotions which outweigh the unpleasant. In challenging this, Huppert (2014) suggests that feeling and functioning well is only partly influenced by positive emotions, and not to devalue the significance of experiencing a variety of negative emotions that an individual may experience as development occurs. This can be viewed as a more sustainable or 'objective' perspective of wellbeing, where optimum functionality is underpinned by a mix of feeling good, being resilient to everyday stresses, fostering beneficial relationships and having a sense of community and belonging (Huppert, 2014; Casas and Frønes, 2020).

As indicated within the literature above, wellbeing is viewed as a multidimensional construct not bound by one shared definition, which is also reflective of early childhood and adolescent wellbeing (Sixsmith *et al.*, 2007; Minkkinen, 2013). Childhood is in a constant phase of development, categorized by physical changes and fluctuating challenges which all impact upon the state of wellbeing (Minkkinen, 2013). In considering these factors, the literature does indicate the relationship between child wellbeing and development and the wider structural circumstances that a child may be subject to (James, 2009). In support of this claim, theoretical models such as

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) can be applied here to unpack this in relation to child wellbeing. Bronfenbrenner (1979, cited in Minkinen, (2013) reflects that multidimensional aspect of wellbeing, in consideration of wider influencing factors and societal environments in which a child may be subject to. The use of this model, that places the child at the centre, suggests the interplay between immediate interactions categorized by basic daily caregiving to satisfy physical and emotional needs, to the outermost dimension framed by cultural norms and societal influences that would serve a more indirect impact upon child wellbeing (Minkinen, 2013). The quality of the immediate structure around the child as identified within this model, is also argued by Newland (2015), who states that child wellbeing is built upon a foundation of good quality caregiving, affection and self-sufficiency within the home. This foundational concept for wellbeing is also evident within the early work of Maslow (1954, cited in Noltemeyer *et al.*, 2012) with attention being given here to the meeting of basic wellbeing needs as the beginning of progression up the hierarchal structure. A deficiency of needs aiding good physical health, safety and feeling loved can be detrimental to a child's motivation to achieve esteem, in the form of academic achievement (Noltemeyer *et al.*, 2012). This suggestion is evident within more contemporary research that still reflects that positive relationship between poorly met wellbeing needs and the ability to achieve academically (Clarke, 2020).

In considering this implication, the acknowledgement of wellbeing, especially in relation to children as the future generation, has placed an increased pressure on education policy (Watson and Emery, 2012). This statement is still evident within the literature, which is now driven by the implications of the COVID 19 pandemic which has placed wellbeing at the forefront of educational agendas (Clarke, 2020; Colao *et al.*, 2020). Education settings, considered a component of a child's immediate environment, have been required to shoulder a level responsibility for the wellbeing of children on roll (Spratt, 2016). The wider school system should be seen to be supporting the multidimensional notion of child wellbeing, to enable the best possible outcome for learning and to aid the development of confident individuals (Wright, 2014). The expectations placed on school environments to foster the wellbeing of learners has continued to evolve, with schools now considered as focal 'hubs' for engagement with wellbeing support services (Hanley *et al.*, 2020). The literature surrounding the increased level of accountability placed on schools, with regards to child wellbeing, has further suggested that education practice has and is continuing to be underpinned by aspects of humanistic psychology (Wright, 2014; Hanley *et al.*, 2020). This can be understood as practice that does not solely focus on the intellect dimension, but to endorse and embrace the 'emotional' domains of learning, encompassing self-awareness and esteem as part of the delivery of curriculum (Wright, 2014, p.141).

An environment where children can best facilitate such humanistic ideals for a good education is argued by Rogers (1957 cited in Hanley *et al.*, 2020 p.2) and Hyland (2009) to be reflective of, and thus enriched by 'therapeutic theory'. This can be viewed in the form of authentic child-centred learning environments, that are empathetic and supportive of wellbeing needs to facilitate positive learning experiences for the best possible outcomes (Hyland, 2009; Hanley *et al.*, 2012). This noticeable shift within education, often referred to as the 'therapeutic turn' is arguably reflective of the considerations of wellbeing and the increased presence of the concept within wider culture and society (Wright, 2011). Whilst considering the arguments for the significance of quality childhood wellbeing and the role of education settings in facilitating this, there has been concern within the literature regarding the growing popularity of said therapeutic notions (Hyland, 2009). In aiming to challenge such a shift, Ecclestone and Hayes (2009 cited in Watson and Emery, 2012) argue that the presence of such notions within educational settings to facilitate wellbeing aspirations, are detrimental to solid academic foundations being achieved. This concern at the time of the increasing

responsibility of education settings and the pressure on educators to become 'surrogate psychologists' was considered an implication for 'good teaching practice' (Craig, 2009 p.16 cited in Watson and Emery, 2012). In arguing this point that the school environment should be a place for traditional core learning supported delivered by teachers and not for wellbeing agendas, comes from a point of view that is not necessarily reflective of the current climate following the pandemic. This major national disruption, including the closure of schools, has resulted in an increased concern for the wellbeing and mental health of children (NHS, 2020 as cited in Buchanan *et al.*, 2022). Such disruption is argued to have highlighted the significant role that education settings play in educating for core learning but as a place for security and the satisfaction of wellbeing needs, especially children already deemed as vulnerable (Colao, 2020).

In reviewing the literature surrounding the complexed nature of wellbeing and the varying arguments outlined on its position within educational agenda, it seems right to explore the area concerning 'emotional literacy' considering the relevance it has to the observed critical incident. The term, very much emulating the wider 'wellbeing' and 'therapeutic' discourse in which emotional literacy derives from, has been subject to differing opinions regarding a standardized definition (Perry *et al.*, 2008). The term has seemingly evolved from the concept of emotional intelligence popularized by Goleman (1995 cited in Perry *et al.*, 2008 and Waterhouse, 2019) is understood more broadly to be the ability to identify and self-regulate emotions and to be empathetic of others. Defining this as an 'intelligence' sparked debate due to the opinion that intelligence is something that is considered 'fixed' rather than a skill that can be amended through learning (Humphrey *et al.*, 2007, p.239). Emotional literacy has thus evolved as a more commonly used term within education, that can be viewed more as the 'practice' of realising the significance of emotions and how to subsequently act based on this (Morris and Scott, 2002 cited in Perry *et al.*, 2008). The fluctuating process of childhood and development towards adolescent years, as previously outlined by Minkinen (2013), is a significant period for the understanding and teaching of emotional competencies (Main, 2018). In consideration of this claim, a commonly used method of encouraging emotional literacy within education focuses on group discussion, often in the form of 'circle time' (Mosely, 2009 cited in Cefai *et al.*, 2014). Establishing circle time as a safe and democratic environment is encouraging for the facilitation of those aspects of emotional literacy, for the expression of individual emotion whilst listening and being inclusive of how others may experience emotion (Coppock, 2007; Cefai *et al.*, 2014). This popular strategy is often encouraged to be a child led activity, where the teacher withdraws from active control over the situation to allow for the 'practice' of social and emotional learning to occur (Cefai *et al.*, 2014, p. 116). The criticisms surrounding emotional literacy and the use of circle time is similarly based on the assumption that children are being subject to therapeutic beliefs within education, and that intervention concerned with emotion results in the potential of stigmatizing certain groups of children (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009 cited in Cefai *et al.*, 2014; Leach and Lewis, 2012).

Reflection and evaluation of next teaching steps

The identification of a classroom-based incident allowed for further reflection to critically analyse, the incident in a wider context. This process of the critical reflection, has highlighted the significance of understanding the wider justifications for teaching practice, as suggested by Donaldson (2015). As can be seen in previous sections, reflective practice was introduced through theoretical ideals deriving from Dewey (1933) and the subsequent work of Schön (1983) and the significance they hold

within the grounding of reflective teaching practice (Sellars, 2017). In keeping with the notion of Dewey's (1933) post event reflection, my own reflective practice using the critical incident in question will aim to embody this. However, I feel that utilizing a reflective framework such as Gibbs (1988) is beneficial to be able to structure my reflection and subsequent outcomes, in the form of next teaching steps. This particular structure emulates the ground work of Dewey (1933) in the sense that it supports reflective learning on the basis of an experience (Gibbs, 1988 cited in Markkanen *et al.*, 2020). This particular framework or 'model' of reflection is comprised of six stages, starting with a description of the experience before further analysis and evaluation, with the addition of considering how the practitioner felt during the experience (Mathew *et al.*, 2017). Each of these steps steers the practitioner to conclude an 'action plan' if the situation were to reoccur in future practice (Gibbs, 1988 cited in Markkanen *et al.*, 2020 p. 49). Compiling a plan to enact in practice reflects that of Schön (1983) in suggesting the intuitive ability of practitioners, developed through experience.

In considering the observed critical incident through the lense of Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988), a detailed description of the incident has been previously outlined and is also evident within Appendix A. In brief, the incident was observed within the context of a wellbeing check in in the form of a circle time type discussion. Child (A) was noticeably disengaged as the check in commenced, before slowly joining the session to indicate how they felt. As the observer, I was instantly concerned when noticing the disengaged child (A) who, from body language, indicated that they were feeling anxious about the situation. The children who were leading the questioning avoided choosing the child until they began making eye contact. Child (A) eventually disclosed a negative emotion as a result of a problem occurring at home, which was reflective of their body language. In evaluating the incident, the wellbeing check in encouraged a child-led question and answering environment which was extremely positive to witness, especially the active use of Welsh vocabulary, that contributes more specifically to the Four Purposes within the reformed curriculum for Wales (Donaldson, 2015). The check in discussion was reflective of the practice of emotional literacy, where the children each took a turn to express how they were feeling in that current moment and to engage with practice in articulating why they may feel that particular emotion. There was also evidence of acts of empathy and support between the children, which is a component outlined within the literature regarding the significance of such practice (Coppock 2007; Cefai *et al.*, 2014). Personally, it was felt that the use of a wellbeing check in highlighted the impact of how some of the children were subject to unmet needs like feeling 'tired', 'hungry' and 'worried' about a situation at home, which indicate towards Maslow's (1943) and Bronfenbrenner (1979) and how this was evidently impacting wellbeing responses. I feel my perspective on the need for the wider school community and practitioners alike to take responsibility for child wellbeing should be equal to the teaching of core material. My perspective regarding this, especially in the current climate is supported by the likes of Colao (2020), is that schools need to offer a secure environment for the nurturing of wellbeing.

From contextualising the incident, I personally feel that encouraging talk is beneficial as not only an indicator and measurement of wellbeing from a practitioner point of view, but for enabling children to develop empathy and acceptance of how others may act based on the emotions they are experiencing. Wellbeing of children is something that cannot necessarily be controlled when absent from school premises, especially regarding the meeting of basic needs, so it is felt that being aware of any wellbeing concerns is paramount for maximising educational potential. The circle time element is still very much an effective tool being used in contemporary school environments, and it is something I wish to emulate in future practice more regularly throughout the school week.

Conclusion

The assignment brief required engagement with the concept of reflective practice. Through observational experience, an incident was recorded and utilized for the further critical reflection using Tripp's (1993) methodology. Reflection occurred using Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988), whilst also acknowledging influential contributors like Dewey (1933) and Schon (1983) within the field of reflective practice. The requirement for teaching practitioners to engage and implement reflection is clear within the reformed curriculum policy in Wales and Teaching Standards alike, driven by the suggestion that quality pedagogy is underpinned by the ability to reflect.

The observed incident was contextualized as part of analysis through engagement with academic literature, which highlighted varying arguments surrounding the concept of wellbeing and the role this holds within education policy. The stages of reflection resulted in the outlining of next teaching steps relating to the observed incident. It was concluded that check ins would be something that could be utilized in future practice after considering the significance of wellbeing.

Reference List

- Belvis, E., Pineda, P., Armengol, C. and Moreno, V., 2013. Evaluation of reflective practice in teacher education. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 36(3), pp.279-292.
- British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, fourth edition, London. <https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethicalguidelines-for-educational-research-2018>
- Bruster, B.G. and Peterson, B.R., 2013. Using critical incidents in teaching to promote reflective practice. *Reflective Practice*, 14(2), pp.170-182.
- Buchanan, D., Hargreaves, E. and Quick, L., 2022. Schools closed during the pandemic: revelations about the well-being of 'lower-attaining' primary-school children. *Education 3-13*, pp.1-14.
- Casas, F. and Frønes, I., 2020. From snapshots to complex continuity: Making sense of the multifaceted concept of child well-being. *Childhood*, 27(2), pp.188-202.
- Cefai, C., Ferrario, E., Cavioni, V., Carter, A. and Grech, T., 2014. Circle time for social and emotional learning in primary school. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 32(2), pp.116-130.
- Clarke, T., 2020. Children's wellbeing and their academic achievement: The dangerous discourse of 'trade-offs' in education. *Theory and Research in Education*, 18(3), pp.263-294.
- Colao, A., Piscitelli, P., Pulimeno, M., Colazzo, S., Miani, A. and Giannini, S., 2020. Rethinking the role of the school after COVID-19. *The Lancet Public Health*, 5(7), p.e370.
- Collin, S., Karsenti, T. and Komis, V., 2013. Reflective practice in initial teacher training: Critiques and perspectives. *Reflective practice*, 14(1)
- Donaldson G, 2015. *Successful Futures Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*.
- Edwards, A., Gilroy, P., & Hartley, D. (2002). Rethinking teacher education, collaborative responses to uncertainty. London: Routledge Falmer
- Estyn, 2014. Primary School Report. Available: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/provider/6702008>
- Farrell, T.S., 2012. Reflecting on Reflective Practice:(Re) Visiting Dewey and Schön. *Tesol Journal*, 3(1)
- Furlong, J., 2020. Re-forming initial teacher education in Wales: A personal review of the literature. *Cylchgrawn Addysg Cymru/Wales Journal of Education*, 22(1), pp.38-59.
- Galea, S., 2012. Reflecting reflective practice. *Educational philosophy and theory*, 44(3), pp.245-258.
- Griffiths, V., 2000. The reflective dimension in teacher education. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33(5), pp.539-555.
- Hanley, T., Winter, L.A. and Burrell, K., 2017. Supporting emotional wellbeing in schools in the context of austerity.
- Humphrey, N., Curran, A., Morris, E., Farrell, P. and Woods, K., 2007. Emotional intelligence and education: A critical review. *Educational Psychology*, 27(2), pp.235-254.
- Huppert, F.A., 2014. The state of wellbeing science. *Concepts, measures, interventions, and policies: UK John Wiley & Sons*.

- Hyland, T., 2009. Mindfulness and the therapeutic function of education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 43(1), pp.119-131.
- James, A. (2009). Agency. In J. Qvortrup, W. A. Corsaro, & M-S. Honig (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of childhood studies* (pp. 34–45). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Layard, R. (2011). *Happiness: Lessons from a new science* (2nd ed.). New York: Penguin.
- Leach, T. and Lewis, E., 2013. Children's experiences during circle-time: A call for research-informed debate. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 31(1), pp.43-52.
- Main, K., 2018. Walking the talk: Enhancing future teachers' capacity to embed social-emotional learning in middle years classrooms. *Education Sciences*, 8(3), p.143.
- Markkanen, P., Välimäki, M., Anttila, M. and Kuuskorpi, M., 2020. A reflective cycle: Understanding challenging situations in a school setting. *Educational Research*, 62(1), pp.46-62.
- Mathew, P., Mathew, P. and Peechattu, P.J., 2017. Reflective practices: A means to teacher development. *Asia Pacific Journal of Contemporary Education and Communication Technology*, 3(1), pp.126-131.
- Minkinen, J., 2013. The structural model of child well-being. *Child Indicators Research*, 6(3), pp.547-558.
- Moon, J. A. (1999). *Reflection in learning and professional development: Theory and practice*. Routledge.
- Newland, L.A., 2015. Family well-being, parenting, and child well-being: Pathways to healthy adjustment. *Clinical Psychologist*, 19(1), pp.3-14.
- Noltemeyer, A., Bush, K., Patton, J. and Bergen, D., 2012. The relationship among deficiency needs and growth needs: An empirical investigation of Maslow's theory. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(9), pp.1862-1867.
- Perry, L., Lennie, C. and Humphrey, N., 2008. Emotional literacy in the primary classroom: teacher perceptions and practices. *Education 3–13*, 36(1), pp.27-37.
- Ryan, R.M. and Deci, E.L., 2001. On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual review of psychology*, 52, p.141.
- Sellars, M., 2017. *Reflective practice for teachers*. Sage.
- Spratt, J., 2016. Childhood wellbeing: what role for education?. *British Educational Research Journal*, 42(2), pp.223-239.
- Tripp, D., 2011. *Critical incidents in teaching (classic edition): Developing professional judgement*. Routledge.
- Waterhouse, A., 2019. *Emotional Literacy: Supporting Emotional Health and Wellbeing in School*. Routledge.
- Watson, D. and Emery, C., 2012. *Children's social and emotional wellbeing in schools: A critical perspective*. Policy Press.
- Welsh Government, 2021 -last update, My Local School. Available: <https://mylocalschool.gov.wales/School/6702008>.

Welsh Government, 2021-last update, Introduction to Curriculum for Wales guidance.

Available: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/introduction#:~:text=The%20four%20purposes%20are%20the,encourage%20critical%20and%20civic%20engagement.>

Welsh Government, 2022-last update, Schools' census results: February 2022.

Available: <https://gov.wales/schools-census-results-february-2022-html.>

Wright, K. (2011). *The rise of the therapeutic society: Psychological knowledge & the contradictions of cultural change*. Washington, DC: New Academia.

Wright, K., 2014. Student wellbeing and the therapeutic turn in education. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 31(2), pp.141-152.

Zwozdiak-Myers, P. (2012) *The teacher's reflective practice handbook: becoming an extended professional through capturing evidence-informed practice*. London: Routledge.

Appendices

Appendix A

Date and time, year group: Monday September 27th in a Year 5/6 class at approximately 9:20am.

Where and When: Wellbeing check in, all children sitting on the carpet with the teacher. Post registration before the first lesson of the day (Language Literacy and Communication).

What Happened?

A Year 5/6 class morning check in after the register- observed a child led 'circle' time where two children, known as the 'Helpwr Heddiw', led the questioning (in Welsh) and chose children to respond to a 'Sut wyt ti?' (How are you?) question. The children were encouraged by the teacher to respond (if they could) using their Welsh vocabulary 'dw i'n .. hapus, drist, wedi blino, grac' (some examples given) and then to try and extend their sentences using 'achos'. Depending on their response, the teacher would intervene to ask if they felt like they wanted to talk about it during the circle time or with her in private. As the observer, I noticed a member of the class (Child A) avoiding eye contact with the children asking the questions. Child A seemed to be getting more fidgety whilst children in the circle were answering. Some examples of responses included feeling (tired) due to a late night/unsettled sleep, feeling 'worried' about a family member, 'excited' due to the arrival of a new baby, and 'hungry' due to not having breakfast before school. Most children were able to use the Welsh pattern but needed some support for certain vocabulary. As time went on, and the children were openly talking about how they felt and the reasons for those feelings, Child A seemed to become more engaged (making more eye contact). The 'sut wyt ti?' question was eventually put to Child A and they answered with a little support from the teacher (for Welsh vocabulary) and disclosed the feeling of 'drist' (sad). Child A chose to briefly disclose the reason for this feeling (problem at home) which encouraged other children to get involved in terms of offering support, explaining that they had felt this emotion before and advice on how to feel better. This was great to watch the children engaging with each other and being open with their feelings (good or bad). The teacher called the circle a 'safe space' to talk and open up if children wanted to. It was really interesting to see the independence being encouraged here in terms of discussion and taking ownership for their feelings. The teacher explained the importance of this discussion, especially on a Monday morning, factoring in the weekend absence from being in school. The teacher explained that the wellbeing check in acts as a good indicator for follow ups during the school day, especially those who have expressed negative emotions or unmet needs like hunger. I observed, from a distance, the teacher speaking to Child A about their feelings during the day to ensure the correct support could have been put in place if the issue continued.

Areas of possible exploration:

- The importance of wellbeing/mental health as part of the school day.
- Theories around child wellbeing- Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs- basic unmet needs, emotional needs and wider social influences and the effect this can have on wellbeing.
- Assessing wellbeing in schools- use of 'circle time' type discussion.

Notes:

- The environment was calm with little to no external distractions.

Appendix B

Date and time, year group: Monday 26th September in a Year 5/6 class at 10am.

Where and When: Language, Literacy and Communication. A carousel of literacy tasks including spelling practice for an upcoming test.

What happened?

The children had just returned from morning assembly. The children were instructed to sit at their designated table to begin the routinely literacy tasks. The teacher sat with one group to do guided reading session, whilst the rest of the groups were to complete independent tasks (a carousel system which would alternate groups each day). The rest of the children were either practising their spelling words ready for the test on Friday, or they were completing language tasks on 'Duolingo' or 'Reading Eggs'. As I moved around the class observing the independent tasks, I noticed that one child (Child X) who was on the spelling practice table was very disengaged (swinging on their chair, playing with pencil case) and was therefore not completing the task in hand. This behaviour was also distracting the other children on the table who could see that he was not engaged. Before I even approached child X, the teacher, from the table they were working on, noticed the misbehaviour of child X and verbally tried to encourage the child to get back on task. I approached child X in an attempt to support the task but, child X explained that they did not understand how to use the 'look, test, check' (LTC) book to practice spellings. As an observer and also new to the school, I was unsure of the method that had been taught, so I suggested that child X seeks advice from another child (child Y) sitting on the table who had already completed the spelling words in that book. Child Y then went on to model how the book was used (there were two bits of card stapled to the inside of the book which covered the words once written to practice). Once child X was shown by child Y, and further reiterated by myself, child X began to get on with the task. Child X did need support to stay on track. After child X completed the list of spelling words in the LTC book, they then moved on to the graffiti book where different coloured pens were allowed to be used to practice the words in any way the children wanted. Child X seemed to know what to do and was much more engaged than before. Through talking to the teacher, it became apparent that the children were familiar with the format of the spelling practice books as they had used them the previous year for spelling sessions, so it was not completely new to them.

Similarly, on the same day but after lunch, I had the opportunity to observe in another Year 5/6 class (class next door) and the children were doing the same tasks as part of the carousel system. Before the children were sent off to their tables with designated tasks, the teacher used the 'visualiser' connected to the whiteboard to recap the children on how to use the LTC book. The children were engaged and watched on the carpet before being sent to complete their tasks. As the observer, I observed the same independent tasks, where children were working on spellings, and there seemed to be no noticeable disengagement with the task with regards to using the book to practice.

Areas of possible exploration

- Why was the child disengaged? Lack of understanding, uninterested in the task, too easy or too hard? Behaviour issue?
- Looking in to scaffolding as a technique – from both the teacher and other peers / asking a friend.
- Promoting independent learning.

Notes

- Noise level was generally at a manageable level with the teacher sometimes having to intervene to remind the children.

Appendix C

Date and time, year group: Monday September 26th in a Year 5/6 class at approximately 10:30am.

Where and When: just before the children were dismissed for morning break time.

What Happened?

The children were sat on the carpet in front of the teacher getting ready to be dismissed. Child B walks back in to the class after being out in the corridor for extra reading, and is followed in by the TA who had been sitting 1:1 with the child (and some of the other children throughout the morning to read). The TA began to praise the children she had read with in front of the teacher who looked pleased to hear the feedback. The TA explained that expression was particularly good (the use of exclamation marks specifically). The teacher and TA continued to praise the children for their hard work in reading and the majority of the children on the carpet were listening. The TA did mention that the use of apostrophes when reading certain words needed a little bit more practice, but the majority of the reading was of good standard. As this was being mentioned to the class, two children (child C and D) began their own conversation (whispering to each other) on the carpet and were not engaging with the whole class feedback from the TA. The teacher was quick to pick up on this low-level conversation and proceeded to say to Child C and D "Oh (said names), would you like to stand up and tell the class about how we use apostrophes in our reading?" Both child C and D looked slightly stunned and stopped talking straight away and turned to look at the teacher. The teacher reiterated the importance of listening and to be respectful when a member of staff is talking. Child C and D did not engage with conversation any further and shortly after, the children were dismissed for breaktime on the yard.

Areas for possible exploration:

- Could look in to behaviour management and in particular the language used here. The teacher was aware that the children probably would not be able to stand up and confidently tell the class about apostrophes and subsequently knew that they would stop talking as a result-a possible behaviour management technique rather than the teacher raising their voice.
- The children were potentially disengaging with the feedback as they thought it may not have applied to them. They may not have gone out for 1:1 reading with the TA so they might have thought that the feedback was not aimed at them. Possibility of looking at the effectiveness of praise within the classroom.
- The majority of the children knowing to sit and be respectful when a member of staff is talking.

Notes

- The children had just finished the morning session and were packed up ready for morning break.
- The situation was calm before the incident unfolded.

