

‘How does effective continuous and enhanced provision, contribute to the depth of independent and focused learning taking place?’

Gallwch ychwanegu'ch targedau o'ch aseiniad diwethaf gan ddefnyddio'r tabl isod. /

Please add your targets from the previous assignment using the table below.

	Targed/Target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn. What I have done in this assignment.
Targed/Target 1	Make your expression more tentative to match the balanced critical conclusions you present.	I have taken extra care when forming sentences using appropriate vocabulary and considering flow of argument when presenting points.
Targed/Target 2	Ensure that references make full sense in the sentence they appear.	Extra consideration of the Harvard referencing system when including references.
Targed/Target 3	Please proofread your work to eliminate comma splicing from your assignment. Avoid over-long sentences running into each other.	I have printed out re read and re structured this essay multiple times before submission. In addition to this I have also asked others to proofread on my behalf.

The aim of this essay is to conduct and reflect upon focused research in an area of pedagogy of interest to myself and my research partner. We were interested in Foundation Phase provisions and the impact these have on the transference and development of skills from discrete teaching sessions. Welsh Government Foundation Phase Framework (2015, p. 3) indicate the importance of children learning through activities that allow them to explore, expand and consolidate their own learning independently and within a group. Our intention was to explore this theory and assess foundation phase provisions in regard to the impact of learning and strengthen the skills that have been taught.

We were interested in the extent of independent learning taking place within a Nursery and Year 2 setting and how effectively the children were transferring a previously taught skill. My partner was in a year 2 class where enhanced provisions were accessed as part of a learning carousel. I was in a Nursery class where much learning takes place through enhanced and continuous provision (E.P. and C.P.).

Initially our research question was 'How does effective continuous and enhanced provision, contribute to the depth of independent and focused learning taking place?'. However, after careful consideration, our topic was too broad, so the focus became transference of skills in enhanced provision. Thomas and Lewis (2016) describe enhanced activities as tasks that extend and enrich the learning by using and providing additional resources. Focus in this area will have a positive effect on our future pedagogy.

I began the research into our topic by first understanding the importance of E.P. and C.P. and the impact this has within a Foundation Phase. Cornerstones (2017) describe the role of C.P. within foundation phase. They emphasise its importance of developing the learning of the children in the absence of an adult within different learning zones. E.P. are activities that are focused on a particular skill within a continuous learning zone. The ethos of the foundation phase is for children to further their learning through play. Fleer (2003, p.68) reiterates the importance of children using real life experiences along with teacher modelling and interaction, to enhance the quality of learning. This theory is in agreeance to the guidelines put forth by the Welsh Assembly Government (2008) They argue that It is crucial for adults in the learning environment to participate and take an active role in the learning taking place in these areas. It could be argued that learning is facilitated through the teacher asking and responding to questions to expand knowledge and promote focused learning. Almeida (2011) highlights the significance of using questions in the classroom from both the

teacher to the student and the student to the teacher. She argues that this level of interaction allows the children to add prior knowledge to new information to result in quality learning experiences. This supports the teacher's perception of the child's conceptual understanding. Questions that the children are beginning to ask can be developed through the use of enhanced activities. The theory that independent activities are successful in promoting learning, is supported by practitioner participation and learning through discovery. Cole et al. and Vygotsky (1978) consider the ways in which teacher interaction to support problem-solving, can further enhance a child's learning, thus impacting the zone of proximal development. They distinguish the zone of proximal development as "the "buds" or "flowers" of development rather than the "fruits", the process of learning rather than the outcome of development" (p.86). This is the possible progression in cognitive understanding that children could have through teacher interaction and communication. This is achieved via questioning and scaffolding and encourages a self-awareness of learning styles they are developing.

Despite this some may argue that allowing the children to play and explore together as mixed groups without an adult, results in increased cognitive domain. Gmitrova and Gmitrov (2003) conducted a study within a preschool in Slovak republic based on teacher-directed pretend play versus child-directed pretend play. They conducted a series of lesson observations and from their findings concluded that child-directed play involving mixed groups of gender and ability, results in free flow of progression and cognitive stimulation, "children's opportunities to interact with more advanced and less advanced peers strengthen their cognitive skills." (Gmitrova and Gmitrov, 2003, p. 242). Finally, they reiterate the importance of pretend play within a child's learning development, and the importance of teachers facilitating and promoting this. Without these provisions the children do not have enough opportunity to enhance skills in all of the areas of learning.

Through E.P. children need to be challenged, engaged and develop perseverance. This is extremely important in the Nursery setting as they tend to become distracted quickly. Enns (1990, quoted in Sarid and Breznitz, 1997, p. 303) reiterates the importance of concentration amongst children in early years settings. He suggests that in order for the child to have cognitive progression, they need to have a sustained level of concentration within the task. Wilson (2014) indicates that impactful resources stimulate a range of senses and are versatile. In regard to learning independently within the environment the children are able to respond effectively.

Bryce-Clegg (2013, pp. 5) highlights the fact that when children are left to independently choose a task, they will often choose the same activity repeatedly. From an external perspective, adults may feel they have achieved. However, when looking more closely at what they have actually produced they are not asserting a new skill, but re-

applying a skill. Therefore, practitioner intervention and observation are essential to ensure that skills are consolidated with a broad range of experiences and resources.

Consideration of specific tools and techniques are crucial in order to understand reasoning behind research and apply my results to pedagogy. Firstly, why to undertake the research as a student teacher. Research that is completed within the classroom is carried out in order to inform pedagogy, test teaching theory and examine and validate whole school structures (Hopkins, 2014, pp. xiii). As a student teacher, research within the classroom allows for improved learning and pedagogy that can be carried forward into future experiences. The Welsh Government document for professional standards in teaching (2018) clearly states within 'Professional Learning' and 'Innovation' the ways in which teachers have to be constantly adapting and expanding knowledge in order to support professional growth. Marilyn Cochran-Smith is an advocate for research and inquiry in professional practice. She believes that knowledge along with classroom experience should be supported with regular enquiry. This will enhance the education system and therefore be the root of educational transformation (Cochran- Smith and Lytle, 2009). In conjunction with this, Gilchrist (2018) is particularly precise in his views of personal research and inquiry. He argues that although research within school is crucial, it is of far greater impact when the research is chosen and of personal interest to the teacher. Teachers should not have to conduct research which has been given to them by senior members of staff, but in actual fact should have the opportunity to enhance their own professional knowledge with research that is specific to their classroom, children and pedagogy. These results can be applied to achieve the greatest impact possible, much like the research undertaken within this essay.

Our research will be undertaken during a lesson study within nursery and a year two classroom. As a form of research, this involves co-operative planning and assessing. This allows the teacher to consider and focus on the finer details and outcomes that may occur. Wragg et al., (1996) maintain the opinion that teachers who survive their first few years of teaching and become good practitioners are those who are able to research, learn and draw upon this information throughout their careers. Lesson studies allow greater depth of learning and understanding. However, in order for a study to be truly reflective it needs to be a minimum of three lessons and possibly more to refine findings (Dudley, 2014, pp.5) As this research is being conducted to improve our individual pedagogy will be used for professional development during our next placement, our study will be sufficient to conclude a final result.

In order to assess the level of involvement of the children and the quality of learning and understanding, my partner and I will use the 'Leuven involvement scale' as part of our observation schedule. This is a scale developed by Ferre Laevers in which the involvement of the observation participants is ranked on a scale from 1 meaning low involvement, to 5

which is high involvement. Laevers and Heylen (2003) relate the level of involvement to the level of mental activity. They argue that if participants of an activity have high involvement, then they are functioning at their maximum capability, the optimal condition for real development. This is particularly important to our research in that the level of involvement, will allude to the level of understanding. During the observation, we intended to be non-participant observers. We felt this would be the most effective form of observation with a specific focus and without preconceived ideas. This will ensure a group of covert participants; a group of children who are unaware they are being observed, and therefore will give a clear outcome based on natural environments (Coleman and Briggs, 2002, pp. 177). Smidt (2005) suggests that an effective observation of a child will take place in their natural habitat highlighting both intellectual and social development.

The basis of the research will be mixed method. 'Quantitative research' will be used as the underlying structure of the lesson studies. Newman and Ridenour (1998) describe this process as research that begins with a thesis or question of interest, and the research then carried out will either confirm or disconfirm the question at hand. In addition to this, we will be using 'qualitative research' methods to gather and reflect upon interview responses from the children. Giddings and Grant (2006) suggest that using mixed methods of research allows for a broader breadth of findings bringing value to the research process as weaker areas in each are compensated for by the other. Reflection upon the observations and lessons that took place will be imperative (see reflection journal, appendix 8). During analysis, we will be conducting an interview with case pupils to understand and consider their responses. It is important to include validation from the participants of the research in order to avert from any bias the interviewer may have (Flewitt, 2005, P.8). The ages of children being interviewed will be 3 and 7 years old, therefore the questions asked during the interview need to be appropriate to their level of understanding to allow the children to give accurate responses. Irwin and Johnson (2005) acknowledge the difficulties with interviewing young children. These are ensuring the children are comfortable to answer questioning, and the importance of the interviewer not leading the child. As a conclusion they suggest that the interviewer should use methods that both the children and adult can understand to ensure the conversation is successful and relevant. Fargas-Malet et al. (2010) are also in agreement of this; using simple clear language and an interview structure children can follow and understand is critical to empower young children's voices. Within our research this will be something to consider, with the possibility of using picture or image representation to help the children respond to the question.

Taking into account the age of the participants involved in the research project, ethical precautions need to be considered. We began by seeking consent from the parents of the children. Myself and my partner have considered and reflected on the BERA (2019) ethical guidelines for educational research and have applied all relevant elements. Flewiit (2005) specifies the importance of the children being involved and aware that research is taking place with 'assent'. This is in direct conjunction with article 12 from the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1992) which states that every child has the right to express their feelings and views on all matters affecting them. Child views on the research will be considered when taking part in the research and also in instances if the children are no longer willing to participate.

Lesson one study was completed with the Nursery children. At this age children are classed as being in the sensory-motor stage or as Piaget would label them, the preoperational stage. Therefore, they are likely to learn through their senses, object prominence and have goal directed actions (Piaget as cited in Blake and Pope, 2008, p.60) They suggest that children in this stage understand one step logic, however struggle with independent reasoning. Taggart et al. (2005, pp. 2) support this theory. They suggest introducing intellectual demands into a child's life too early is not advisable. This is reflected in lesson one. The teaching that took place was short being only 15-20 minutes long, and the rest of the session was observed in the E.P. Three children were chosen to be observed. They represented a higher, middle and lower ability, but also were selected as those who were able to respond effectively to questioning. During the discrete teaching session, the children were taught the concept of using money. This was modelled during the lesson using price tags, purses and real pennies. Resources within the classroom need to represent that of real-life experiences (Hamed Al Azri and Al-Rashdi, 2014). Our research question is based around the validity of independent learning. Are the children transferring skills they have been taught effectively? The observations for this were completed during the children's time in E.P. It was crucial for us to be thorough and focused during this time within these observations. If the child had indeed understood the learning that had taken place, it would, in theory, be recognisable within their independent learning. The children were supplied with the materials reflecting those used in the lesson. They needed initial prompting and support from myself as the attending adult, in order to distinguish roles between themselves and use the materials. Interviews were conducted after observation. The children were asked firstly to draw what they had been doing that session. This allowed us to assess their understanding and development of the skill they had been taught. Making the child interview responses appropriate with their voices being brought to the surface in a visual way, is a highly effective interview technique for younger children. (Danby, Ewing, and Thorpe, 2011;

Angelides and Michaelidou, 2009). If you consider Appendix 4 (C, D and E) the children were all able to respond to what they had learnt with all of them able to tell me the meaning of their marks using appropriate language relating to the task i.e. till, coins, money, food etc. It could be argued that there are particular draw backs to using drawing as an interview method. Backett-Milburn and Mckie (1999) argue that young children could be drawing what they find easy or what they feel the adult wants them to draw. It is important for the interviewer to take this into consideration. The children were also asked to point to an emotion picture of how they felt their learning went. The variety of questions in addition to these visual variations presented us with a greater overall understanding of what they had learnt.

Child one was considered to be the higher ability child and was observed as having 'continuous activity with intense moments', (see appendix, 1). They were clearly able to take the learning from the initial session and transfer it into the activity in the role play area. As you can see from child one's responses in appendix 3 (A and B) a clear understanding of what they have achieved during the session is presented with responses such as "My favourite part was the till". This child was also able to extend their learning with next steps in what they would like to do next time, "A toy shop". This child was engaged with the enhanced activity for the whole of the session, using it appropriately.

Child two is of middle ability, they showed the same level of engagement as child one, however this child was not in the area for the same length of time. They also gave appropriate answers however reflection upon their responses suggests that they were more interested in social interactions between themselves and their peers. Their drawn reflection showed them with all their friends (see appendix 4, D). In response to 'how did you feel about this activity?', the response was 'confused' as they 'found it tricky giving the money.' This could suggest that ability level could affect the transference of skill and differentiation should always be considered.

Child three was considered our lower ability child. However, their interaction and engagement with the activity was on par with child one. Although responses to questions were less eloquent (see appendix 3), this child was able to produce a drawing representing the activity and complete the task with child one to a thorough extent. This could be linked to the point made by Gmitrova and Gmitrov (2003) of the impact and success of mixed ability children playing together to expand their learning.

In summary of these findings, it would seem that all children were able to transfer the skill they had been taught and develop it further to some extent. However, depending on interest in the activity, some did this better than others. Although we had intended to be non-participant observers of the session, we did have to intervene in the beginning in order to help the children begin and set up the task. Once the children had the method clarified, they

were able to continue with and advance the activity adding their own experiences of going to the shops to the games they were playing (see appendix 2, observation field notes.) This initial practitioner interaction could be something to consider within the Year 2 study.

The second lesson study took place within a year two classroom. The three chosen children were completing an independent activity as part of a classroom carousel. Owen and Thomas (2019) suggest that a carousel lesson that has been successfully facilitated by the teacher through explanation and exciting resources, will not only interest but also scaffold the child's learning. They explain that the children then have the opportunity to engage in their own learning, as well as the learning of others selecting challenges that are personal to them and therefore self-assess their progress. The three case children were again representatives of the higher, middle and lower ability group. This allowed us to consider ability level as a factor of comparison to the research focus. The skill taught during the beginning of the lesson was based on recognising and handling money. Coin recognition was recapped along with comparing amounts of money. This then informed the independent activity of the carousel. Children were given a 'desktop shop'. The children worked co-operatively to choose two items, add up the cost and select the correct money to pay the amount. Reflection from our previous lesson study suggested that the children may benefit from adult input at the beginning of the activity to ensure they have the understanding to complete it independently. In addition to this, the adult is able to differentiate the delivery of the activity to the children as ability level would suggest necessary. Differentiation of prices and varying forms of scaffolding supported the learning. Maybin, Merver and Stierer (1992) suggest that scaffolding gives children the support they need to complete an activity they otherwise would not be able to complete on their own. The observations of this activity took place as the children completed the activity. In addition to the scaffolds, the children used each other to communicate findings and support their outcomes.

Interviews with the case children in this group were far more structured than the previous study as these children are older. Waterman, Blades and Spencer (2001) suggest that the level of accuracy from the response of a child is dependent on the questions they are asked. Often children are able to answer as accurately as adults when asked open recall questions, only with slightly less information. Therefore, these types of questions are more reliable than that of closed questions. (Cassell and Bjorkland, 1995) My partner and I avoided closed questions (see appendix 7, A and B) where possible in the interview. This correlates to the 'qualitative research' approach interpreting the reality that the children are portraying in their answers (Newman, 1998).

Child one was in the higher ability group and completed the activity first. Children within this groups responded to the activity well, using correct money terms, sufficient coin

recognition skills and problem-solving skills, "We don't have a 30p coin, so we will have to make it." (see appendix 6, section A) The observation schedule notes (see appendix 5) showed that this child had 'sustained, intense activity'. This could suggest that this child was challenged to the correct level and therefore was able to successfully transfer the skill taught.

Child 2 was a middle ability child who was placed on the observation schedule as 'continuous activity with intense moments' (see appendix 5). The children within this group needed more from the teacher in terms of scaffolding and differentiation in order to complete this task. During the input for the activity the teacher had to specify that the children had to include prices that were two digits to ensure children were challenged. (See appendix 6, B). The observation of this group in general was that more questions were asked between peers and children seemed to have greater doubts within their ability to complete the task. Children would often look to the adult to confirm their method.

Child 3 was in the lower ability group. Notes from the observation of this group saw that they were generally fussier and took longer to settle (see appendix 6, B). At the beginning of the activity the teacher had to reinforce independence as this group seemed to need clarification from the outset. They were able to transfer some of the skills and knowledge they had been taught however they were in greater need of teacher interaction to enhance their outcomes.

During the interview (see appendix 7, A and B) the case children from each group were all able to answer open questions responding to the activity. This demonstrated transfer of skills using money. When asked the question 'Did you need any help?' all three of the children replied 'no' however, two of the children included scaffolding resources within their answers (see appendix 7, A) this is interesting as although they completed the activity independently, they did not consider the scaffolding that was supplied and ultimately was a necessity to completing the activity.

In reflection of this, it has become clear that an important factor of independent learning, is the facilitated resources, scaffolding and environment that are put into place by the teacher. This is also supported by the responses from the children when asked if they would change anything, they responded with individual next steps to make the activity harder. This represents the importance of challenge level being appropriate to engage the children.

From these lesson studies I have been able to draw upon a series of findings. Firstly, that although we had initially decided we were going to be non-participant observers, it became clear this was not appropriate to achieve optimum learning. Jorgensen (1989) Depict participant observation as that which allows the researcher to be included in the research in

order to produce qualitative narrative of what is taking place. From this the researcher is then able to measure, test and construct 'explanatory theories.' (p. 7). This process occurred naturally during our lesson studies. During the first lesson I felt it important to prompt and scaffold the children's learning, so they were able to have a more informed outcome. This method was transferred into the second study as the activity input.

Another finding that can be taken from the two lesson studies is that in order to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, a blended teaching approach needs to be adopted. This finding came as a result of the structure of the two lessons that took place. Initially we had not considered the differences in structure between the two. However, upon reflection, it seemed that although each were successful in transferring the skill, the more structured activity seemed to have limited learning possibilities. Bryce-Clegg (2015, p.6) supports this theory suggesting activities in E.P. and C.P. need to be open ended experiences that give children the opportunity to explore and play. This, along with careful practitioner input, will have the best impact on developing essential skills. This was clear after comparison. Lesson one was far more open ended, therefore the children began adding their own experiences and independent exploration deepening the quality of the learning. During the second study; independent learning activity, a skill was learnt but the learning could only be taken to one level, no individual exploration could take place. Therefore, E.P. should include some structured activities but also some that are very open ended that allow children to consolidate previously taught skills independently. This will then avoid practitioners having any preconceptions of what the children are able to do as they can observe individual responses and outcomes taking place. This correlates directly to Donaldson (2014) successful futures report suggesting that the learning of all children should lead them to become 'ambitious capable learners'.

Another finding from this study was the impact of allowing the children to build their own creative outcomes and make their own mistakes within E.P. When this is a possibility the learning journey becomes individual to the children and therefore the quality of the skill, they are consolidating is far greater. Beard and Wilson (2006, p. 2) argue that experiential learning infuses all forms of learning. Through active engagement and an holistic approach, learners are able to use experiences they have had to further develop their quality of learning. Nevertheless, careful interference from practitioners within the environment is still crucial to progress the metacognition of children.

Finally, this research has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of using a lesson study as a method of research. Firstly, the strengths are the impact of child lead observation. This results in genuine outcomes and responses and as researchers we are able to interpret and apply this to our own pedagogy. In addition to this the research is first-hand and allows us to develop our observation and reflective skills that will be used

throughout our teaching career. The weaknesses of using this as a research tool are that as the researcher it can be difficult to only use immediate observations from the lesson study. Familiarity with your class can often result in preconceptions about the children, their abilities and responses.

To conclude I will first consider both studies carried out and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses in order to generalise the findings. The first strength within lesson one was child engagement and the results we gathered on our observation schedule (see appendix 1). All the children had continuous activity with intense moments scoring four out of five. Previous findings of Laevers and Heylen (2003) would suggest that high levels of engagement equate to the successful transference of skill.

Although the children were engaged during our observation, this was only for one session on one day. It could be argued that a weakness of this is that the case children observed may frequently play in the role play area and therefore are not developing any new skills. As highlighted previously (see page 3, Bryce- Clegg, 2013). It could have been beneficial to observe the skills the children had before the lesson study took place for progression and acquisition of new skills.

Another strength of the study was the strategic questioning and prompting from adults. Meacham et al. (2013) acknowledge the importance of teacher interaction during 'sociodramatic play'. Through successful interaction, children are able to sustain their play adopting appropriate roles and language in context. They also recognise the role of the practitioner; play-leader or co-player. Play-leader indirectly guides and redirects the play to ensure the children are developing metacognitive language and social skills (p. 563). A play leader role was adopted with the children in order to ensure they were able to use the skill they had been taught. Once the play had initial guidance, the children were able to create their individual version of sociodramatic play using money independently adding their own experiences (see appendix 2).

Another weakness of this study was the level of progression available to the children. Despite the fact the activity was enhanced with resources, the possibility of progression was limited to what was facilitated to the child. The children were given pennies to develop their skills with money, but some could have more knowledge of other coins. It is important to regard differentiation and consideration of progressive learning.

However, prior to the study, we had not considered or designed a set of success criteria to look for during the observation. This criterion could have pinpointed particular skills and how these were being represented through play. In hindsight, we should have considered a criterion to recognise the learning taking place. Forehand (2011) references Bloom's revised taxonomy. This considers the six levels of cognitive thinking and the ways in

which students are able to build their own quality learning experiences. This revised taxonomy includes titles such as remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating and creating. Using these levels of thinking to produce measurable success criteria would have been beneficial to findings.

A strength of the Year 2 study was the differentiation in E.P. However, the activity was structured, pre-planned and was limited in extending the learning taking place. Similar to Nursery, this activity could only be completed to a certain level. Some children could have benefitted from further challenge. As previously stated each of the children wanted further challenge when interviewed after the activity (see appendix 7, B)

Skinner and Belmont (1993) argue that highly structured activities in which the expectations and guidance are clearly stated, keep the students engaged and on track resulting in improved behaviour management. This point is reflected in our observation schedule for this study (see appendix 5).

As previously stated, Thomas and Lewis (2016) suggest that enhanced activities should include additional resources for the children to progress particular skills. In the Year two study this was not the case. This activity was a whole resource given to the children. There were no additional resources added to a provision they already had narrowing opportunity to build on prior learning.

To summarize our findings and the validity of this method, I would argue that E.P. is in fact successful in development and transference of skills from classroom to C.P. I believe that in addition to careful practitioner interventions, and successful and engaging resources, children are able to build upon prior learning, develop new skills and explore possibilities for consolidating ideas. However, a blended approach to this is imperative. In order for children to transfer skills and embed them into their learning journey, there needs to be dominant open-ended learning as well as more structured activities used for consolidation.

This lesson study method is valid as we witnessed areas of strength and weakness in the contrasting studies. There are, however, factors I would change if I were to do this again i.e. including success criteria, planning for two activities that have the same nature; open ended, structured. I would also consider planning two sessions that are within two classes of similar age.

Before beginning this study none of the methods were piloted. Had this been done the importance of intervention would have been more apparent. Interview questions would have also been considered. Waterman, Blades and Spencer (2001) recommend using a variety of 'wh' questions when interviewing children. Our Year two interview could have included more of these questions in order to promote the depth of answer.

Constructive information will be taken forward and implemented in future planning. I have been able to highlight key areas for successful engagement and transference of skill in E.P. and C.P. This will affect how I plan for adults and the resources I use in future.

Recommendations in light of this research are to allow more time to collect and consolidate results of the study. This could be longer lessons or more of them. I would also recommend producing an outcome that is more quantitative than our study was. For example, choose ten children to complete the study and from that produce data that can be compared and considered effectively. I have also learned the importance of carefully planning enhanced and continuous provision. With quality adult interventions and support, Effective independent learning is as impactful as the teacher focus task. Therefore, it is particularly important to recommend that all staff are trained in effective questioning, observation and application in order for every child to have the same learning experience to the highest quality, reaching their full cognitive potential.

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