

Targedau / Targets	Sut rydych wedi gweithio ar hwn / How have you worked on this?	Ceir enghraifft ar / An example can be found on:
<u>Targed/Target 1</u> Ensure effective use of paragraphs in your work to distinctly separate and emphasize the crucial points you present.	I will proofread my work thoroughly before submission to allow for the readers interpretation to match my own.	This can be found throughout my written response to the question.
<u>Targed/Target 2</u> Make sure to describe any specialized terminology or concepts to ensure full comprehension for the reader.	I will elaborate on any specialised terminology to allow the reader a greater understanding.	This can be found throughout my written response to the question.

Research Proposal: Case Study based on an Electives Experience

An exploratory case study arising from practise (noticing) and investigated further through identified research tools. The assignment concludes with the identification of an intervention which can be piloted throughout Professional Teaching Experience and evidenced through reflection in the Professional Learning Standards.

For this assignment, I will aim to discuss the research findings of an exploratory case study which focused on the environmental factors of a school and how they may affect learners' behaviour within Progression Step 3. The focused research will be based on the research question, "How do environmental factors within an educational setting influence the behaviour of learners in Progression Step 3?". The school's name has been anonymised to protect its identity and learners; following British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines, it will be kept confidential under the synonym 'School A' (BERA, 2018). As the researcher, I decided to focus on how a classroom's environmental factors can influence the behaviour outcomes of the learners in progression step 3. This was done to further my understanding of the needs of learners in this progression step and build on my knowledge of influencing factors in preparation for my future practice. This links to the Progression in Learning standard of the 'Advancing Learning' in Pedagogy strand. School A is classified as a large, multicultural, double-form entry school in an urbanised city centre area. As of October 2023, there were 430 pupils on roll with both Progression Step One and Two learners in receipt of universal free school

meals, with a plan for all learners to receive this by the end of the 2023/24 school year. 42.26% of full-time learners at School A are on the Free School Meals Register, nearly double the national average of 23% (Estyn, 2023). Learners with Additional Learning Needs at School A are at 12.4%, slightly below the national average of 16.1% stated by Estyn (Estyn, 2023). These Additional Learning Needs are categorised into 4 sections, Communication, and Interaction, Physical and Sensory, Emotional, Social and Behavioural, Cognition and Learning (Welsh Government, 2018). To address the provisions put in place for these learners, School A have implemented a tiered system including universal provisions, interventions support and specialist level support such as Individual Development Plans (IDPs). At the present time, there are 14 learners with IDPs on roll in the school with 6 learners on the pathway to diagnosis. 36% of learners at School A have been identified as using English as an Additional Language (EAL). This is equivalent to 146 learners, an increase of 20 learners since the beginning of the school year, with an additional 13 learners awaiting English language assessments, and 17 learners who have been in the UK for less than 2 years. There are 9 learners who belong to serving military families. As the research was conducted within Progression Step 3, there are an allocated 55 spaces for each year group, with Year 4 having 2 spaces available, 5 spaces available in Year 5 and Year 6 being at capacity.

The learning environment within an educational setting proves significant to the behaviour that learners display throughout their educational pathway, specifically for those in Progression Step 3. In year groups 4, 5 and 6, these learners are given the tools to develop the physical and social skills to thrive in an educational setting and further develop into their adult lives and careers. Research has suggested that learners at this stage of their education will thrive in their learning outcomes if attention is given to creating a positive classroom environment (Zandvliet and Fraser, 2019, p.2). This is an expansion of Fraser, 2012 who implies links between the effective outcomes of a learner's cognitive development and the classroom environment they learn in (Fraser, 2012, p. 1191 – 1232). Whereas Fraser and Aldridge, 2017, suggest that the reflection of teachers' own practice is at the root of learning outcomes in schools rather than their environment (Fraser and Aldridge, 2017, pp.91–107). Dörnyei and Muir, 2019 go further suggesting that a proactive

learning environment is the outcome of staff developing “interpersonal relations” with the learners to build trust and situational understanding (Dörnyei and Muir, 2019). Estyn support this comment, discussing further how using these personal connections allows adults to bond with learners which can lead to reinforcing a “sense of belonging and develop pupils' communication, co-operation” as well as giving them the opportunity to share personal information such as their feelings daily and mindfulness sessions to use as coping strategies (ESTYN, 2019). However, Estyn offer support to Fraser, 2012, by further discussing how this study was conducted in a ‘nurture group’ whereby the learning environment is described as “homely and pleasant”, which takes into consideration the needs of the learners and provides them with the opportunity to develop the skills they require to function not only in a mainstream classroom, but also in general society. This discussion of a classroom environment is supported using the Stimulation, Individuality, and Naturalness (SIN) conceptual model, as Barrett et al., 2015, argue that a natural classroom design accounts for 50% of the impact on learning outcomes with stimulation and individuality making up the remaining 50% equally (Barrett et al., 2015). Isbell and Raines, 2013, goes further, suggesting that to enhance the learners’ experiences of a natural classroom environment, live plants and flowers should be added to the classroom to allow learners to discover and develop new skills. The addition of a living thing encourages the learners to take responsibility for the care of the plant, while also adding a visual aspect to the classroom environment in the form of vibrant colours and scents (Isbell and Raines., 2013). Obaki, 2017 argues that the behaviour of the learners is a direct result of the classroom environment, suggesting that their social interactions and behaviour outcomes can be contained using effective environmental factors. They state, “A friendly classroom develops an environment that creates a desired children’s social behaviour” (Obaki, 2017). Sugai et al., 2000, has proposed that managing challenging behaviour takes up a disproportionate amount of time in education settings which then has a negative impact on more proactive learning strategies being implemented (Sugai et al., 2000). This is an area in which I would like to conduct further research from the perspective of the class teacher and learners as I would like to observe how School A incorporates the learning environments into their behaviour management strategies and how this further impacts the outcomes of the learners. Olds, 2001 discusses how learners who are in a safe and secure environment, who feel comfortable and

accepted are more inclined to discover and explore materials and resources which will allow them to generate new ideas to further develop their understanding of their surroundings and environment (Olds, 2001). During an observation research project, Webster, and Blatchford, 2014 stated that they experienced learners with additional learning needs to experience a “high degree of separation” from the classroom environment compared to those without ALN (Webster and Professor Blatchford, 2014). They also noted that 25% of the ALN learner's time was spent out of mainstream lessons and with the classroom teaching assistant. This is an area where I would like to observe during the research period as Wilson and Lipsey, 2007 argues that these learners who are removed from the typical classroom environment would not have the opportunities and resources made available to them to develop and benefit from specific interventions, whether they be aimed at educational and cognitive development or social and emotional progress (Wilson and Lipsey, 2007).

Case study research is the method of research and data collection in which the topic of research is from real life, authentic contexts. The researcher conducts case study research to gain further understanding of the complex social, administrative, and individual needs surrounding schools as an educational setting. Yin, 2014, defines case study research as utilising multiple sources of research data to gain a full understanding of the research topic. They define the importance of empirical inquiry, contextual examination, and the incorporation of diverse sources of evidence while conducting case study research (Yin, 2014, pp.2–6). Creswell and Poth, 2017 also discuss how this form of research is a qualitative approach that involves a detailed analysis of a specific topic from a real life, authentic context. They consider how case study research requires the researcher to be “flexible and adaptable” during the data collection period, suggesting that questions or routines in the setting can change quickly (Creswell and Poth, 2017). For this research proposal, the case study research model fits the needs of the researcher as it requires the flexibility and adaptability that an educational setting requires. It also has a child centred focus which this research proposal requires, as it focuses on the environmental factors of the school setting which can impact the behaviour of the learners. However, Flyvbjerg, 2001 discusses potential limitations to case study research as it can often lead to the researcher confirming their preconceived notions of the topic, which can prove difficult to “develop general propositions and theories”

when analysing specific topics of research (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.67). For this research project, the sample for the data collection are Progression Step 3 learners, teaching staff and members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The researcher has used observation as a research method for the learners in Progression Step 3, who are grouped into year groups (Year 4, Year 5, and Year 6) who are aged eight to eleven with approximately fifty learners per year group. Krusenvik, 2016, supports the use of observation in a small-scale case study, claiming that it can provide a closer analysis into the research topic by allowing direct observation in the natural environment. This primary data collection can be associated with direct access to subjective factors, such as the researchers personal bias or contextual influences. These subjective factors are not always common in research projects that use questionnaires that provide the researcher with secondary data (Krusenvik, 2016). There is also an argument to suggest that the outcomes to case study research can encourage the professional development of teachers as it can promote reflective practise amongst the profession. Hökkä and Eteläpelto, 2013 argue that case study research can not only enhance professional growth but also can “maintain professional interest.” They go further, discussing how their own research data implies that potential for professional development was influenced by the availability of resources. However, they propose that to be able to make significant developments within the professional development of teachers, further research is required into the “imbalance between teacher educators’ professional identity and the social demands imposed on them” (Hökkä and Eteläpelto, 2013).

The methodology adopted throughout this research study uses a mixed method approach using a variety of research tools to collect both qualitative and quantitative data through the methods of one to one in person interviews and questionnaires. Clark and Moss suggest that the mixed method approach to research is an analogy of a “mosaic of individual tiles.” In this instance, they suggest that the term “individual tiles” relates to the purpose of mixed method research being the collection of data from all aspects of the research topic, correlating to form one cohesive body (Clark and Moss, 2011). The researcher also adapted the Leuven Scale model to use observation as a research tool within the school setting. This was decided as it was felt that an observation schedule adapted to the Leuven Scale model was the best format to use during an in-class observation to be able to record

the environmental factors and its influence on the learner's behaviour and engagement. Georgeson and Payler, 2013 suggest the use of the Leuven Scale model in observation as a "scanning device" to oversee the classroom setting and the learners over a set period to gain an insight to the overall resources available (Georgeson and Payler, 2013, pp.221-223). The research data for this study will be collected via an online questionnaire aimed at the teaching staff throughout Progression Step 3 and a semi – structured, informal set of interviews with two members of the Senior Leadership Team. Data will also be obtained via several observation sessions with Progression Step 3 classes. The online questionnaire directed at the Progression Step 3 teaching staff, is designed with the intention of obtaining their professional viewpoint on how environmental factors within their classrooms can influence the behaviour of their learners (see appendices for a blank questionnaire). An advantage of applying a questionnaire as an effective research tool is the anonymity that an online submission can offer the respondent, allowing them to answer freely and with more honesty, facilitating the collection of qualitative data. Notwithstanding the possible strengths, Welsh Government, 2015, have proposed that the drawbacks of an online questionnaire may result in a reduced number of participant responses, which may impact the qualitative data gathered (Welsh Government, 2015). The National Foundation for Educational Research also advocates this as a limitation, highlighting that limited resources are available to further query unclear responses when consulting these online anonymised questionnaires (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2013). This is disputed by Hunter, 2012, who proposes that research projects with a concise timescale produce sufficient data quality and responses when online questionnaires are used a research tool, suggesting that the potential drawbacks commonly associated with traditional questionnaires are rendered obsolete (Hunter, 2012). The data collection opportunities in this research project suggests that each research tool used has the capability to produce qualitative data (see appendices). As this is a small-scale research study, it would be difficult to generate considerable and significant quantitative data. The researcher should be aware of this limitation and the challenges it may present when analysing the results of this research study. This primary research study, conducted within School A, involves learners who are within the Progression Step 3. It also involves two members of the Senior Leadership Team, who do not wish to have their roles within the school setting recorded. Each

interview was conducted in person on a one-to-one basis, with the researcher leading the interview process. The purpose of this set of interviews was to gather research data from the primary source on a topic in which School A are making a strong objective to thrive within. Opdenakker, 2006, proposes an advantage to conducting face to face interviews, emphasising that this method of research provides a superior quality of research compared to an online questionnaire. They argue that social cues, including tone of voice and body language, can be insightful during an in-person interview which enables the researcher to attain a more profound understanding of how the interviewee discloses their responses (Opdenakker, 2006). Additionally, they argue that recognising the significance of social cues in a face-to-face interview enables the researcher to gather a deeper understanding of the information they intend to gather during the data collection process. However, these social cues can also be viewed as a drawback of in person interviews expressions such as facial expressions or gestures can often have different meanings. Knapp and Hall highlight the importance of understanding cultural variations which can lead to these nonverbal communications being interpreted differently across cultures (Knapp and Hall 2013). Prior to the research interviews and consistently throughout the interview process, the researcher-maintained transparency by informing all participants about the primary goal of the research. Each participant was given the opportunity to withdraw their consent to participate as both were adults, able to give their own consent. This falls in line with the ethics form completed prior to the research collection (see appendices) and all participants were made aware that the research collected would remain anonymous. They retain the right to withdraw from the research collection at any point without the necessity of providing an explanation, adhering to the guidelines outlines by BERA for ethical research practices (BERA, 2018). Furthermore, the observations included learners from Progression Step 3 and took place with those who had returned parental consent forms, alongside their verbal assent prior to, and throughout the observation period. The entirety of the research was carried out within the school premises for the purposes of progressing behaviour management and the factors which influence it. Throughout this research study, learners were clearly notified that any information they disclose would be treated with confidentiality and utilised for the purposes of this research project only. This then correlates with articles 12, 13 and 16 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), aligning the

respect of the child's views, freedom of expression and their rights to privacy (UNICEF, 1992). This outcome of data can therefore be triangulated as the researcher has also conducted observations of the environmental influences on learners' behaviour, endorsing the work of Heale and Forbes, 2013, who discuss how the research methods corresponds with the mixed methods model for collecting research data. They propose that this methodology in research can "allow the limitations from each method to be transcended by comparing findings from different perspectives" (Heale and Forbes, 2013).

On completion of the research data collection, all research outcomes will be presented via observation schedules, transcripts of interview scripts and individual responses to an online questionnaire (see appendices). During the electives experience, the researcher collaborated with colleagues to arrange an appropriate time for the observations to take place. It was discussed with the class teachers how the researcher intended to conduct the observations and any uncertainties were mutually communicated. The research data collected from observations is displayed using an observation schedule designed around the Leuven Scale model. Each class observed by the researcher has a separate schedule in which the researcher rated the behaviours of the learners on scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being 'extremely low' and 5 being 'extremely high'. General observations regarding the learning environment were also noted in this schedule for ease of reading. It was the researchers' intentions during this study to conduct observations of all three year groups within Progression Step 3, however, when discussing this with the Network Lead of School A, it was decided that Year 4 learners were not suitable to be observed at this time due to many of these learners being involved in safeguarding procedures, potentially affecting the outcome of the research data. Due to the flexibility of the researcher, this was not an issue and observations were able to proceed with years 5 and 6. Interviews were also used as a research tool during this study, whereby the researcher conducted these face-to-face meetings with members of the SLT. The interviewee was asked prior to the interview if they consented to the interview being voice recorded to ensure no data was lost during the discussion. The researcher elaborated that the interviews would later be transcribed into written text and all recordings would be deleted, showing transparency and confirmability in the research. Online questionnaires were the final research tool used in this study,

aimed at teaching staff within Progression Step 3 allowing for anonymous research data to be collected. This collection of data was gathered using a Microsoft Form distributed to the target audience via an in – house email. Microsoft forms was used by the researcher as it allows for convenient collection of all research data submitted as well as having the capabilities to present both qualitative and quantitative data. This method of data presentation also demonstrates credible research as the responses to this form of research tool are unable to be altered in any way, excluding any suggestion of researcher positionality or bias. At the conclusion of this research study, the researcher met with Network Lead and Senior Mentor Teachers to feedback on the findings of the research study. During this professional discussion, both the findings from the school observations and SLT interviews were discussed, however, the data from the online questionnaires was inconclusive at the time as not one response had been submitted. Etz and Arroyo, 2015, discuss how small-scale research can produce a lack data for analysis, and that the researcher should incorporate “alternate strategies that may be superior in some instances regarding their efficiency in their use of available information” (Etz and Arroyo, 2015).

In conducting any form of research study, ensuring ethical standards is paramount to safeguarding the rights and well – being of the participants and to uphold the integrity of the study. This research study adheres to the recognised ethical guidelines to ensure transparency, fairness, and respect to all participants. In accordance with the ethics form attached to this research (see appendices), all research was conducted in accordance with BERA (2018), the Data Protection Act (GDPR) (2018), as well as the Education Work Force Professional Code of Conduct and the UNCRC. All research data collected will be stored on a memory stick which will be password protected. Consent forms were distributed to all learners in this sample group to gain parental consent for them to contribute to the research while learner assent was also gathered during the data collection. Any learners who did not return the parental consent forms were not observed and will not be involved in the analysis of the data collected. Interviews were conducted with two members of the Senior Leadership Team, to gain a more generalised view of the research topic and how they approach this as a whole school initiative. These were conducted on a one-to-one basis with the interviewee and the researcher, however both members of the SLT have requested that their roles within the school remain confidential. A

questionnaire was also distributed to members of the teaching staff to ascertain more detailed research data which is suited to classroom specific factors and experiences. It is important to the researcher that different viewpoint of the research topic be collected as this creates data that has both strengths and limitations, benefitting the school setting indefinitely as they have multiple angles to address the data from. Bassey, 1999, supports this as they suggest that the results of a research proposal will only show certain experiences from the school and another researcher looking at a similar topic may find vastly different results (Bassey, 1999, p.83).

In addressing the research question of this study “How do environmental factors within an educational setting influence the behaviour of learners in Progression Step 3?”, the analysis of research data collected offers valuable insights into the key patterns and trends observed in the data. In relation to the qualitative data collected through observations conducted in years 5 and 6 classes, each class were observed in three different locations throughout the school with different environmental influences in each. Both were observed in their respective classrooms, in the assembly hall during a singing assembly and outside during their break times. Each location introduced the learner to environmental changes which reflected in their behaviour. The subject lesson during the observation of the year 5 class was an expressive arts lesson with cross curricular links to literacy, language, and communication. The learners were asked to discuss a piece of art by an artist they were researching that term and create a written reflection on the piece. The classroom environment was busy, with brightly coloured displays and many resources out on tables. However, this differs to the learning environment preferred in the year 6 classroom, where the learning environment is calming, with neutral colours on displays around the classroom. This coincides the data collected from the staff interviews which show how School A are in the process of introducing calming, neutral colours to the school environment to reduce potential influencing factors to behaviour (see appendices). Another difference to the classroom environment noted during the observations was the learners seating plans and how they affect the behaviour outcomes. Within the year 5 classroom, learners are grouped in tables of 4-6 learners who have a front facing and side facing view of the class board. This creates distractions for the learners as there is a higher degree of temptation for ‘off topic’ discussion and movement. This was observed during the research period as

learners would often stand and walk around the classroom during the lesson, to congregate with friendship groups rather than for educational discussions. This led to the classroom environment feeling chaotic and overwhelming, with a lack of productivity. This differs to the learning environment observed in the year 6 classroom, as the seating arrangement was organised in forward facing rows of up to 6 learners. Aubrey and Riley, 2016, uses the work of Knowles to support this choice of seating by suggesting that by adjusting the learning environment to forward facing seats infers to the learner that the classroom environment is one of “knowledge transition.” However, they do present a limitation to their suggestion, stating that this lack of social interaction which would occur in group seating plans can “discourage any form of participation” (Aubrey and Riley, 2016, p.95). When learners are taken out of the traditional learning environment of the classroom, the research data shows that their behaviour outcomes are dependent on the current task and environment. The data collected by the researcher also demonstrates that there are differences in behaviour outcomes when learning outside of the classroom. Both groups of learners took part in a singing assembly together which was observed by the researcher. Although the data suggests that year 5 learners displayed a lower level of disruption and behaviour compared to the classroom, learners in year 6 displayed the reverse. The researcher observed behaviour which showed a lack of engagement with the activity and a growing level of disruptive behaviour. Notwithstanding this, the data collection for both year 5 and year 6 learners correlate during the activities observed in different environments, specifically during outdoor play. Learners from both year groups displayed low levels of disruptive behaviour and stayed on task throughout this observation period. This was predicted by the researcher as outdoor play is typically used as time for the learners to regulate and have personal choice, encouraging time for social interaction and their health and well-being.

In addition to the qualitative research data collected, an effort was made to gather quantitative data through an anonymous online questionnaire directed at the teaching staff in Progression Step 3. Unfortunately, the research responses indicate that only two responses were submitted within the time limit set out for data collection (see appendices). From the limited uptake in the questionnaires, I can see from the data that teachers within Progression Step 3 find that challenging behaviour is most often portrayed as low-level disruption and general ‘fussy’ behaviour. To

encourage the learners to remain on track with their learning and reduce disruption and distractions, responses to question 7 suggest that a common strategy used is positive praise, whether that be in the form of Class Dojo or creating a classroom culture where kindness is regularly discussed. Given the limited research data collected in this instance, if the research study is to be undertaken in the future, the researcher should consider exploring the option of distributing the questionnaire to a broader cohort of teachers. This strategy aims to secure a greater number of responses and facilitates a more thorough and comprehensive collection of the research data.

To conclude, this research study focuses on collecting data on how the environmental factors of a school setting influence the behaviour of learners in Progression Step 3. This study has also highlighted the strengths and limitations of environmental strategies that School A are using to develop behaviour management. The data shows the researcher how the outcome in behaviour is linked to the environmental factors within the traditional learning environment; however, engaging in tasks and activities also influences learner's behaviour. A strength of this study is that it demonstrates how the researcher observed strong professional relationships between staff and learners, which allowed for effective use of routines and staff high expectations. Additionally, by using a mixed method approach to research, it is clear to the researcher that strengths and limitations are shown through the data collected. The data indicates that learners are more productive and display lower levels of behaviour when their environment is structured but uses calming sensory influences, such as calming music and neutral colour schemes throughout the classroom. It also implies that more sensory stimulating environments, such as brightly coloured displays, and more flexibility create a higher level of disruptive behaviour outcomes. A noticeable constraint of this research study stems from the limited participation in the online questionnaire, leading to the deficiency in quantitative data available for analysis. For future research studies, the researcher would advise increasing the sample size of the participant groups, directed at both interview and questionnaire respondents.

For future practice relating to professional development within my teaching career, this research study has developed my capabilities and skills needed to comprehend

and excel in each specific strand of the Qualified Teacher Status. Regarding the strands 'Advancing,' 'Refining' and 'Influencing' of Pedagogy, this research study provides examples of the researcher's ability to manage the learning environment in addition to the progression and reflection of their learning. It is also attainable for the researcher to develop further within the 'Professional Learning' and 'Innovation,' as this study encouraged the use of wider reading and researching findings while also giving the opportunity to evaluate the impacts of change within teaching practice.

By using the Gibbs model of reflection, the researcher can justify several recommendations based on the research data collected for School A (Gibbs, 1988). A recommendation for School A based on the findings of this study would be to implement calming sensory influences and a structured classroom environment for all learners throughout all Progression Steps to create a whole school approach to behaviour management. Moving forward, the researcher would like to further develop this research by introducing a specific focus on learners with Additional Learning Needs and how the different environments of a school setting can influence their learning experiences.

Word Count: 4912

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