

Critical incident analysis of classroom management in the subject context



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“ Success is not final, failure is not final; it is the courage to continue that counts.” (Unknown). Although undoubtedly not referring to teaching or learning when said, I believe this quote sums up the learning to teach experience very aptly. It implies that trial and error, along with the reflection on both of these, is key to all learning.

School A is a mixed gender school, providing secondary education to 11-18 year olds from both the local and neighbouring education authorities. The school is part of a multi academy trust, which also includes a Studio School and a local primary school. Located in an affluent area, the number of students eligible for free school meals (ergo registered for Pupil Premium (PP)) is below average the national average.

The school had an Ofsted short inspection in March 2016, having previously been judged as good in November 2011. The outcome was that “ the school continues to be good” (Ofsted, 2016) and a particular inspection finding was that “ the school has a good record of raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, although some gaps remain. Recently, the school’s success in narrowing the achievement gap in English between disadvantaged pupils and others received national recognition.”. The report also stated that “ an additional focus on the achievement of boys has led to more boys making the progress expected of them.”.

School performance in GCSEs ranks it tenth in the Local Authority area in terms of the percentage of pupils achieving Grade 5 or above in English and Maths, with its Progress 8 score described as “ Average” at 0. 20 (National Statistics, Compare School Performance, Jan 2018). In 2017, 100% of Sixth

Formers (Keystage 5) completed their main study programme, with the average grade across a student's best 3 A levels being B-.

Nationally the incidence rate of SEN for pupils on the roll in state funded secondary education is 18.5% (National Statistics, Special educational needs in England, Jan 2018). The rate at School A is slightly lower at 14%, with boys accounting for 60% of these pupils. The school operates a setting system throughout Keystages 3 and 4. Pupils at Keystage 3 study one or two modern foreign languages, depending on ability. Least able pupils only study French and it is not expected that they will opt to continue in Keystage 4.

The critical incident observed happened at the start of Phase 1 of my initial teacher training when I was observing a Year 9, set 4 French class for the first time; a class I would eventually be teaching. The cohort consisted of 15 pupils; all low ability and all boys. Six pupils are on the SEND register and 5 are in receipt of Pupil Premium (PP) - four pupils are both SEND and PP. One pupil is on prescribed medication for ADHD and ADD. The class teacher is an experienced, male, modern languages teacher, as well as being Head of Faculty. This was the first lesson of two timetabled for that day; the second being Lesson 4, straight after lunch. At School A, pupils start the AQA GCSE curriculum in Year 9.

It became clear from the start of the first lesson that managing the behaviour of some of the pupils in this class would be the primary barrier to learning during the lesson. Many of the pupils entered the classroom in a loud and rowdy manner, throwing their bags on to the desks and shouting across the room to each other as they sat down. The teacher quickly

instructed them to sit down and to listen quietly as he outlined his expectations in terms of behaviour from them along with the Lesson reward and sanctions monitoring system employed by the school.

Throughout the lesson, behaviour varied between low level disruption, such as talking and messing with pens, to higher level disruption and disengagement of unprompted shouting out and resting heads on the table with no involvement in the classwork that had been set. The teacher dealt with this unwanted behaviour by both addressing individuals about their specific behaviour as well as addressing the whole class with regards to focus and effort. This behaviour was not universal, however, and some of the pupils were able to complete the task set to a reasonable level.

This disruptive behaviour not only continued in the second lesson of the day, it escalated. The same pupils persisted with shouting out and overall the effort during the class to complete the tasks given was very low. There were a couple of occasions when pupils commented that they did not know why they had to bother as they knew they wouldn't be learning French beyond Year 9.

Following the lesson, I spoke with the teacher regarding the class as a whole and what techniques might be of use in achieving a higher level of effort and commitment to learning from the pupils in future lessons. He explained that teaching this class was a particular challenge as the pupil were aware that they would not be expected to continue with learning French to GCSE level in Years 10 and 11. He suggested that this cohort needed more incentivising to behave than other classes

Having considered the situation from the pupil's perspective, I determined that my overall objective for this class when I took over their teaching, would be to focus on changing how they viewed their French lessons; to change it from one of negativity and being pointless, to one of enjoyment and understanding the value in learning a foreign language, no matter how basic.

Following on from those lessons I reviewed a number of reflective models and concluded that Jay and Johnson's (2002) 'Typology of Reflection' would provide a valuable and logical framework from which to appraise and analyse the critical incident I had observed. The typology outlines a number of questions from which three levels of analysis are formed: descriptive, comparative and critical. The consideration of these levels would then form the perspective from which I could consider how behaviour might be better managed, may be even corrected and the learning outcomes at the end of each lesson improved for all pupils.

My initial thought on how the class behaviour might be better managed centred on the teacher's comment that the class required more incentivising than others. It suggested that the school's Lesson monitoring system would go some way to help manage their behaviour, but that it was probably not the only way required to get them to engage with what is being taught. Further reflection on the lessons left me with a number of questions: how else might the most disruptive pupils be incentivised?; was incentivising the best way to motivate low ability pupils to learn?; did pupils learn more when incentivised to behave better?

In this early part of Phase 1 I had also observed a Year 9, Set 1 for French where the learning outcomes were very different. Behaviour was much improved, the rate of learning accelerated and the pleasure in learning for learning's sake self-evident. Of note is that out of this class of 30, only two pupils were on the SEND register and five receiving Pupil Premium.

Two possible learning theories that could be employed are Behaviourism and Constructivism. Although very different in their pedagogical approaches, they both purport to being the best way in which pupils can gain knowledge. Behaviourism is based upon the relationship of stimulus and the subsequent response to that stimulus and is often referred to as 'Operant conditioning' (B. F. Skinner, 1974). In the classroom, it works upon the premise of incentivising pupils to behave as the teacher would want and expect them to, that their behaviour could be predicted and controlled, by giving them a reward in return for a positive response and that these responses will continue as long as the stimulus is provided. On the face of it, this theory works well to manage behaviour, but does it lead to improved learning outcomes for pupils? And is the behavioural response conditional on the stimulus being provided? What behaviour will be displayed if this

Conversely, Constructivism is based upon the premise of discovery and empowerment, dependent on the cognitive development of pupils. That pupils should be allowed to explore and construct knowledge themselves and develop understanding through active participation in the learning process (E. Rummel, 2008). In constructivism, it is believed that learning happens most easily and effectively when the knowledge to be gained is consistent with the developmental stage of the pupils. UK school academic classes are <https://assignbuster.com/critical-incident-analysis-of-classroom-management-in-the-subject-context/>

currently split according to the chronological age of the pupils, but if Constructivism is the most effective theory for learning, is this the best way to stream children to elicit the best possible learning from them? How would the developmental stage of each child be easily and quickly profiled? And when would this profile take place?

By studying these two learning theories and comparing the two class observations, I have concluded that classroom management, learning theories and positive learning outcomes are inextricably linked. They cannot work in isolation if good teaching with the best pupil outcomes are to be achieved. There is no 'one size fits all' approach in the classroom that will work every time with every pupil in every lesson. For the low ability Year 9 class I will be teaching, I believe that finding a way to combine elements of both behaviourism and constructivism would be of greatest benefit to their longer term learning outcomes in French. I will be looking for ways in which to motivate them through incentives, as well as devising lesson plans in such a way as to allow pupils to discover language learning, whilst at the same covering content as stated in the AQA GCSE curriculum.

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