

E111 tma02 essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Excerpt 10 Description This excerpt shows a PE lesson in a school gym with the teacher and TA at the front of the class. The children are arranged into groups of three on exercise mats. We are told that these children are arranged into groups of mixed ability. The teacher holds up a red sign and says “ Stop” and congratulates a child for doing the right thing. All of the children sit down on the mats. She then asks the class what they think a green sign would mean.

Standing next to her is a TA who is signing to a small group of children at the front. A girl then explains that the TA has to sign as they have children that are hearing impaired within their class. This girl is also signing. The TA explains that she is responsible for the hearing impaired children encouraging them to watch the other children yet feel reassured that they are safe. Learning Within this excerpt, the children are learning about working together as a team with other children. It also shows them working together with the TA.

As well as the TA, the hearing children were helping the hearing impaired children by signing to them and ensuring they understood the instructions. They are also learning about the communities of practice within their school as discussed in ST3. 3. An example is that the children are all barefooted, and this could be part of the school’s Health & Safety policy. It is also a part of the Gym procedures used. By asking the children what they think the green sign is for, the teacher is encouraging them to use their previous experience of red and green signs (e. g. raffic controls) to find the answer. This is called constructivism and is a theory developed by Jean Piaget who believed in “ the importance of children’s direct experience with their

environment” (ST3. 1 page 20). The children are learning the ground rules of being in a PE lesson, for example, being barefoot, stopping when the red sign is shown. These skills can be transferred to other environments, such as home, out and about etc. and are in line with the schools policies. By praising the child for doing well, the teacher is increasing his sense of self-worth as discussed in ST4 p11.

Also, the TA is encouraging “ inclusive development” (Hancock 2005 p25) for the hearing impaired children both of which are exceptionally important for good learning. By observing the children, the adults could see how the children interact with each other and pool their knowledge to achieve results. They may then be able to integrate any learned knowledge into future lessons to help expand these results. Piaget’s constructivism influence (ST3 p26) can be clearly seen in this excerpt. By providing a stimulating environment with practical apparatus, the teacher has encouraged the children’s natural curiosity.

She has also incorporated Vgotsky’s theory of socio-constructivism (ST3 p20) by encouraging the children to interact with each other. By structuring the lesson, she has acknowledged Vgotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD) of the children. This is the distance between ACTUAL development level (where the child can solve the problem with no assistance at all) and their POTENTIAL development level (what they should be able to solve after receiving guidance from a ‘ more knowledgeable other’).

The route to achieving the potential development level is called ‘ scaffolding’ and was developed by Barbara Rogoff. As discussed in ST4, curriculum

guidance documents in the UK emphasise the importance of establishing relationships with pupils and promoting their social and emotional development. This is shown in the excerpt, as the TA clearly has a good relationship with the hearing impaired children, and she says they often look to her for reassurance that they are going to be safe.

ST5 (p25) says that positive learning relationships between TAs and children should involve, among other things, empathy, acceptance, trust, approachability and a willingness to share ideas and experiences. This appears to be the case in this excerpt. Another way the adults are supporting the learning of the children is by praising them and encouraging them, thus building the self-esteem of the children. Excerpt 5 Description This excerpt looks to be set in an Early Years setting with children playing at various activities including sand, water and a play house.

The TA explains that she has the youngest children in the class, and is sitting with a group of children that are drawing with chalkboards. She then walks around the play area to check the other children who all seem to be playing nicely with each other. She explains that the children enjoy playing at the water or in the house and that they speak a lot while playing together. After looking in the house, she goes to a boy called Josh who she describes as a loner who enjoys doing things on his own.

The TA kneels down with Josh at the water table and passes boats across to him while counting in Welsh. Josh looks slightly uncomfortable at the interruption, but soon catches the boats and repeats the numbers after the TA. Learning Within this excerpt, the children are learning about working

with other children which helps promote their social & economic development as they are learning about working as a team, talking to each other to see what can be achieved both as individuals and as a team.

This excerpt looks to be showing them ideas about art (drawing pictures), science (how sand or water moves) and imaginative play (in the house). The children appear to be aware of the ground rules of the classroom as those playing with the water are wearing aprons, and those drawing are sitting nicely around the tables. These help the children develop their knowledge of the special rules associated with the community of practice that is school. By leaving the children alone, the TA is encouraging them to use their own expertise and knowledge and share it with each other.

By doing so, she is acknowledging the skills the children have and helping to foster a greater sense of self-worth – a very important part of social development and learning. As discussed in ST3, the play area is an important part of the classroom as play is vital for children to “ establish themselves as members of a group and try different roles” (ST3 p18). This excerpt clearly shows the children at ease with each other and provides a good way for the teaching staff to observe them in an informal setting as how children cope socially directly affects the way they learn.

By approaching Josh at the water table, the TA is using her knowledge of him, and respecting that he prefers to play alone. As a member of staff, it is essential that she recognises that all children are different and respond to children’s learning. By letting Josh continue to be on his own, the TA is showing that she recognises his feelings, and respects them. By doing this,

she is helping to empower Josh & build his confidence. The importance of children's beliefs and feelings is often outlined in schools' inclusion/exclusion policies.

This excerpt is a good example of Barbara Rogoff's Scaffolding Theory where she states that for successful learning to occur, the more knowledgeable other must:

- * Work with what the learner already knows and move forward from there
- * Foster the learner's interest in the topic
- * Give a practical demonstration or explanation
- * Be able to provide a step by step approach for the learner to achieve progressively
- * Remove elements causing a stumbling block thereby controlling frustration
- * Provide positive feedback about progression made
- * Encourage the learner to remain focused

Encourage the learner to talk about how they feel about the task. The TA clearly knows Josh's Actual Development Level and is scaffolding to help him reach his Potential Development Level – in this case count to five in Welsh. She is supporting Josh emotionally, by not making him work in a group and also supporting his learning by helping him work through his ZPD. Conclusion

In conclusion, I feel that both excerpts clearly show how Piaget and Vgotsky's theories of constructivism and socio-constructivism are applicable in today's educational environments.

They also show how important it is for teaching staff to be aware of the children's individual needs, beliefs and feelings towards learning. This is obviously extremely difficult to maintain in a busy classroom, and shows how important it is for all staff to communicate with each other to ensure the children's needs are updated as necessary. Excerpt 10 shows the teacher and TA working together to ensure the hearing impaired children are

included. The children in this class also know sign language, so this aids inclusion.

At the infant school I work in, we have a girl in Year 2 with a physical disability, I will call her Jane, in accordance with the ethical guidelines written by BERA, 2004. Jane's class have been together since Foundation Stage, and all of the other class members ensure she has space in the classroom or hall for her wheelchair or walker to get through easily. They also take it in turns to fetch her cushion for her in assembly so that she can sit comfortably. These children are now aged 6 or 7, and do not treat Jane any differently socially, yet they are aware that she has very different physical needs to them.

This example shows how the children have learnt about the community of practice that is their class. This differs from the rules of home, and also, they are the only class with a wheelchair, so they have a different set of unwritten rules to the other Year 2 classes. It has also developed their personal & social education (PSE) by developing their regard for others – in this case Jane – in the same way as the children in excerpt 10 have learnt to sign, and those in excerpt 5 have learned to let Josh play on his own.

Both excerpts have shown the importance of embracing the differences in children, and helping them by nurturing their self-esteem, another key element with regard to their PSE. However, had I been the TA with Josh, I think I would have moved the water table into the main room to encourage some interaction with the other children should the opportunity arise.

Reference List Shaw, L (2005) “ Supporting Human Rights” in Hancock, R &

Collins, J (eds), Primary Teaching Assistants: Learners and Learning, London.

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