

How can we improve pupil engagement through choice and the self-selection of tasks in a KS2 classroom?

Aim and focus of research

Student engagement and learning suffers when teachers provide limited opportunities for choice and autonomy within the classroom (Reeve, 2009). The focus of this research study was decided upon following the first Professional Teaching Experience (PTE) which saw pupils displaying a lack of engagement and interest in the tasks and activities that were set for them. My research partner and I found the issue of student engagement interesting after personal practice and research demonstrated that by refusing to give pupils autonomy and control over their own learning, pupils were less likely to engage with what is being taught. This was emphasised further by the research conducted by Barkley (2009), who argues that engaged students care about what they are learning; they want to learn. We decided, therefore, to focus on whether choice and self-selection can help to re-engage and re-motivate pupils in KS2 classrooms.

Research Context

The research study took place in two large primary schools situated in South West Wales. School 1, located in the county borough of Bridgend, accommodated approximately 450 pupils aged three to eleven. The class in School 1 was a mixed Year 5 and Year 6 class with 27 pupils aged nine to eleven on role. School 2, located in the centre of Swansea, accommodated approximately 400 pupils aged three to eleven. The class in School 2 was a Year 6 class with 26 pupils, aged ten to eleven on role.

This study explores how pupil engagement in a Key Stage 2 classroom can be improved through choice and the self-selection of tasks. This was an area that was of great interest to the researchers, who had observed the disengagement of students during their first Professional Teaching Experience and who sought to use this research to inform their future

teaching practice. Additionally, with the introduction of the new curriculum in Wales (Donaldson, 2015), the incorporation of choice into the classroom can allow pupils to take control of their own learning and help them to develop into ambitious and capable learners, as outlined by one of the four key purposes introduced by Donaldson in his report *Successful Futures* (2015).

Literature Review

Teachers are influential in their students' motivational processes within the classroom. However, Brooks & Young (2011) have argued that the more traditional classroom approaches where the teacher is in control can potentially lead to teachers "zapping" their students of motivation and engagement with a lesson. Moreover, the research conducted by Parker et al. (2017) suggested that by giving students control over the material they study, the work they complete and the peers they work with, teachers can boost students' engagement and motivation. This, Parker et al. (2017) argued, allowed students to capitalize on their strengths and enabled them to meet their individual learning needs. Patall, Cooper & Robinson (2008) also noted how the incorporation of choice and self-selection into the classroom helped to develop pupils' persistence with their work, keeping them engaged and working for longer periods of time. This suggests that by providing pupils with a sense of autonomy and freedom within the classroom, choice can positively impact their engagement with and interest in the topics and subjects that they are learning (Tsai et al., 2008).

However, other studies on the effects of choice on student engagement have found that giving pupils choice within the classroom has little to no effect on student motivation and engagement (Parker & Lepper, 1992; Reeve, Nix & Hamm, 2003). A study conducted by Flowerday and Schraw (2003) demonstrated that in some cases, student motivation and engagement even decreased when students were given the opportunity to choose a task to work on during a lesson. For example, in a lesson where the students were given the choice to work on either a crossword puzzle or an essay task, the students showed reduced effort and engagement throughout the course of the lesson. Despite being given autonomy over their own learning, the pupils in this study were found to be less motivated to complete their

work. In contrast, students who were not given any choice about what task they were to complete were generally more focused and produced higher quality work. Reeve, Nix and Hamm (2003) intimated that offering students the choice between specified task options, such as a crossword puzzle or an essay, were less effective at motivating and stimulating student engagement than choices that were more meaningful to pupils, such as choosing their own goals for a piece of work. For enhanced intrinsic motivation to occur then, Reeve, Nix and Hamm (2003) suggested that the choice had to be relevant to a student's personal interests or goals. This was also highlighted by Reynolds & Symons in their 2001 study, where they assessed the motivational effects of topic choice and response format choice on eight-year-old children taking part in an information search task. They found the choice of topic as a motivational tool to be higher than the response format choice due to the fact that the topic choice was directly linked to the pupils' interests and therefore had more meaning to them.

The importance of a student's interests and goals on motivation and engagement was also emphasised in the study conducted by Reeve, Nix & Hamm (2003) on university students. In their research, they gave the university students 'action choices' (how to apportion their time etc.) and 'option choices' (what puzzle to solve etc.), finding that the action choices had a marked effect on the students' engagement levels. They concluded that:

'action types of choices did...engender an experience capable of affecting perceived self-determination and hence, intrinsic motivation' (Reeve, Nix & Hamm, 2003; 387).

This suggests then that limiting a student's choice to what task they can complete in a lesson does not have the same effect as giving pupils the opportunity to choose something that has significance to their personal interests and goals. Intrinsic motivation can be significantly impacted when the learning is personalised to the learner, as it provides them with a sense of ownership over their own work (Scott, 2010).

Research studies have also suggested that too many choices within the classroom can lead to pupils' feeling overwhelmed and unmotivated, leading to a decrease in their engagement with the lesson (Evans & Boucher, 2015; Iyengar & Lepper, 2000). For choice to remain

impactful on student engagement, then, it is essential that an appropriate balance is struck between providing pupils with a sense of autonomy and freedom in their learning, and overwhelming them with too many tasks and activities to choose from. It is also important that choice is not reduced to a 'static input into the learning environment' (Nectoh, 2017; 385), but is used as an opportunity for students to take control of their own learning with teachers guiding them towards specific lesson aims and objectives (Morrison, 2008).

From the literature that surrounds the topic of choice and student engagement, it is clear that for choice to positively impact engagement within the classroom it must be beneficial and relevant to a pupil's individual learning needs and interests. Moving away from the traditional learning environment and shifting the balance of power between pupil and teacher to increase student autonomy is also essential as this results in a more engaged student who wants to learn (Barkley, 2009). It can be seen, therefore, that for choice to matter within the classroom it has to have relevance to the students themselves.

The reading into the effect of choice on student engagement has helped to refine the research question that is the focus of this study. From the reviewed literature it can be seen that choice has a positive effect in the classroom, but only when the choice is of relevance to the student's and their individual interests and goals. Therefore, my research partner and I have decided to narrow our focus so that the choice the students are presented with is meaningful to their learning. This will be in the form of a task that has been differentiated. We will then give the pupils the opportunity to choose what level of work they would like to complete during the lesson, whether they would like to work on something they know they can do or whether they would like to challenge themselves with higher ability work. We will then observe what effect this has on the target pupils' motivation and engagement during the lesson.

Research Methodology

Lesson Study

Our research into the effect of pupil choice on engagement in the classroom was supported by the use of Pete Dudley's Lesson Study model (2011). A classroom-based form of action research that originated in Japan, Lesson Study (LS) has become globally renowned for how it provides teachers with the opportunity to work collaboratively to plan, deliver, observe and discuss lessons with specific focus on pedagogical approaches, and how groups of pupils learn (Department of Education, 2009). The resulting professional and collaborative community developed among teachers as part of the LS model (Lewis, 2009) has been shown to have a positive impact on student learning and engagement (Puchner & Taylor, 2006) and has been noted for its ability to improve pupil attainment levels (Dudley, 2011).

Mon, Dali & Sam (2016), however, suggested that a notable limitation to the LS model was the time it required from the teachers taking part in the study. It was concluded that the constraints placed on a teacher's time meant that there were often interruptions to the process of LS, particularly in countries where LS was not used as the main professional development model (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004). The findings from a UK wide study conducted by the EEF (2017) also intimated that there was no evidence to suggest that LS could improve pupil attainment as had been claimed by Dudley (2011). The EEF noted, however, that LS had been found to have a positive effect on the practice of the teachers who took part in the study, with the EEF highlighting the benefits of the collaborative structure of the LS model.

Although Lesson Study has been found to have a positive effect on the practice of teachers, due in part to its collaborative nature and the opportunity it provides for teachers to focus on the deeper substance of their work (Stepanek et al., 2007), the small scale and short time frame of our Lesson Study research may limit the impact of the results from our enquiry. While the findings from the analysed data will be utilised in our future practice, my research partner and I will be constrained by the limitations of our study. As such, we will be prevented

from making any generalised conclusions on whether choice within the classroom can have a positive effect on pupil engagement in a wider context.

Methodology

A qualitative research method (Crestwell, 1994) was deemed to be the most appropriate research approach for this study given the focus of the research question and the intention of the researchers to examine how choice effects student engagement. The methods of data collection used in this study were: observational notes and ratings of engagement, a teacher reflection proforma and a focus group interview with the three target pupils in each school. The six target pupils were chosen due to their ability levels in an effort to be as representative as possible. These focus pupils were identified through discussion with the class teacher and subsequently chosen through the use of a probability sampling method (Higginbottom, 2004).

Focus pupils were interviewed as a group after the Lesson Study. They responded to open-ended questions, giving their honest opinion on what they thought of the lessons. This interview process is believed to be a strength of a qualitative research method, as those participating in the study are given the opportunity to voice their own opinions, rather than being forced to choose from the fixed responses found in quantitative research methods (Mack et al., 2005). By using open ended questions to develop the focus pupils' responses, the validity of the data collected during the interview was increased as any bias on the part of the researchers was effectively removed from the interview process. However, it should be noted that just as the individual responses from the focus group pupils are highlighted as being one of the main strengths of this form of research, it is also understood to limit the findings of said research. The data collected cannot be extended and used in a wider context, due to the subjective nature of the responses from the participants (Atieno, 2009). The small sample size that was used in this research also means the data collected cannot be used in a wider context. While the focus pupils were chosen to be representative of a range of ability levels, any conclusions drawn from the data could not be comparable across the ability levels as the observations took place in two different settings and with two different observers.

An observation schedule was used by the researchers throughout the course of the two Lesson Studies. This schedule consisted of a time sampling method that had been modified to include the Leuven Scale of Engagement through which the pupils' engagement levels could be rated and commented upon. The purpose of the observation schedule was to identify the effect of choice on pupil engagement. The reliability of the descriptive quantitative data that was collected through the observations of the target pupils, much like the qualitative data collected during the focus group interviews, must be questioned due to the subjectivity of the observer and the potential limitations of the observation schedule that was used. Burton and Bartlett (2005) emphasise caution when using observation as a method of data collection due to the human processes that are used to gather said data. In support of this, Palaiologou (2008) in her research into childhood observation, noted the potential for bias from the observer and the potential for important data to be overlooked.

After each Lesson Study, a reflective proforma was used to reflect on the findings of the collected data. Reflection has long been an important aspect of teaching practice, as it focuses on a teacher's ability to improve the quality of teaching and learning that occurs within the classroom (Grigg & Lewis, 2017). In order to critically reflect on the findings of our research, my partner and I created a reflective proforma based on the work of Kolb (1975) and Brookfield (1988). The use of Brookfield's four lenses gave us the opportunity to reflect on the study from multiple perspectives: our perception of the lesson, the observation of our fellow researcher and the view of the students taking part in the study. These reflections, from multiple different viewpoints, would then be underpinned with the reading of relevant literature. A notable limitation to Brookfield's lenses, however, is how it fails to provide insight on what to do next after the reflection has taken place (Liu, 2015). In order to overcome this issue, my partner and I chose to combine his reflective model with that of Kolb's to provide our reflections with structure and enable us to take what we had learnt from the reflection into future practice.

Ethical Considerations

There are ethical considerations that need to be considered when conducting research within a classroom. These are: confidentiality, anonymity, consent and assent. To ensure the research conducted adhered to these ethical considerations, the researchers followed university policies, such as the UWTSD Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice, as well as following BERA (2018) and EWC Ethical Guidelines.

Informed consent was collected from the parents of the participating students in line with the schools' policy. Consent forms were signed and returned by parents who consented to their children participating in the Lesson Study and speaking to the researchers after the lesson, in a focus group interview. Consent was not gained for every pupil in the two classes, however these pupils were informed that they would take part in the lesson but would be exempt from the focus group interview. Three pupils from each class were then selected using the purposeful sampling method, defined by Higginbottom (2004) as being the process:

‘by which a selection of the population can be chosen by researchers as they have characteristics that can be viewed as representative of wider society, albeit in smaller numbers.’ (Higginbottom, 2004; 13).

The sample was selected from different ability and attainment groups to try and ensure that representative data was collected for the study. The focus pupils each had informed parental consent and verbally assented to participating in the focus group interviews after the lesson had concluded. All pupils were aware of their right to withdraw at any time during the interview process and were informed of their right to voice their honest opinion about the lessons.

The confidentiality and anonymity of both the participating pupils and the schools in which the research was being conducted was essential throughout the study. We ensured that confidentiality was maintained by omitting the names of the focus pupils and the schools from our research data. The research schools were referred to as School 1 and School 2, with

the pupils participating in the study being referred to as Child A, B and C for each class. This adhered to BERA and EWC confidentiality guidelines.

Lesson Study: Results and Analysis

Lesson Study 1 – Data Findings and Analysis

The aim and objective of the first Lesson Study conducted in School 1 was to write an extended piece of writing based on a World War 2 (WW2) opening statement. The teacher/researcher explained to the pupils that they would be writing an extended piece based on one of the WW2 statements displayed on the interactive whiteboard (IWB) and that they would be able to choose what structure their writing would take. The options given to the pupils were: a diary entry, a letter or a short story. The teacher/researcher then went on to discuss the features of the different forms of writing to ensure pupils knew what to include in their extended piece of writing.

The data collected by the non-participant observer showed that the engagement levels of the focus pupils fluctuated during the lesson, with Child C demonstrating significantly higher levels of engagement with the activity that they had chosen compared to Child A and Child B (Appendix 4). It was observed how Child A began their chosen activity highly engaged, but their attention proceeded to fluctuate throughout the course of the lesson. Despite this, however, it was noted that they were the only focus pupil to actually finish the extended piece of writing set for them by the teacher/researcher from School 1. Child B displayed consistently low levels of engagement with their chosen activity, however the limitations of the data collected with the observation schedule used could account for this. In the focus group interview, the focus pupils claimed that they enjoyed the freedom of choosing what task they would be completing during the lesson and that choice allowed them to experience new things (Appendix 6). Despite the findings from the focus group interview, however, the observation data from the lesson suggested that providing pupils with a choice of what task to work on did not have a positive effect on student engagement.

Discussion in the post lesson reflection led to suggestions about how the lesson and the study could be improved for the pupils in School 2. The non-participant observer emphasised the need to modify the observation schedule that had been used to collect the data for the lesson. The observer had noted that the ten-minute check in intervals that were used as part of the time sampling method meant that the data that had been collected was not representative of the engagement displayed by the focus pupils at other times throughout the lesson. The observer felt that this had led to the data showing a biased view of some of the focus pupils' engagement with their chosen activity (Palaiologou, 2008). A suggested improvement for the schedule in preparation for the next Lesson Study was to continue rating the focus pupils' engagement at timed intervals, but to make comments on other aspects of the pupils' engagement levels as and when they were observed.

Another way the lesson could be improved was to narrow the focus of the research itself. The researchers concluded that for choice to benefit student engagement within the classroom, the choice provided for the pupils by the teacher had to have some relevance to the pupils own individual learning needs and goals. This suggested improvement came from research into the literature surrounding the topic of student choice (Reeve, Nix and Hamm, 2003; Scott, 2010). It was decided that for the Lesson Study in School 2, the pupils would be given a choice about what level of work they wished to complete to see whether this improved engagement. As the focus of the two Lesson Studies were from two different parts of the curriculum (the first lesson focusing on literacy and the second focusing on numeracy) no other aspects of the lesson were changed at this time.

Lesson Study 2 – Data Findings and Analysis

For the Lesson Study in School 2, the aim and objective of the lesson was to have pupils calculate the volume of different shapes. The teacher/researcher introduced the topic with a PowerPoint, explaining how to calculate the volume of simple and compound shapes and discussing the formula that would be used throughout the pupils work on volume. The class were then given the opportunity to practice using this formula during the introductory section of the lesson. The preparation of the second research lesson resulted in an approach where

pupils would choose from three differentiated puzzles that used a traffic light system to indicate the level of difficulty of the activity. The pupils were informed that they could change the puzzle they were working on at any time and that they were free to work in partners or in groups of three if they wished to. Child B chose to work with the person next to them, while Child A and Child C decided to work on the puzzles alone.

As discussed in the analysis of the Lesson Study in School 1, the researchers narrowed the focus of their research to differentiated choice. This seemed to have a marked effect on the level of engagement observed during the lesson. The focus group pupils in School 2 stated that they found the lesson to be more engaging as a direct result of the choice that was provided to them. Selecting the level of the work they wished to complete was found to be important for all of the focus group pupils in School 2, as they reported that it gave them the opportunity to work at a pace and a level that suited their own individual learning needs. "Say if I was to do a red and I found it too difficult, then I could move onto a yellow...[this] was one of the good things about the lesson. We could pick the level that best suits us." (Appendix 1). The data collected from the non-participant observation corroborated the findings from the focus group interview, as it showed that the focus pupils were consistently engaged throughout the lesson. While the levels of engagement did fluctuate at times, as can be seen by the data collected on Child B whose engagement radically decreased at the end of the lesson, the findings from the observation data in School 2 remained consistently high throughout. This was found to be in direct contrast to the data collected from School 1, where most of the focus pupils showed a decreased level of engagement with the task they were completing, despite being given the choice of what activity they would complete during the lesson (Flowerday & Schraw, 2003)

However, despite this increased level of engagement, reflection after the lesson and the focus group interview revealed ways in which the lesson could be improved for future teaching. The non-participant observer noted on the observation schedule that there were moments of decreased engagement throughout the lesson due to the pupils waiting for help from the teacher (Appendix 7). In order to rectify this in future lessons, it was acknowledged by the teacher/researcher in School B that a more thorough introduction to calculating the volume of compound shapes was needed. From discussions with other pupils in the class, as well as

the focus pupils, a common difficulty was identified as being the cause of the decreased engagement and this was when the yellow and red tasks required the pupils to work out the missing length, width or height of a compound shape before they could calculate the volume. The teacher/researcher concluded that in future teaching, more examples on how to work out the missing measurements needed to calculate the volume were required. This was emphasised in the focus group interview when Child B stated "...it would be more useful if we could have the instructions written down and read while we are working the questions out." (Appendix 1). Another aspect of the lesson that could be improved was also noted on the observation schedule by the non-participant observer. When rating and commenting on the engagement levels of the focus pupils, it was observed how the focus pupils were often out of their seats to change the puzzle they were working on. Child B, in particular, was noted to be out of their seat regularly or was observed to be waiting for their partner to come back with a new puzzle from the front of the class. This meant that they were disengaged from the lesson (Appendix 7). To avoid this in future teaching, the teacher/researcher concluded that having the tasks ready on the tables for the pupils to swap as and when they needed to, would help to prevent pupils from leaving their seats and disengaging with the lesson.

After the study had been concluded and the data had been analysed, the researchers stated that they had learnt several things throughout the course of their research into student choice and engagement. The first came from the data collected during the focus group interview, that indicated that pupils felt choice within the classroom was not always beneficial to their learning and engagement. Child A claimed that while choice made the lessons fun and gave the pupils the chance to work at their own pace, there were also situations where choice was not relevant to their learning: "Like Child B said for the test. It's a bit stupid to choose an easier test because, really, everyone is going to go for that. They don't want to sit there and do a hard test." (Appendix 1). For the focus pupils then, it was found that choice had to be relevant and beneficial to the learning and not just an opportunity for pupils to choose the easy option (Netcoh, 2017). This was also displayed in the findings from the observation data, which clearly indicated that in order for choice to positively impact student engagement, the choice must be beneficial and relevant to the pupils' own individual learning needs. It also suggested that when pupils are given the opportunity to capitalize on their own strengths and

are able to work towards their personal learning goals, there will be a marked increase in the level of motivation and engagement that is displayed (Appendix 7).

The researchers also stated that they had learnt how the tools they used for data collection could result in a biased view on pupils' behaviour. This was found to be one of the major limitations to this study as the data that had been collected over the course of the two Lesson Studies had been limited by the observational method chosen by the researchers. It was concluded that in any future research on student engagement, a time sampling method would not be appropriate for research on this topic. Instead, a written method of observation would be utilised in conjunction with the Leuven Scale of engagement to rate focus pupils' levels of engagement throughout the lesson.

While the findings from the data collected will be used to inform the future practice of the researchers, the researchers recognise that the study had limitations and have tried to overcome these in their reflections on the study.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that choice can have a significant and positive impact on the motivation and engagement of pupils. Use of the Lesson Study model (Dudley, 2011) gave the researchers the opportunity to reflect and refine the choices provided to pupils, which in turn, increased pupil engagement. Focus pupil participants stated that they believed that having access to choices that were relevant to their learning needs and goals had a positive impact on their engagement with the Lesson Study lesson, as they had the opportunity to work at a level and a pace that was suitable for them.

If choice is to have a positive impact on the engagement of pupils then it is vital that 'real' choices are provided, ones that give pupils the opportunity to work at a pace and a level of difficulty that is relevant to their learning needs (Katz & Assor, 2007). Giving students access to choices that are both meaningful and relevant to their learning has been found to significantly impact student's intrinsic motivation within the classroom (Rose & Meyer, 2002)

and this has been emphasised by the findings of this study. It is necessary, therefore, for teachers to move away from simple option-based choices within the classroom and strive for choices that are relevant and developmentally appropriate for each student.

Data collected from the focus group interviews emphasised how the target pupils felt choice was engaging as well as motivating, allowing them to experience topics and subjects in a more personalised way. However, it was found that the focus pupils in both School 1 and School 2 believed that choice may not always be appropriate for every lesson they participated in, with pupils from School 2 claiming that students may take advantage of the choice provided to them. The opinions of the focus pupils correlate with research conducted by Netcoh (2017) on the effects of student choice within the classroom. A major drawback of student choice, Netcoh (2017) states, is the possibility of students perceiving their new autonomy as 'negative freedom' or freedom without constraints. This perception of unlimited freedom could lead to pupils expecting or demanding lowered workloads and easier tasks to complete (Morrison, 2008). For teachers, then, it is about finding the appropriate balance between freedom and limitations, allowing pupils to take control over their own learning while simultaneously guiding them towards specific learning aims and objectives. Incorporating choice into the learning environment must provide pupils with a sense of autonomy and freedom, while also being relevant and beneficial to their learning.

This study has also emphasised the importance of using appropriate data collection tools. Analysis of the data collected throughout the study revealed how the observation schedule, selected and modified by the researchers before the research began, limited the scope of their observations and created a biased view of the engagement levels of certain target pupils. Research by Palaiologou (2008) into different methods of observation, highlighted biased views of the observed pupil as being one of the main limitations of the time sampling method utilised in this study, due to the observer being limited to recording the actions and behaviour of the target pupils at specific intervals. The researchers both concluded that in future research a written observation method would limit the potential of the data collected during observation creating a biased view of the observed pupils' behaviour and engagement. It was agreed, however, that the Leuven Scale of Engagement used in this study to rate the

level of engagement displayed would continue to be used, as it gave a better insight into how engaged the pupils were with the lesson.

Conclusion

Choice and the effects that it has on student engagement has been widely debated within educational research (Reeve, Nix and Hamm, 2003; Turner et al., 2014; Zuckerman et al., 1978). Within each of these studies, the methods used to collect data each had their own strengths and limitations. This was seen during this study, where the methods used were revealed to have both strengths and limitations. A notable strength of the methods used, for example, was the focus group interviews conducted after each Lesson Study. These interviews provided the focus pupils with the opportunity to discuss the lesson in their own words and give the researchers their opinions on choice within the classroom. A surprise to both researchers was the claim by focus pupils in both schools that more choice wasn't always beneficial to their learning and should be limited to certain lessons, such as Art, P.E. or Maths. The Lesson Study model that was used was another notable strength of this research study as it allowed the researchers to collaborate and plan lessons centered on an area of interest to them as teachers, with the results of the study positively impacting the pupils participating in the study.

One of the main limitations to the methods used was the observation schedule that had been created before the start of the study. During the post lesson reflections, the researchers discovered how the modified time sampling method they had chosen to use for their study had limited the scope of their observations on the focus pupils, and in doing so, had led to the collected data showing a biased view of the engagement of some of the pupils participating in the study. Despite modifications to the schedule, the researchers stated at the end of the study that if they were to conduct the research again then a written observation method would be more appropriate to note down observations on pupil engagement. Other limitations to the study included the small sample size and the limited time frame in which to conduct the research.

However, despite the limitations of some of the methods used, this research shows that choice can have a positive impact on the engagement of pupils. While the findings of this study cannot be generalised, the data collected from School 2 demonstrated how differentiating tasks and providing pupils with the opportunity to choose a level of difficulty that suits their own individual learning needs and goals can increase their motivation and engagement during lessons. Moreover, Parker, Novak and Bartell (2017) state that by giving students real choices within the classroom, such as choosing the peers they wish to work with or the difficulty of the task they are to complete, this allows pupils to capitalize on their strengths and provides them with an increased level of concentration and motivation to complete their work. The research conducted by Reeve, Nix and Hamm (2003) emphasises the need for choice to be worthwhile and urges teachers to move away from the notion that simple task choosing exercises will positively impact the engagement and motivation of their pupils. This was demonstrated in the first Lesson Study in School 1, where the choice provided to the students was choosing what task they would like to complete. The data collected from this study highlights how this type of choice in the classroom has little to no effect on the engagement of the pupils. It is necessary, therefore, for teachers to consider the personal learning needs and goals of the pupils they are teaching and how the choice that they provide for their students must be relevant to the students themselves.

There is a need, therefore, for further research into this topic, and for teachers to provide 'real' choices to their students in a wider range of settings and contexts. While the findings of this study are not generalisable, the data collected throughout the course of this study may be of interest to others in the teaching profession who wish to implement choice within their classrooms. Additional studies into the use of differentiated choice in the classroom would also be needed to document the effects of how choice impacts engagement within an extended time frame and in the wider context of the educational system.

Despite the identified limitations of this study, I will use the findings of the data collected to improve my future practice. I will do this by endeavouring to provide my pupils with 'real' choices that can enable them to strive towards their personal learning goals and needs. However, if this research were to be conducted again, I would ensure that a more representative sample was chosen in an effort to give the results of the study more validity.

The time frame of the study would also be extended to document the effects of consistent and sustained choice within the classroom. To increase the reliability of the collected data, another method of observation would be required as the time sampling method that my research partner and I used for this study led to data that created a biased view of the engagement of some of the focus pupils participating in the study.

Recommendations

In light of the research conducted in School 1 and 2, I will make every effort to provide pupils with 'real' choices in future lessons, ensuring that any choices provided for my pupils are appropriate and relevant to the pupils and their learning needs and goals. It is important to note that, while the study had limitations, it emphasised the need for a shift in the balance of power between teachers and their pupils, with teachers guiding pupils towards specific learning aims and objectives while simultaneously providing them with a sense of autonomy and control over their own learning. This study has demonstrated how a move away from the traditional classroom structure can have a positive impact on student engagement and learning and this will also inform my future practice as a teacher.

If I were to conduct the Lesson Study research again, I would ensure that a larger, more representative sample of focus pupils was chosen, in an effort to increase the validity of the collected data. The time frame of the study would also be extended in order to document the effects of sustained and consistent choice within the classroom and whether the impact of 'real' choices on student engagement would continue over a longer period of time. Finally, to increase the reliability of the data collected during observation, I would use another method of observation in order to prevent the data from creating a biased view of target pupils participating in the study. Instead of the time sampling method used for this research, a written observation method would allow me to comment upon pupil engagement without being limited to a specific time frame. This, in turn, would provide a more representative view of the engagement of target pupils.

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