

Example- Findings & Discussions

After analysing the data from the interviews transcripts and questionnaire data, four key themes were identified from teachers and Year 3 learners' perceptions of using 'Think-Pair-Share' as an Assessment for Learning tool in the classroom: (i) enhance pupils' emotional well-being; (ii) increase engagement and deeper understanding; (iii) promote inclusivity; and (iv) effective facilitation.

1.Enhance learners' emotional well-being – the first theme identified was that Think-Pair-Share contributed positively to promoting pupils' emotional well-being when used during activities in the classroom. For example, during the group interviews, Child b noted, "I like discussing my ideas with a friend as this gives me more confidence to share my answer." Similarly, Child d said, "I'm more confident that my answer is right after discussing it with my friend and then listening to other answers in class." This supports Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which highlights the emotional and cognitive benefits of learning with supportive peer. Furthermore, Gillies (2016) asserts that cooperative learning structures help pupils develop trust and a sense of psychological safety, where this was mirrored in how pupils in this study visibly relaxed and participated more willingly during the 'Pair' stage. Teacher interviews reinforced these findings. Teacher 1 explained that Think-Pair-Share prevented pupils from "feeling isolated" and "encouraged interaction beyond friendship groups" (Appendix 3). This aligns with Johnson and Johnson's (2009) argument that structured collaboration enhances belonging and reduces social exclusion. Questionnaire response also reflected that pupils preferred to discuss in pairs than answer questions directly in the classroom, with 9 out of 10 responses stating that they prefer Think-Pair-Share to using lolly pop sticks or no hands up.

2.Increase engagement and deeper understanding – the second theme identified was that using Think-Pair-Share increased pupils' engagement in their learning. Participants described that their engagement increased when they had an opportunity to discuss and compare their ideas and answers. Teacher A explained that "learners tend to listen more because they know that they need to discuss their ideas and answers with the group after pairing" while Teacher B noted that "learners

who were reluctant to share their ideas in front of the classroom were more likely to take part in the pair and share activities.” Teacher C also noted that by asking them to “think themselves, then discuss with a peer and then share helps to reinforce and consolidate their learning.” The re-engagement of pupils supports Piaget’s (1952) emphasis on peer-interaction as a driver of cognitive and restructuring, helping pupils reconcile different viewpoints and deepen conceptual understanding. This is further supported by Slavin (2014) who claims that cooperative learning increases on-task behaviour and intrinsic motivation. Questionnaire responses also reflected higher engagement in activities when using Think-Pair-Share with 8 of 10 the responses stated that they felt that they were understanding and learning more in lessons when using Think-Pair-Share. This aligns with the findings of Hernando et al. (2023) who argue that collaborative discussion encourages pupils to articulate and refine their understanding. The findings also demonstrate that classroom talk when using Think-Pair-Share become more purposeful and academically productive as pupils built on one another’s ideas. Teacher 2 noted that ‘pupils often adopted partner vocabulary or reasoning during the class share phase’, which reflect Mercer’s (2000) concept of “inter-thinking” and Alexander’s (2017) research on dialogic teaching.

3. Promoting inclusivity – The third theme identified was that Think-Pair-Share promotes inclusivity within teaching and learning. Teacher 1 noted that pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) needs “magpie ideas and gain confidence” (Appendix 3), which support’s Cohen et al (2018) assertion that structured peer-interaction supports inclusive practice. Teacher 2 described Think-Pair-Share as an “informal assessment tool,” which highlight’s Black and Wiliam (1998) key message of eliciting evidence of learning through structured talk. These findings therefore may suggest that Think-Pair-Share can be used as an effective formative assessment strategy, enabling pupils to test out ideas in low-risk settings while allowing teachers to access real-time understanding.

4. Effective facilitation – the final theme identified was effective facilitation and that this is key to promote effective use of Think-Pair-Share when teaching and learning and as an assessment for learning tool. The individual teacher interviews emphasised that Think-Pair-Share must be planned carefully, with attention to grouping, timing,

and the nature of the prompt. Teacher 1 noted that ‘higher-attaining pupils may feel “pulled away from their own learning” when repeatedly paired with lower-attaining pupils peers (Appendix 4). This reflects the literature findings as Louie’s (2019) findings noted that poorly planned grouping can weaken challenge for some learners. Similarly, the questionnaire responses highlighted careful planning and organising of pairs as key factors in ensuring effective practice of using Think-Pair-Share. Teacher 3’s emphasis the need for “flexibility and organisation” (Appendix 3) when planning to use Think-Pair-Share in lesson. This findings align with literature suggesting that that cooperative learning only succeeds when teachers explicitly model expectations and monitor interactions (Gilles, 2016). These findings suggest that Think-Pair-Share may not inherently effective and that its success relies on deliberate pedagogical decisions and responsive teacher facilitation.

In summary, the findings indicate that Think-Pair-Share supports emotional well-being, increase engagement and deeper understanding, promotes inclusivity, and enables teachers to assess the learning and address misconceptions during the lessons. The findings also suggest that careful planning and organisation before using Think-Pair-Share is key to the success of the strategy as a teaching and assessment for learning tool.

Conclusion:

Overall the findings indicate that....

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Reliability was enhanced through consistent data collection across interviews and questionnaires, supporting dependability (Denscombe, 2014). While generalisability is limited to the specific school context, findings may be transferable to similar settings (Thomas, 2017).

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Findings and Discussions

Using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), three key themes were identified from teachers' perceptions of strategies to engage parents in their child's learning. These were barriers to engagement, effective strategies for engagement, and ongoing challenges.

The first theme identified was barriers to engagement, particularly those relating to time constraints. Participants frequently noted that limited availability prevented some parents from engaging fully with school activities. One teacher reflected, "Time constraints are also a barrier, as a parent myself, I know how hard it can be to attend events during the day, especially if you're working" (Teacher A). Similarly, another explained that "working parents said they would've preferred an after-school slot... a lot of our events are during the school day, so it's about striking a balance" (Teacher B). Questionnaire responses echoed this, with one suggesting that engagement could be improved through "more flexibility, as one size doesn't fit all."

These findings align with literature suggesting that engagement can be difficult to achieve consistently because parents' ability to participate vary according to time and socioeconomic pressures (Goodall and Vorhaus, 2011). Similarly, See and Gorard (2015) note that, while schools value parental involvement, identifying practical strategies remains a challenge, particularly in lower-income contexts. Goodall and Montgomery's (2014) view of engagement as a process of shared responsibility and collaboration underscores how time barriers can limit parents' ability to contribute equally to this partnership. These findings suggest that teachers

perceive time as a key barrier to parental engagement, highlighting the importance of developing flexible strategies that accommodate families' varying circumstances.

The next theme identified was effective strategies for engagement, which emerged strongly through discussion of the school's 'Meet the Teacher' event. Participants described this as a valuable opportunity for early communication and relationship-building with parents. Teacher A explained that "the 'Meet the Teacher' event went really well... it was good timing to put faces to names and start building relationships with parents," while Teacher B noted that it allowed parents to "see where their child learns and understand classroom expectations." Questionnaire responses also reflected that parents valued these sessions as an "informal chat" and a way to "build trust and allow parents to have a voice."

These findings appear consistent with Dettmers, Yotyodying and Jonkmann (2019), who emphasise that trust and mutual respect are central to effective parental engagement. Similarly, Epstein's (2002) Overlapping Spheres model highlights the importance of structured opportunities for interaction between families and schools, a principle reflected in the 'Meet the Teacher' sessions. Furthermore, Jeynes' (2018) DNA approach suggests that effective engagement bridges home and school environments, a connection supported by early communication events. This theme suggests that structured, relationship-focused opportunities such as 'Meet the Teacher' events may play an essential role in promoting collaborative engagement between teachers and parents.

The final theme identified relates to the challenges teachers face in engaging parents who are considered hard to reach. Despite open-door policies and regular efforts to communicate, participants noted that some families remain consistently disengaged. One teacher described the most challenging aspect of engagement as "getting the difficult-to-reach parents through the door; it's challenging to engage the 'tricky' parents," reflecting the persistence of these barriers. Similarly, both participants felt that "no matter what we do, some parents just don't engage," highlighting a shared sense of frustration and the limits of teachers' influence. As one teacher reflected, "in

our area, there are lots of families who are hard to get involved,” suggesting that contextual factors within the school community may also contribute.

These findings support Evans’ (2018) observation that building relationships with families is one of the most significant challenges teachers face. Likewise, Jeynes (2024) emphasises that effective parental engagement is rooted in relational trust, when these are weak, sustained involvement is difficult to achieve. This perspective suggests that “hard-to-reach” parents may, in some cases, could be better understood as “hard-to-connect-with”. Contextual challenges may also play a role, as the Education Endowment Foundation (2021a) highlights that parental engagement is often more difficult in disadvantaged areas, where time, confidence, or prior experiences with education can limit participation. This theme highlights teachers’ perceptions that a key barrier to engagement is first reaching parents to establish communication, which is essential before meaningful involvement with the school can take place.

Overall, the findings indicate that Reception and Year 6 teachers view current parental engagement strategies as valuable but constrained by practical barriers, particularly time and reaching all families. Strategies such as “Meet the Teacher” events help support engagement, though some families remain difficult to involve. Validity was strengthened through appropriate research methods and analysis (Leung, 2015), and purposeful sampling across relevant year groups supported contextual validity (Palinkas et al., 2015). Reliability was enhanced by consistent data collection across interviews and questionnaires, supporting dependability (Grossoehme, 2014). While generalisability is limited to the specific school context, findings may be transferable to similar settings (Leung, 2015).

In response to the research question, teachers perceive current strategies for parental engagement as partially effective. Structured events like ‘Meet the Teacher’ support communication and relationship-building, but practical constraints, such as parents’ time and contextual challenges, limit full engagement for all families. This indicates that while strategies are valued, adaptations are needed to make engagement more accessible and inclusive.

The purpose of this study was to explore how Think–Pair–Share influenced emotional well-being, confidence, participation, and engagement among Year 4 pupils. Drawing on the Leuven Scales of Well-being and Involvement (Appendix 3; Appendix 4), structured observations, and teacher interviews (Appendix 1; Appendix 2), the findings highlight that Think–Pair–Share contributed positively to both socio-emotional and cognitive aspects of learning. These findings align with and extend existing literature on cooperative learning, formative assessment, and classroom dialogue.

The results clearly suggest that Think–Pair–Share enhanced pupils’ emotional well-being. High Leuven well-being scores and positive non-verbal indicators are consistent with claims by Kaddoura (2013) and Sampsel (2013) that the strategy reduces anxiety by providing a scaffolded environment for speaking. This supports Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which highlights the emotional and cognitive benefits of learning with a supportive peer. Similarly, Gillies (2016) asserts that cooperative learning structures help pupils develop trust and a sense of psychological safety—mirrored in how pupils in this study visibly relaxed and participated more willingly during the pair stage.

Teacher interviews reinforced these findings. Teacher 1 explained that Think–Pair–Share prevented pupils from “feeling isolated” and encouraged interaction beyond friendship groups (Appendix 1). This aligns with Johnson and Johnson’s (2009) argument that structured collaboration enhances belonging and reduces social exclusion. Teacher 2’s observations that pupils were “smiling, happy” during paired dialogue further support the notion that emotionally secure environments promote willingness to take intellectual risks, a theme also identified by Mercer (2019) in his work on dialogic classrooms.

The slight decline in emotional well-being towards the whole-class sharing phase reflects research by Mahdalena et al. (2017) and Alexander (2017), both of whom highlight that public performance can increase cognitive load and anxiety, particularly for younger pupils or those who lack confidence. This suggests that while Think–Pair–Share reduces pressure, teachers must carefully support transitions to whole-class discussion, by validating partial ideas, offering sentence starters, or reducing the expectation that all pupils must share publicly.

Engagement and cognitive involvement were also significantly improved through Think–Pair–Share. High involvement scores, particularly during paired dialogue (Appendix 4), mirror the findings of Hernando et al. (2023), who argue that collaborative discussion encourages pupils to articulate and refine their understanding. The re-engagement of pupils such as Pupil C supports Piaget’s (1952) emphasis on peer interaction as a driver of cognitive conflict and restructuring, helping pupils reconcile different viewpoints and deepen conceptual understanding. This is further supported by Slavin (2014), who

maintains that cooperative learning increases on-task behaviour and intrinsic motivation.

Teacher insights affirmed this. Teacher 1 noted that pupils with additional learning needs “magpie ideas and gain confidence” (Appendix 1), which is consistent with Cohen et al.’s (2018) assertion that structured peer interaction supports inclusive practice. Teacher 2 described Think–Pair–Share as an “informal assessment tool,” demonstrating alignment with Wiliam and Black (1998), who emphasised the importance of eliciting evidence of learning through structured talk. Think–Pair–Share therefore appears to operate effectively as a formative assessment strategy, enabling pupils to test out ideas in low-risk settings while allowing teachers to access real-time understanding.

The findings also demonstrate that classroom talk became more purposeful and academically productive as pupils built on one another’s ideas. Observations showed that pupils frequently adopted partner vocabulary or reasoning during the class share phase, directly reflecting Mercer’s (2000) concept of “interthinking” and Alexander’s (2017) research on dialogic teaching. Ikprress (2023) similarly found that Think–Pair–Share improves conceptual understanding in mathematics by enabling learners to verbalise and test ideas collaboratively. This study therefore contributes to the evidence base that supports the cognitive benefits of structured peer interaction.

Despite these benefits, the findings highlight that effective facilitation is essential. Both teachers emphasised that Think–Pair–Share must be carefully planned, with attention to grouping, timing, and the nature of the prompt. Teacher 1’s concern that higher-attaining pupils may feel “pulled away from their own learning” when repeatedly paired with lower-attaining peers (Appendix 1) is consistent with Louie’s (2019) findings that poorly planned grouping can weaken challenge for some learners. Teacher 2’s emphasis on the need for flexibility and organisation (Appendix 2) aligns with Gillies’ (2016) argument that cooperative learning only succeeds when teachers explicitly model expectations and monitor interactions. These findings reinforce that Think–Pair–Share is not inherently effective; its success relies on deliberate pedagogical decisions and responsive teacher facilitation.

The study faces limitations. Planned pupil interviews could not be conducted due to the school’s preparations for parents’ evening and an upcoming Estyn inspection, which constrained the depth of direct pupil voice. While the triangulation of Leuven data, observations, and teacher interviews strengthened validity, reliance on teacher perceptions may introduce bias. Additionally, the small sample size and single-class context restrict generalisability. However, the findings align strongly with existing literature, suggesting broader relevance despite contextual limitations.

In summary, this study demonstrates that Think–Pair–Share supports emotional well-being, promotes engagement, and deepens cognitive involvement when implemented with intentional facilitation. The findings reinforce established theoretical perspectives on cooperative learning and dialogic pedagogy while contributing further evidence of the strategy’s potential in primary education. Despite limitations, the study highlights the value of structured peer dialogue in creating inclusive, supportive, and cognitively rich learning environments.

Through carrying out this enquiry, I have come to understand much more deeply how Think–Pair–Share influences the emotional, social, and cognitive dimensions of learning. The findings demonstrated that the strategy consistently created a secure environment for pupils to articulate ideas with a peer before sharing more publicly, reflecting research which highlights the emotional safety and reduced anxiety associated with paired dialogue (Kaddoura, 2013; Sampsel, 2013). Observing pupils relax, smile, lean forward and actively engage during the “pair” stage reinforced my understanding of the role of structured talk in promoting well-being, echoing Gillies’ (2016) argument that cooperative learning fosters trust, comfort, and inclusion. This resonates strongly with the Professional Standards emphasis on supporting learner well-being and creating a positive learning culture.

I also learnt that the “share” phase can be far more challenging for pupils than I initially appreciated. The dip in well-being and involvement observed towards the end of the session suggested that whole class sharing introduces additional cognitive and emotional demands, a pattern supported by the work of Mahdalena et al. (2017) and Alexander (2017), who note that public performance often increases anxiety. This insight has already influenced my pedagogical thinking: I now recognise the importance of scaffolding the final stage of Think–Pair–Share through sentence starters, teacher modelling, or smaller group sharing opportunities before transitioning to whole-class dialogue. These strategies align with Wiliam and Black’s (1998) emphasis on the teacher’s role in creating supportive conditions for meaningful talk and reflect the Professional Standards around effective pedagogy and adaptive practice.