

Targedau / Targets
Targed/Target 1 Endeavour to select a greater depth of appropriate peer reviewed sources of research for your writing to aid academic support of your key points.
Targed/Target 2 Ensure a critical approach throughout, offering the opposing view/ aspects to be cautious with and limitations whenever possible.
Targed/Target 3 Use a wide range of sources in your engagement with literature so as not to over-reference the same source.

NAME: Catrin Cullen.

STUDENT NUMBER: 2005652

COURSE: Primary Education with QTS.

ASSIGNMENT TITLE: Design and conduct a small-scale research study, and critically evaluate the impact of chosen research tools and data/findings on the learner and on your professional practice.

WORD COUNT: 3269

In order for teachers to be successful in aiding the progression in their pupils, they must undertake research to appreciate how best the pupils learn. Austin (2016) highlights the importance of conducting research for educational purposes, as teachers have the opportunity to discover solutions for particular problems that arise in the classroom. Austin continues by suggesting that conducting research allows the teacher to improve on their professional practice by learning how to best aid their pupils.

During the course of this assignment, there will be research undertaken to understand the benefits and drawbacks of using Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies within Key Stage 2 (KS2) classrooms. Wiliam (2011) believes that AfL is a tool that is used in order to enhance the learning of the pupils in the classroom. Wiliam suggests that using AfL strategies in the classroom can have extreme powers to allow the pupils to better engage with their work, resulting in improved learning outcomes.

In order to gather this information on relevant AfL strategies, there will be extensive research conducted, using both questionnaires and interviews. There will be online questionnaires available for teachers of the chosen school to take part in, and interviews taking place in the school with a selected number of pupils. The method of using both questionnaires and interviews to gather data is named the Mosaic approach, as it is a multi-method approach to gather data (Clark, 2017). Using the Mosaic approach allows for the researcher to demonstrate their ability to become a skilled researcher, by trialling different techniques in order to achieve better results.

Donaldson (2015) begins his overview of the Curriculum for Wales (CfW) by mentioning that each child in Wales should have the opportunity to reap the benefits from using assessment in the classroom, to better improve on their learning. Donaldson continues to underpin the importance of using AfL strategies in each classroom, by suggesting that assessment allows for pupils to progress in their learning, and to ensure that each pupil is receiving the opportunity to excel in their work, and to move onto the next progression step.

Furthermore, Broadfoot *et al* (2002) implied that using AfL strategies encourages pupils to become aware of their current knowledge, where they need to go in their learning and how they can achieve this. Ausubel *et al* in 1968 had a similar viewpoint on this, as they mentioned that pupils and teachers should both be aware of the current knowledge of the child, resulting in the teacher altering their teaching, to benefit the child. These opinions are in agreement that AfL strategies allow teachers and pupils to understand their current knowledge and provides them with the opportunity to learn how to improve.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (2007) believe that using peer and self-assessment, feedback and questioning in the classroom as a form of assessment can

shape student learning. They continue by stating that using these forms of assessment, namely formative assessment, differs from using summative assessment, such as teacher assessments and exams, as this way of assessing only allows the teacher to view the attainment of the pupils at the end of each period of learning, therefore not allowing the teacher to aid the pupils during the learning period.

Moreover, Cambridge International Education Teaching and Learning Team (CIETL) (2014) provide the opinion that AfL is used to encourage the performance of each pupil to improve, as the pupils themselves are involved in their learning and therefore will gain confidence in the expectations that are set, and the standard that is expected. In agreement with this viewpoint is Black and Wiliam (1998) as their suggestion is that using assessment in a classroom is essential as it allows for the standard of work produced by the pupils to be greater. They believe that this occurs due to the pupils having more involvement in their learning, and having the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding on what they need to do to improve on their learning.

As there has been clear evidence to suggest the importance of using AfL strategies in classrooms, there must also be evidence to support how AfL strategies can aid in the progression of each pupil. HWB (2022) examines the sheer importance of using AfL strategies, as it was stated that the purpose of using assessment is to support the progression of the learners, throughout their entire school life. Furthermore, if pupils are provided with guidance on how to improve on their learning and progress through the necessary progression steps as stated on HWB (2022), then all pupils are given opportunities to meet all four purposes that were proposed by Donaldson in 2015. The review proposed by Donaldson in 2015 clearly recommends that assessments should be used to give expression to the purposes of the CfW.

However, although there have been clear viewpoints to suggest the importance of using AfL strategies in schools to aid in the progression of learners, there can also be negatives. Tunnell (2021) implies that although it can be seen that AfL strategies are successful in aiding in the progression and development of pupils, it can be problematic and time-consuming. To expand, all pupils must be given clear instructions on the purpose of using AfL strategies in the classroom, as some pupils may take feedback, for instance, negatively and feel as though the teacher is purposely pointing their mistakes out, without understanding the reasoning behind providing feedback. In contrast, Coe et al (2020) state that great teachers would be aware of these drawbacks and would provide all learners with the depth of knowledge and expertise to understand the importance of using the AfL strategies, therefore allowing the pupils to take ownership of their own learning and progressing through the progression steps of the CfW.

There are many techniques that can be used to utilise AfL in the classroom, and all techniques fall below the four key elements of AfL. Those elements are, 'quality of questions/quality of talk', 'use and quality of feedback', 'sharing criteria with learners' and 'peer and self-assessment' (Black and Wiliam, 1998). To conduct this research in the chosen school, the chosen technique will be 'peer assessment', without researching the use of self-assessment. This was decided in order to give a deep understanding of one aspect of AfL, to allow the researcher to ask in depth questions relating to one key area.

Reinholz (2016) supports the use of peer assessment in the classroom, as it is suggested that if we allow pupils to become an assessor, in addition to themselves being assessed, their learning can benefit more than if the pupils were just assessed. In addition, Hattie and Timperley (2007) highlight their view on the importance of providing feedback in any form, as it allows pupils to develop in their learning and development. Furthermore, Double *et al* (2020) suggest that using peer assessment as an AfL strategy can improve academic performance, therefore resulting in the progression of each learner.

Moreover, Black (2003) believes there are benefits to using peer assessment as an AfL strategy as it encourages all pupils to take ownership of their own work, as due to their peer marking it, they are more motivated to succeed and complete work to a high standard. By encouraging pupils to become involved in peer assessing, they begin to develop the skills to evaluate their own work, allowing them to improve on their work in the future, without the need for feedback (Black, 2003). In addition to this, Black implies that pupils can have a gentle approach to giving feedback that is negative, therefore resulting in relationships between the pupils improving, and the classroom climate becoming more positive (Coe *et al*, 2020).

The chosen school for this research day was the school that the researcher has recently completed their second teaching placement in. The school is a medium-sized school with 220 pupils (██████████ 2022). In 2016 Estyn reported that the school has 27% of their pupils on free school meals, which they state is highly above the national average (Estyn, 2016).

As previously mentioned, during the research day at the chosen school the research tools used were questionnaires and interviews. As a result of using two approaches, it can be seen that the Mosaic approach was used. Clark (2017) describes the Mosaic approach as using different research methods, in a multi-method approach. Clark explains the importance of allowing the pupils to become skilful communicators by listening to their views, experiences and opinions without interrupting them.

To ensure that the pupils had the opportunity to express their views, experiences and opinions, interviews in the school were conducted where the researcher asked the chosen pupils a

range of questions in relation to peer assessment, and the children were instructed to answer truthfully without the risk of their answers being shared. Utilising interviews as a form of gathering data provides qualitative data to the researcher, which allows the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the thoughts and opinions of the pupils, as detailed responses are provided (Gibbs, 2018).

Powney and Watts (2018) highlight the strengths of using interviews as research tools to gain data. They state that interviews allow for the researcher to gain a depth of information from the participants, as follow-up questions can be asked if the researcher requires clarity on the answers. In addition, when interviews are conducted in person it allows the participant to ask questions to the researcher if they are struggling to understand questions. However, Powney and Watts imply that interviews can have implications such as the language that is used. If the researcher is using complex language that the participant will not understand, then clarity would be required throughout the entire interview, therefore resulting in the interview being a lengthy process.

In order to gain detailed information from this research, the interview is set as semi-structured, therefore allowing for the researcher to probe or ask follow-up questions if required (Kallio *et al*, 2016). Peters and Halcomb (2015) provide an insight into their beliefs on the benefits of using interviews as research tools. They state that interviews can produce powerful and information filled data, that provides insights into the opinions, feelings, perceptions and experiences of the participants.

The interviews were conducted in order to gather information from the pupils of KS2 classes. There were 8 pupils interviewed, 2 from each KS2 class. The benefits of interviewing children were that there was no risk of being biased, meaning that the children were all comfortable giving their honest opinion as they knew that their answers were not going to be relayed to their teachers. However, it was found by Eder and Fingerson (2003) that younger children may be more uncomfortable in interviews and feel as though they are being tested. In light of this evidence, it is important to develop techniques in the future to allow the younger children to feel more comfortable, such as, getting to know them personally before questioning them.

In addition to using interviews, questionnaires were used to gather more data. Questionnaires are a research tool that allows the researcher to gather quantitative data. Unlike the interviews, the questionnaires were conducted online, and the participants were the four teachers from KS2. As a result of the teachers answering the questions, they may have been biased and provided inaccurate data regarding their use of peer assessment in their classroom, as they do not want to shine a negative light on their teaching or the school itself.

As the questionnaires were online, it enabled all the participants to access at their convenience and allowed the researcher to chase the participants if there was no response within a designated time (Wright, 2005). In agreement with this is Phellas *et al* (2011) as they suggest that questionnaires are not only more convenient for the participant, but much more convenient for the researcher, as they do not have to travel to collect the data.

However, both Wright (2005) and Phellas *et al* (2011) imply that there are disadvantages of using online questionnaires. Wright notes that results from online questionnaires can result in inaccurate data, due to the participants rushing to complete. Similarly, Phellas *et al* suggests that individuals may refuse to attempt the questionnaire, or if they do attempt, they will answer in the quickest way possible, therefore resulting in inaccurate data. However, although Phellas *et al* mentioned the above, they also believe that questionnaires can be very affective in ensuring that there is no interviewer bias. This can occur in interviews where the researcher can prompt for answers by revealing their own opinions, which cannot occur in online questionnaires.

In order to successfully complete research, the researcher must take into account ethical principles, to appreciate the effect that the research can have on the participants. Cohen *et al* (2017) state that researchers must be aware of the nature of ethics in educational research to free the participants from any potential harm. Ethical considerations were of upmost importance to this research study, resulting in the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines being fulfilled throughout. Prior to attending the research day, an ethics form (see appendix 1) was completed and viewed by university lecturers, and a consent form (see appendix 2) was completed by the head teacher, to allow for the researcher to question the pupils.

BERA (2018) guidelines highlight the importance of implementing techniques in order to ensure ethics are considered throughout conducting research. The guidelines suggest the need for the researcher to notify the participants of their right to withdraw from the interview at any given time. At the beginning of the interview, it was made clear to the participants that they did not have to comply and could withdraw from taking part and halfway through the interview the participants were again notified of their right to withdraw, if they felt uncomfortable or did not want to continue (BERA, 2018).

In addition to the above, it was made clear to all participants that their names were not to be recorded on any paperwork relating to their answers, resulting in their anonymity being obtained throughout. The researcher also made it clear to both the pupils and the staff that their answers were to be kept confidential and not shared with any person, apart from noting the results during this assignment (BERA, 2018).

The majority of the findings from the research day highlighted that the pupils agreed with the previous research and enjoyed the idea of peer assessing. Out of the 8 children that were interviewed, 7 of them answered question 4 (see appendix 3) with stating that it makes them happy when their friends mark their work. In addition, 7 of the children also stated on question 6 that their friends are 'nicer' when they mark their work as the feedback they give is more encouraging than what their teachers say. These findings coincide with the previous research found by Black (2003) as it was suggested that pupils can have a gentle approach in providing negative feedback.

However, when conducting the research it was found that 6 of the pupils stated on question 7 (see appendix 3) that they prefer it if their teacher assesses their work. Due to this answer, the researcher prompted the pupils to expand and explain why they prefer their teachers to assess their work. It was found that the pupils shared this opinion as they felt as though their friends may incorrectly mark their work and give them inaccurate feedback. As a suggestion, teachers should ensure that all pupils are given the depth of knowledge and expertise to allow them to successfully assess their friends work, such as the teacher writing the correct answers on the board at the front of the class (Tunnell, 2021).

To expand on the data found, the online questionnaires were answered by all 4 participants, which illustrated the convenience of conducting the questionnaires online. A point previously mentioned was the concern over the true nature of the answers given by the teachers, as they would not want to shine a negative light on themselves or the school. This concern was highlighted in question 1 of the questionnaire (see appendix 4) where all 4 teachers answered 'yes' to whether they use AfL strategies in the classroom. As Donaldson (2015) suggested the sheer importance of using AfL strategies in each classroom to aid in the progression of the children, even if the 4 teachers were not using AfL strategies they may answer 'yes', therefore resulting in inaccuracies in the data (Wright, 2005).

To discuss further results, question 6 of the questionnaire (see appendix 4) gathered interesting results that illustrated differing opinions and views of using peer assessment. Although it was suggested by Black (2003) that pupils can have a gentle approach to giving negative feedback, 1 of the 4 teachers found that the pupils are not successful in providing negative feedback to their friends as they only want to state the good things about their work. In addition to this, 1 of the teachers is in agreement with the point made by Tunnell (2021) as they believe that it is the teachers' responsibility to ensure that the pupils fully understand the need for peer assessment and are undertaking it in a successful and effective manner.

In relation to the online questionnaire, the 4 teachers stated similar answers for question 9 (see appendix 4), where they suggest the importance of allowing the children an opportunity

to learn how to reflect on others work, allowing them to reflect on their own work in the future. Black (2003) illustrated the importance of allowing children to take part in peer assessment activities as it can encourage them to develop the skill to evaluate their own work, resulting in their work being of a higher standard in the future. In addition, Hanrahan and Isaacs (2010) mention that peer assessment in the classroom can aid the pupils in becoming more independent and allow them to work more effectively in the future, as they are actively assessing their own work.

The aim of this research study was to develop a deep understanding of the usage of AfL strategies in KS2 classrooms, specifically the use of peer assessment. The research found illustrated how perhaps other AfL strategies would benefit the pupils more than using peer assessment. The research conducted with the pupils suggested how most of them did not enjoy peer assessment as they felt as though they were not being accurately assessed. This finding could suggest that if we implement peer assessment in every classroom, then perhaps some children will not be accurately assessed and may continue making mistakes, therefore not progressing through the progression steps as stipulated on HWB (2022).

Furthermore, the questionnaires highlighted the opinions the teachers have on the usage of peer assessment in their classrooms. It was found that although peer assessment can be problematic and time consuming to begin with, the teachers felt that in time, the pupils would benefit from using this strategy and become more successful in learning how to evaluate their own work, resulting in an improvement in their standards.

To conclude, this research study has allowed for the professional practice of the researcher to be improved as it allowed them to improve on their skills of becoming an effective and skilled researcher in the future. In addition, the researcher has learnt the importance of the teacher to teach the pupils how to successfully undertake peer assessment for it to become effective. As a result, the researcher will ensure to develop techniques in preparation for further teaching placements, to allow for the pupils to become successful in their peer, and ultimately, self-assessment.

Reference List

- Austin, R. (2016) Researching primary education. *Researching Primary Education*, pp. 1-144.
- Ausubel, D. P., Novak, J.D. and Hanesian, H. (1968) Educational Psychology: A cognitive view (Vol. 6). New York: holt, rinehart and Winston.
- Black, P. (2003) *Assessment for Learning: Putting it into practice*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Black, P. and Wiliam, D. (1998) Assessment and Classroom Learning. *Assessment in Education*, 5(1), pp. 7-71.
- British Educational Research Association (2018) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*. 4th edn. London.
- Broadfoot, P.M., Daugherty, R., Gardner, J., Harlen, W., James, M. and Stobart, G. (2002) *Assessment for learning: 10 principles*.
- Cambridge International Education Teaching and Learning Team (2014). *Getting started with Assessment for Learning*. [Online]. Cambridge Assessment International Education. Available at: [Getting started with Assessment for Learning \(cambridge-community.org.uk\)](https://www.cambridge-community.org.uk) [Accessed: 11/05/2023].
- Clark, A. (2017) *Listening to young children, expanded third edition: A guide to understanding and using the mosaic approach*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Coe, R., Rauch, C., Kime, S. and Singleton, D. (2020) *Great teaching toolkit: evidence review*.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2017) *Research methods in education*. England: Routledge.
- Donaldson, G. (2015) *Successful Futures*. Wales: Welsh Government.
- Double, K.S., McGrane, J.A and Hopfenbeck, T.N. (2020) The impact of peer assessment on academic performance: A meta-analysis of control group studies. *Educational Psychology Review*, 32, pp. 481-509.
- Eder, D. and Fingerson, L. (2003) Interviewing children and adolescents. *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns*, pp.33-53.
- Estyn (2016) A report on [REDACTED] Available at: [Inspection Report Template \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales) [Accessed: 15/05/2023].
- Gibbs, G.R. (2018) *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, 6. London: SAGE Publications.

Hanrahan, S.J. and Isaacs, G. (2001) Assessing self and peer-assessment: The students' views. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 20(1), pp.53-70.

Hattie, J. and Timperley, H. (2007) The Power of Feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), pp. 81-112. <https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487>

HWB (2022) *Curriculum for Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Kallio, H., Pietila, A.M., Johnson, M. and Kangasniemi, M. (2016) Systematic methodological review: developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 72(12), pp. 2954-2965.

National Foundation for Educational Research (2007). *NFER position paper on assessment*. Available at: [NFER position paper on assessment \(2007\) - NFER](#) [Accessed: 11/05/2023].

Peters, K. and Halcomb, E. (2015) Interviews in qualitative research. *Nurse Researcher*, 22(4), p.6.

Phellas, C.N., Bloch, A. and Seale, C. (2011) Structured methods: interviews, questionnaires and observation. *Researching society and culture*, 3(1), pp.23-32.

Powney, J. and Watts, M. (2018) *Interviewing in educational research*. England: Routledge.

Reinholz, D. (2016) The assessment cycle: A model for learning through peer assessment. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 41(2), pp. 301-315.

 (2022) *Prospectus*. Available at: [Prospectus-FINAL-202223.pdf \(i2webby.com\)](#) [Accessed: 15/05/2023].

Tunnell, L. (2021) *Formative Assessment: Pros and Cons You Need to Know*. Education Advanced. Available at: [Formative Assessment: Pros and Cons You Need to Know | Education Advanced, Inc.](#) [Accessed: 11/05/2023].

William, D. (2011) What is assessment for learning? *Studies in educational evaluation*, 37(1), pp. 3-14.