

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.

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My research question – How effective do staff and pupils find self and peer assessment as an assessment for learning (AfL) strategy in the classroom?

As part of this assignment two different research strategies will be put into practice for a conclusion to be drawn on the research question, 'How effective do staff and pupils find self and peer assessment as an assessment for learning (AfL) strategy in the classroom?'. The first strategy will be a questionnaire to teachers in Year 3-6 and the second strategy will be interviews with children from Year 3-6. The aims of this research is to answer the research question whether or not peer and self-assessment is an effective AfL strategy within the classroom.

Assessment for learning (AfL) is a teaching and learning strategy that provides teachers and pupils with feedback to enhance learning and influence improvements in the future. In order to maximise student learning, AfL focuses on the feedback process between teachers and students (What does assessment for learning mean?, 2019). There are a variety of different types of AfL strategies such as questioning, verbal feedback and using success criteria. However, the strategy that was used within the research school was self and peer assessment therefore, it is the strategy that will be explored more into. The practice of having children critically reflect on their own learning is known as self-assessment. Recording progress, while in no way undermining the teacher's responsibility for the final marks and grade awarded, can act as a stimulus to focus on learning in the right directions and can act as guidelines to help the teacher make appropriate judgements about the true level of learning that has occurred (S, 2006). The process of having children critically evaluate and maybe provide marks for their peers' learning is known as peer assessment. Peers evaluation differs from group assessment in that children assess each other's learning, even if the learning took place independently or outside of any structured collaborative groups (S, 2006b).

An alternate viewpoint to typical school assessments is provided through assessment for learning. By focusing on formative rather than summative assessments, assessment for learning changes the focus from making judgements to producing descriptions that can be used to the following learning stage. Teachers that use assessment for learning gather a variety of information for various purposes in order to change the educational experiences for their children (Earl, 2013).

Formative evaluation was first defined by Dylan Wiliam and Paul Black as encompassing all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged (Black and Wiliam, 1998). Formative assessment is a strategy that teachers use to gauge their pupils' understanding of the concepts and abilities they are teaching, according to Stuart Kahl (2005). It's a 'midstream' tool to spot certain pupil errors and misunderstandings as the content is being taught (Hofman, Goodwin and Kahl, 2015). Formative assessment should not be used at all, according to Popham (2006) and Shepard (2008), unless teaching is enhanced. The Assessment Reform Group stated that five components needed to be in place before utilising assessment to enhance learning in the United Kingdom. They said that the phrase "formative assessment" was unhelpful for defining these uses of assessment since it may be interpreted in many different ways and typically refers to nothing more than frequent assessment that takes place along with teaching. They advised that the term "assessment for learning" be used instead of formative assessment (Alexander, Broadfoot and Phillips, 1999).

When teachers evaluate the completed task, this is known as a summative assessment. It often happens at the ending of a unit of study. Summative assessments provide children's final results to them, their parents, the school administration, and the governing authorities (Burke, 2010). Summative assessments, according to Ainsworth and Viegues (2006), are frequently used as stand-alone final assessments that assess children's understanding of a subject or evaluate whether they achieved the topic's learning objectives or criteria. Since these assessments are conducted after all teaching and learning has been completed by children, they are summative in both design and intent, they stated (Reeves, 2009).

However, several assessment experts disagreed with summative, such as Marzano, Stiggins, Black, Wiliam, Popham and Reeves. They all agreed that one or two significant assessments given in the middle and end of the school year are not as effective at measuring a student's learning as many smaller tests given throughout term.

Black and William suggested that there are four elements to AfL: questioning, feedback, sharing criteria and self-assessment. The element that has been chosen for research is to look more into peer and self-assessment. However, sharing criteria also plays a small part.

The research school (School A) uses peer and self-assessment as a form of AfL. Whilst the children are peer and self-assessing their work they have a copy of the success criteria as a guide while they are marking. Although there are two elements involved, for this research only one will be looked at in greater depth.

According to Bangert-Drowns et al. (1991), there are two types of feedback: the type that is given externally and the type which students generate for themselves by keeping track of and evaluating their own progress. The ability to track and evaluate their own learning is crucial to self-assessment, which is the foundation of effective learning (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991). Self-assessment includes thinking about thinking, or meta-cognition, in one of its elements. Children who self-assess are keeping track of their own learning and evaluating whether or not they are meeting objectives. Creating an assortment of methods for learning and being aware of when and when to utilise them is another aspect of self-assessment (Paris and Winograd, 2003).

Peer assessment provides a lot of benefits for both the students giving and receiving the feedback. It requires reflection on learning and can broaden the children's comprehension of their own learning. "Because they are forced to internalise the learning intents and success criteria in the context of someone else's work, which is less emotionally charged than their own" Dylan Wiliam states, "research shows that the people providing feedback benefit just as much as the recipient." (Black and Wiliam, 1998b).

Peer assessment is based on active learning principles and can be viewed as a form of social construction. This is because it involves collaborating to construct knowledge through discussion. It might be argued that the concern is with validity if evaluating pupil assessments against those of teachers as a benchmark. Since teacher marking has been proven to be problematic (e.g., Falchikov & Magin, 1997; Guilford, 1965; Newstead & Dennis, 1994), work in the domain of marking or grading is challenging. Marcoulides and Simkin (1991) claimed that even when there is a sufficient level of agreement amongst assessors, "consistent grades are not necessarily 'fair' grades" (p. 82), supporting Guilford's claim that marks may not be highly trustworthy or legitimate measures of success. For instance, Newstead and Dennis (1990) suggested that bias in marking may manifest itself in a variety of ways (Falchikov and Goldfinch, 2000).

In order to answer the research question a pragmatic approach is used. The two methods used were sending questionnaires to teachers and also interviewing children. When interviewing the children, a mosaic approach was used. Traditional data gathering techniques might not be the greatest strategy for doing research in a classroom, especially when working with young children. Children may consider interviews to be overly extensive

and intensive, or they might have trouble expressing themselves. In the case of observations teacher-researchers often notice how children's behaviours change and therefore do not offer a truthful representation of classroom experience. For these reasons, Peter Moss and Alison Clark created the Mosaic approach, their own method for conducting research with children (Clark and Moss, 2011). There are three phases to the mosaic approach. Stage one involves collecting data using a variety of research methodologies, which are interviews in this case; stage two involves putting the findings together for discussion, analysis, and participant reflection; and stage three involves applying the results to decision-making and taking action (Greenfield, 2011).

The best research method to be put in place to gather data from the children was felt to be short semi-structured interviews. Brinkmann and Kvale defined semi-structured interviews as an interview conducted to collect insights of the interviewee's reality in order to assess the significance of the events that are being discussed (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018). Compared to other research methods, interviews enable the researcher to obtain rich information and make more thorough findings by accounting for nonverbal communication, unexpected reactions, and emotional responses. The methodology employed in interviews has its limitations. Many of its advantages enable variable levels of subjective bias on the part of the interviewers. For instance, respondents' willingness to answer all questions, potential hostility between the interviewer and interviewee, or deliberate bias on the part of the interviewer who asks or purposefully frames questions to provoke a particular sort of response (McClelland, 1995).

For gathering data from teachers, the easiest and most efficient method was questionnaires. Sage defined questionnaires as, a group of people are asked a series of carefully constructed questions in exactly the same format in order to gather information about a topic or topics that the researcher is interested in (McLean, 2006).

The teacher-researcher's expertise with the subject matter might have a negative effect. It might imply, for instance, that some things are assumed when they should be questioned. There are several methods for attempting to get critical distance on a subject, such as talking with an unbiased third party and reviewing published research findings. Collecting data from people who are familiar with you might be challenging for a teacher-researcher. People may be less forthcoming if you are interviewing them than if they can give you information anonymously. There are, of course, opposing arguments for this. If they know and trust you, it's possible that individuals will be more forthcoming with information. What you are attempting to learn and the power dynamics between you as the researcher and the respondents will both have a significant impact. The questions in a questionnaire are the same for every responder. There is no interviewer in the way between the response and the question, therefore there is no room for discussion or explanation of the question's intent.

Because of this, questions must be carefully crafted and piloting is crucial (Munn and Dreyer, 1990).

When carrying out the interviews with children six to eight children will be pulled out of their class into a separate area for the interview to take place. When choosing what children will be interviewed the class teacher will use a random name generator. This is to ensure that every child has a fair chance. However, from using this tool the children that may get selected are a different variety of children for example to random tool may only selected all boys or only choose children that are all of the same ability. To keep a note of each child's interview, their voices will be recorded on a secure device with password entry. The children will be made aware prior to the interview that only their voice will be recorded and their name will not be mentioned throughout and they will be known as child A, B, C, D and so. After the interviews have taken place a transcript will be written up and the voice recordings will all be deleted. The transcript will be used in order to analyse the data and to easily compare each answer that the child has given (see appendix).

The questionnaires are online questionnaires that are to be sent out prior to teaching staff in Year 3 to Year 6. The questionnaire is made of a mix of both open and closed questions. The questionnaire will be emailed to a member of staff within the school, who will then forward that onto teachers and teaching assistants from the asked year groups. In the email it is important to state that all questionnaires are anonymous. If the staff are told that it is anonymous it is likely that they will be more at ease and therefore, more likely to answer all questions honestly. By sending the questionnaires out prior to the research day it allows the staff time to fill them in, also it gives the opportunity to ask the staff to participate if not done so already.

In order to collect the data from the questionnaires the quantitative data were imported into graphs and tables (see appendix)

The study has some clear limitations because just five of the school's teachers and teaching assistants responded to the questionnaire. The fact that several of the questionnaire's questions went unanswered may indicate that the respondents were bored or thought the question had already been asked. To overcome this next time, questionnaires could also be sent out to teaching staff from several other schools, in order to get more feedback to compare. In the relation to the interview, the children that were originally asked didn't give answers that were being wanted of them which could be down to their age so therefore may have not properly understood what was being asked to them. On the interview day three children from Year Six were asked the same questions, in order to get more information to compare. However, next time, a number of children from each year group could also be interviewed to then get a perspective from different year groups.

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) rules were strictly followed throughout this study since ethics were of the greatest significance. Initially, the head teacher was required to read and sign a consent form, and an ethics form (see appendix) in order to get 'voluntary informed consent to be involved in a study will be obtained at the start of the study' (BERA, 2018, p15). The staff members had the "right to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at any time," that was stated in the email which was distributed before the research day (see appendix) (BERA, 2018b, p24).

The first question asked on the questionnaire was what the member of staff's role was in the school (see appendix). From the results, only five people took part in the questionnaire and they were all the class teacher. The following question was to see how many different AfL strategies were used in their classroom. From looking at the graph 60% said that they use five or more strategies and 40% said they use three.

Continuing through the questionnaire four out of the five participants said that they believe pupils understand the importance of assessment for learning. However, one said they believe pupils don't understand the importance of assessment for learning. The follow up question to that was for them to explain their answers. One response that said yes 'It is discussed with the pupils on a daily basis. Pupils are able to self and peer assess with confidence.' Whereas the one that said no then followed by saying, 'While children in my class are encouraged to take ownership of their learning and to reflect on their learning regularly, I believe only some fully understand its importance. Hence my answer to the above is 'some'.

When asked 'How effective do you think peer and self-assessment is for the pupils?', four of the participants said it is 'somewhat effective' and one said it is 'very effective'. This falls in line with Tim Roberts who states that peer and self-assessment is an effective tool as it helps to improve the child's communication skills and also increases self-reliance (S, 2006c). The participants were then asked if they felt the teacher benefits from self and peer assessment, all of which said yes. When asked to further explain their answer one of the responses that was received was 'If a child can recognise elements of their learning that they're doing well and what they need to focus on, they're more likely to achieve the next step in their learning'. Lindsay and Clarke (2001) believe that, teachers can understand what their pupils' own understanding of their work is and use self and peer-assessment as a means of planning future lessons. They observed that including self- and peer-assessment into their classes allowed them to examine how well their students understood their own work. The children had the opportunity to consider and improve their responses, form their own goals, and raise more questions. The benefits of this demonstrate children were

proactive in their education, in charge of their learning, and had a target audience and purpose for their work (Briggs et al., 2008).

The final question asked was 'What do you think the impact is on the child from them receiving feedback from their peer? Please explain answer'. All participants responded one of the responses was 'Impact can be corrective, motivational and move learners forward quickly. Peers should be chosen carefully and instruction should be explicit on the type of feedback / feedforward they are giving.' The importance to involve students in decisions about how and what is being studied, as well as insights into how the work is being assessed, was underlined by a Deakin-Crick et al analysis of the influence of self and peer assessment on students. In this approach, children get more knowledge about the learning process and share a larger amount of decision-making authority with the teacher. Since the ecology of learning is an issue here, this has large pedagogical implications. Many teachers will have to significantly change their classroom settings in order to approach pupils as co-constructors of the learning process (Deakin Crick, 2002).

When interviewing the children, they were all asked a series of questions relating to self and peer assessment. Seven of the children that were asked were from a Year Three class and three of the children asked were from Year Six. From analysing the transcript (see appendix), five of the seven Year Three children said that 'sometimes they mark their own work', another child answered 'No I've never done it before but group four the oldest group that does more-harder work has marked their own work before'. From this answer all follow up questions had to be slightly adjusted, so when they child was being as further questions they had to think what it would be like to peer and self-assess their work. The children from Year Six all also said that they sometimes mark each-others work. The children were asked what subjects they do peer and self-assessment in nine of the 10 participating children said Maths and English/Literacy. The Education Development Trust have stated that self and peer assessment is the best AfL strategy for English/Literacy because It has been shown that they have a strong potential to encourage teachers to enhance their teaching practices (Education Development Trust, 2013).

The children were also asked if they prefer it when their friend marks their work or teacher. 60% of the children said they'd rather their children, when asked why they all gave fairly similar answers that they feel their friend may copy or won't be as truthful as the teacher will be. Although Lindsay and Clarke (2001) discussed that children are much more likely to look at each-others work in much more depth than the teacher might (Briggs et al., 2008b).

The primary objective of this research was to investigate how both teachers and pupils viewed the effectiveness of feedback in the classroom. The research question for this study was 'How effective do staff and pupils find self and peer assessment as an assessment for

learning strategy in the classroom?', from undertaking a range of different research methods, it could be believed that the research question has been answered. From the data from the questionnaires it is clear to see that teachers find self and peer assessment an effective strategy to use in the classroom. However, when analysing the children's interviews it could be said that they don't understand what it is and the importance of it.

Since professional learning has been created throughout this study, feedback is presented as being essential to the educational success of children. It is crucial to improve research abilities and pedagogical quality in order to give children the greatest learning chances.

Even the children did not quite understand the importance of self and peer assessment, it is clear that it was being used within the classrooms of the research school. From the children using this strategy they are benefiting as they are thinking about thinking. Children who peer and self-assess are keeping track of their own learning and evaluating whether or not they are meeting objectives (Paris and Winograd, 2003).

When going into PTE3 self and peer assessment will be implemented, as this strategy has many benefits for all parties involved. However, in PTE3 the children will be made aware as to why self and peer assessment is important to their learning journey.

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