

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE PUPIL ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SELF-SELECTION OF TASK LEVEL IN A KS2 CLASSROOM?

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Aim, focus and purpose of the research

During the first segment of professional teaching experience (PTE), it was noticed that many children lacked the independence to complete their work and some of the children found the differentiated work chosen for them was not challenging enough or, inversely, too challenging. This may be a barrier to the children's learning. This intrigued me as differentiating work is intended to improve children's attainment adhering to the principle of not leaving children behind and ensuring all children are challenged at the appropriate level. The purpose of this research is to find out if allowing children to choose their level of work allows them to challenge themselves appropriately and promote the independence necessary for that age group.

With this in mind, I discussed this problem with my research partner to see if we could adapt our teaching to ensure that children were offered an opportunity to complete work and progress in the desired and required manner. Subsequently we created our research question '*How can we improve pupil engagement through self-selection of task level in a KS2 classroom?*'. As can be seen in the question, the elements that we are looking at are pupil engagement during a lesson where children are granted the option to choose the level of the work they complete. Usually the children are given the level of work that the teacher deems most appropriate for that child with most lessons split into 3 differing ability groups. It is also anticipated that an increase in engagement should lead to more progress made academically.

Research context

My class are a year 5 class in an affluent suburb of a large South Wales city and shall be known as School A. My partner's class is a year 3 and year 4 mixed class in a more deprived area in the South Wales valleys and is in a small village. This school shall be known as School B.

Both partners decided to teach maths as this was deemed to be the most appropriate subject to use this method and be able to show the differentiation to the children more easily for this research project. Going forward, other subjects could be used but as it is one lesson for each partner to teach, we needed to be able to allow enough time for the children to work and come to terms with the idea of choosing their own work. Other subjects may have taken slightly longer to explain to the

children and therefore, it would have been harder to observe for the required time for this snapshot of research.

Literature review

With this research focus, it was important to read around the subject. This method of teaching allows us to look at many different theories within education and how they link in with other previous research.

Firstly, the whole idea of a child's mindset playing an important role in their learning has been developed and more importantly, a child having a growth mindset (Dweck, 2008). Dweck has written about a child's own perception of learning affecting their attainment and ability to learn. The theory is that children tend to have either a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. The fixed mindset being that the child has a certain level of intelligence and won't necessarily become more intelligent. The growth mindset is where a child believes that they can always improve on their ability and intelligence. When encountering difficulties in their learning, a child with a growth mindset is more likely to overcome that difficulty. The idea, then, is to promote the growth mindset in the children we teach. This strategy can do this by encouraging children to challenge themselves in their learning but also if they reach difficulties, they can change their chosen difficulty until they are sure they can grasp the challenge at that level and then build on that. The children can be aware when they are struggling at a certain lesson and choose a level to make them more comfortable to build themselves up to a level they believe they should be at. Therefore, the child is overcoming their barrier to learning and hopefully building on that. We can, therefore, view how this approach to differentiation may affect a child's growth mindset.

Dweck (2008) also found that teachers who held one of the two mindsets tended to pass that onto the children. So, if the teacher had a fixed mindset, for example, the children who they deemed were more able would continue to achieve greater achievements and those deemed lower ability were not pushed and therefore did not improve on their ability. Therefore, it would be encouraged to allow children to create this growth mindset and give them the environment to do that. A limitation to this idea, which is mentioned but not really acted on by Dweck, is that children can show traits of both growth mindset and fixed mindset and may not be wholly one type. This

is to be considered when Dweck discusses the idea as this may skew the results and have a bias to her predisposed views.

As written by Claxton (2018), it is believed that people, including children, have three modes of thinking. They are learning mode, performance mode and defence mode. These are modes that can be observed in the class room. Learning mode, which is the desired mode for the classroom, consists of the children having the ability to grasp new ideas, make mistakes and evaluate those mistakes to progress learning. There is also a want to learn, as opposed to just completing a task. The performance mode can be interpreted as completing the task accurately without any miscalculations. The defence mode puts the child into survival state, not trying to learn, not trying to perform, just 'getting by'. The idea is that the children should always be in the learning mode during lessons, so they get the most out of them. The children should be free to make mistakes and learn from them during the course of a lesson and not just believe that they have to get something right every time. Allowing the children to change the activity they are choosing during the lesson allows them to make these mistakes and change activity if they deem it necessary. With hope, they will learn from their mistakes and not just move into the survival mode. This idea links to Dweck's mindset theory and builds on it to show that children change mindset essentially. A child may not always be in the growth mindset or learning mode and they will be able to switch to the necessary mode when applicable.

Hattie (2009), concluded that metacognition, or thinking about thinking, allowed children to become aware of their learning. This can then encourage them to seek out the best way for them to learn themselves. This was understood to allow the children to question themselves more regularly and also increased their curiosity which can lead to them asking more questions to the teacher. As the curiosity is increased, the child is more likely to learn as they are more involved in the learning.

Hattie (2009) in his synthesis of meta-analysis has discussed that engagement has shown correlation with achievement. He also puts forward the notion that engagement alone may not necessarily be an indicator of achievement, as they may just look busy and engaged rather than fully understanding and may be acting to not bring attention to their lack of knowledge.

Differentiation in class has been implemented throughout education for a number of years. The idea of differentiation is to allow all children to work at a level they are at. Furthermore, it means that in theory that no child's learning suffers in a lesson, lower ability children are not over-stretched and higher ability children are challenged enough that the learning is purposeful (Hayes, 2008). Therefore, differentiation should be prevalent in all lessons where it is appropriate as to include all children.

Differentiation can be adapted, and the children allowed to choose their own difficulty. The differentiation can stay the same, but the teacher no longer tells each student which level they are to work on, the student themselves decide. This is taking into account the children deciding on their learning and assessment (Hargreaves, 2005). This is a form of formative assessment that the child is in control of (Clarke, 2014).

Tomlinson (2014) believes that children may be ready for certain aspects of a subject and not for others. Readiness is not linked with ability in Tomlinson's point of view and therefore a child may be deemed high ability but not ready for a certain aspect of a subject. Contrary to that, a child may be deemed lower ability, in maths for example, but has a keen interest in shapes from a computer game and would actually perform at a higher standard to other children that are in a higher ability grouping. Accordingly, an ability grouping can be deemed to be quite a fluid entity and should be taken into consideration when setting tasks based on ability groupings.

Some barriers to student choice were highlighted by Kone (1993) in that some teachers do not have the freedom to allow children to make decisions on their learning. Education has changed somewhat since these ideas were put forward and this way of teaching and learning is much more prevalent and therefore resistance from teachers is becoming less. The curriculum, in Wales especially, has changed since the early 90's and now there is much more emphasis on pupil choice and creating independent pupils. This is even more relevant in the current climate as implied in the recommendations to changes to the National curriculum in Wales by Donaldson (2015).

Explanation of lesson study design

The method used for this research was Lesson Study (Dudley, 2014). This involves devising and planning a research lesson with my partner and one partner teaching that lesson. The other partner shall observe the children throughout the lesson with particular concentration on three focus children. With this method, we will be looking at children's learning and not the teaching itself. Due to time constraints and availability of resources, this was adapted to have two research partners as opposed to the proposed three partners by Dudley. The same method was used but for two lessons instead of the three.

The size of our study cohort was three children. This number was chosen so that we can truly observe those selected in great detail. We felt this number was manageable in the class sizes we have. The chosen pupils have been selected as a representative cohort of the class. One child was chosen from each of the three ability level groups in each class, lower ability, middle ability and higher ability/more able and talented. Generalisations for the class may be able to be gleaned from this cohort. The children were chosen by each research partner and this selection was then conferred with the class teacher to confirm the selection was appropriate. The weight of the class in each ability group was not proportionate but we felt that we would garner superior results if all abilities were present in our cohort.

Our data comes from the teaching partner's reflection, the non-teaching partners observations and from the focus interview. These will be compared to the literature that has previously been reviewed. This follows the Brookfield (1998) Four Lenses approach. This method allows to critically reflect on the practice we are involved in. We have adapted this slightly to suit our study. The colleague lens shall contain any key observations of the three focus children and also the observed engagement and well-being scores.

The colleague lens observational techniques we used are based on the Leuven scale (Plymouth City Council, 2011) for both engagement and well-being. This scale is a pre-written description of behaviours a child exhibits at different levels of engagement and well-being and is scored on a scale from one to five.

Observations were taken at several moments during the studied lesson. These were during the introduction (pre-choice), directly after the choice is made (post-choice),

and 10 minutes, 20 minutes and 30 minutes post-choice. These timings were considered and discussed by the research partners and were deemed the most appropriate moments of the lesson to gauge well-being and engagement in the children. We felt this would give us a good range of values and show if any changes happen throughout the lesson. We were intrigued whether there would be any change in engagement after attempting the work and if applicable whether children felt they had chosen the wrong level of difficulty for themselves and how they would respond to that.

The majority of the data collected was qualitative in the form of field notes and interview in a focus group. The numerical values produced from the Leuven scale are the only quantitative data in this study. We chose to use qualitative data as it is more flexible and offers us more discussion. We felt that open questions should be used to question the children as this would elicit responses that could be expanded on by further questioning. If closed, more quantitative questions were used, they could lead to answers that may be pre-determined and could lead to an expected answer being given rather than the child's true feelings on the teaching strategy.

The reflection on each lesson was executed using the Gibbs (1988) reflection cycle. This method was chosen because we were seeking a method to reflect on practice, rather than in practice. The cycle element of this reflective practice is ideal for our study as we wished to reflect on one lesson to then use that reflection to shape the next taught lesson and then to shape our future teaching.

The pupil interview formed the basis of the child's point of view section of Brookfield's four lens approach. The children were sat as a group for the interviews, so they were not felt to be under any further pressure and to help them feel at ease. This has been found to be a successful approach to interviewing children (Cohen et al., 2011).

The focus group interviews have been included to incorporate pupil voice and allow them to help us form an improved version of the teaching strategy. This is in conjunction with Welsh Government (2011) guidelines on pupil participation. It is good practice to include children in the decisions that shape their school life and aiding us in our teaching strategies is acknowledging this. The interviews were semi-structured and contained ten questions and the option for the children to score the

teaching technique out of ten. We asked open questions to the participants to elicit their opinions rather than closed and leading questions.

Ethical considerations

In setting up this study, it was a requirement to gain ethical approval from University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) Athrofa Ethics Committee. This was granted prior to collecting any data. The ethical considerations for this study included risks to the participants, risks to the investigator, risks to the University (UWTSD) and any adverse outcomes that could arise from a study.

Risks to participants were kept to a minimum by constantly checking if the participant still grants assent to continuing in the study by allowing them to change a card from green to red indicating their approval. This was a non-verbal acknowledgement that the children could initiate at any point throughout the study. The study shall also be anonymised to ensure that there are no identifying features of the school or participants present in the study. Any paper documents have been kept by the investigators in locked cabinets and any digital data has been saved in password protected folders in the investigators UWTSD 'One Drive' network. This will eliminate any chance of data breaches occurring during or after the study. No identifying information is present on any paper or digital copies of documents related to this study. Safeguarding was also considered in this study and the individual schools and the UWTSD safeguarding policies were adhered to.

Risks to the participants included the absence of chosen children on the day of the study lesson. This was mitigated by gaining parental consent for all of the children in the class prior to the study lesson. Therefore, we could change the pre-selected child to observe prior to the lesson if necessary.

The participating schools are partnership schools of UWTSD and were notified that research was to take place prior to the research partners attending. The head teachers of each school gave prior approval to the study. Professionalism of both research partners was upheld throughout the study, following the UWTSD (2017) code of practice.

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) ethical guidelines document was followed to ensure the study was ethical to all components.

Results and analysis

Lesson 1

The children of the class in School B did not show a dramatic change in their well-being or engagement throughout the lesson (Table 1). This is demonstrated by each child having a range of one for both well-being and engagement throughout the observation. Child 1 shows some increase in their engagement and well-being (from 3 to 4) at 10 minutes post choice. This engagement is sustained until the final observation point of the lesson, thirty minutes post-choice, where the engagement then drops one point, down to three.

	School B					
Child	1		2		3	
	Engagement	Well-being	Engagement	Well-being	Engagement	Well-being
Pre-choice	3	3	3	4	3	3
Post choice	3	3	3	4	2	3
10 minutes	4	4	4	4	2	3
20 minutes	4	3	3	3	3	3
30 minutes	3	3	4	4	2	2
Range	1	1	1	1	1	1

Table 1.

As the children chosen are a representation of the class as a whole, it can be assumed that this is a fair portrayal of the class as a whole. This can be limiting though, as the three focus pupils, although much consideration is taken, may not actually represent the feelings of the rest of the class due to the nature of the study and own individual's emotions.

From the interviews, we elicited that one of the children did not feel challenged enough from the work they completed. This can be a limitation with differentiation as although much thought is taken into account when setting work that is at a challenging level for the pupils, it is hard to gauge what is appropriate for every child in a class of around thirty. This child is a more able and talented child so it was expected that they would be able to complete the activity set for them. This child

highlighted that the highest difficulty challenge was too easy for them and wished to be tested further.

Related to the previous observation, the children also enquired about adding extra levels of difficulty and having more choice. With this in mind, an extra level of difficulty shall be added to the second lesson so there shall be four different choices. This also eliminates the child choosing the middle as they're not sure what to choose. They will then have to consider their options rather than just picking the middle option.

Another recommendation given via the focus group interview was that each option of difficulty was explained to the children prior to them making the choice. In lesson one, there was a brief description of what each worksheet consisted of, but no examples given. This, according to the children interviewed, made their decision of which level of differentiation to choose more difficult. It also meant that the children tended to choose the level at which they normally complete. For example, the more able children, tended to choose the most difficult (trickiest), the middle ability children tended to choose the middle difficulty (trickier) and the lower ability children tended to choose the lowest difficulty activity (tricky). When the different activities are demonstrated and displayed to the children, they could then make a more informed choice of which activity to choose.

One child in the focus interview said they had originally made the wrong decision of which sheet they chose to work on. The first sheet they chose they deemed too difficult for themselves so wanted to make the decision to choose a sheet that was easier. This child later moved back to the worksheet that was more difficult and progressed through the challenge. The children agreed that the opportunity to change their decision should be present. The three children proposed that the chance to change their mind should be offered more frequently as they had been informed that they could do this, but they felt reluctant to at first as they didn't want to do something that they thought would be incorrect.

What the activities were called in School B came under scrutiny as the children were not too keen on the names. The children thought that the identifiers of each level were slightly off putting as they thought they sounded more challenging than they were. One child recalled that they did not choose the highest level at first because of

its name (Trickiest) and were too anxious to choose it. They then went on to attempt that worksheet and were surprised that they found it a very comfortable level for them. Upon evaluation, we came to the conclusion that we should re-name the differentiated levels. Therefore, in lesson two, the work sheets shall be renamed; challenge, more challenging, most challenging and, the added fourth level of difficulty, ultimate challenge.

Lesson 2

Two of the three children showed an increase in engagement after making their choice of the activity to complete in School A. Child 1 went from a 2 score for engagement during the introduction to a 3 score after making their choice. Their engagement then dipped after 10 minutes of the activity. This may have been due to the child choosing an activity too easy or too hard for them. After 20 minutes of the activity, the child's engagement then increased further than they were previously to a 4 score on the Leuven scale for engagement. This may have been due to them now settling on an activity that was a correct level for them and now enjoying the task at hand. This was supported by an addition of a field note by the non-teaching partner that this particular child had struggled with the work and required some additional help with the task. They had not asked for help, so the teaching partner was unaware that the child was finding the task difficult. The child did ask for help eventually and once help was given, the child engaged much more successfully and then was observed at a 4 score for engagement for the duration of the lesson.

Child 3 also exhibited a big increase in engagement from the introduction to making their choice of activity. The engagement again, was low to begin with, at a score of 2. Once child 3 was given the opportunity to choose their task, their engagement increased rapidly to a score of 4. This was continued for the first ten minutes. At the observation at 20 minutes after the choice was made, the child's engagement then decreased to around a score of 2. This was quite alarming on reflection. The field notes from the observer stated that the child had completed their worksheet which had led to the lower levels of engagement. The child had not independently progressed onto the next challenge.

A child in the second study lesson recommended that the gap between each differentiation level was too large and it made it a demanding task to make the step

up to the next level. The teaching partner had attempted to make each level differentiated to a level that was an achievable step up from the last, especially as this had four different levels. On reflection the teacher believed this was the case. An idea going forward could be that there is a step up within each level. For example, in 'more challenging', the first eight questions could be relatively simple and then the following six questions are slightly more challenging. There is further differentiation within each level in that sense.

Following on from that idea, one of the children expressed they would rather all of the differentiated levels on one page and they could then work through the difficulty from easiest to hardest. This could be a differentiation by outcome scenario. I feel there would be a limitation in that plan as some children work faster than others which may be unrelated to ability. Consequently, a slower working child who is capable with challenging themselves with the most difficult sections of the work may not get to that point by the end of the lesson meaning they are not progressing, and it would be hard to determine whether they are achieving at that higher ability.

Two of the children in the interview expressed that they would not change anything from the lesson delivered at first response.

Much care was taken by the teaching partner to explain through each levelled worksheet in the introduction to the lesson as was the recommendation from the previous lesson study. One particular child disclosed that they felt they would like the worksheet explained further and demonstrated how the questions are to be worked out. Similar questions were explained on the interactive white board prior to the children selecting their activity which I felt had given the children enough information to complete each sheet. It was observed that this child had a low level of engagement during the introduction time slot. This could have been down to lack of concentration or low-level chatting occurring that the teaching partner was unaware of. Alternatively, it could mean that the child was not interested in what was being taught and therefore was not engaging. This would have to be rectified in future lessons to ensure that the child was engaging and that the lesson was captivating enough for them to engage fully. This may allow the child to be able to grasp the task immediately and could remove this barrier.

Discussion

A child in School A that is in the higher ability group for the subject taught, maths, stated in the interview that she sometimes felt work given to her was too hard. This was also observed by the non-teaching research partner as the child in question seemed to stall when asked to complete the work they had chosen until they had help. This was interesting to observe as it was previously thought the child would be able to complete this work independently. This could be a result of low self-esteem and the child not having the ability to persevere and to solve the questions independently. The alternate idea is that the child was just not achieving at the level that was previously observed by the research partner in that class and also the class teacher. This behaviour was observed previously by Dudley (2014) in lesson studies. Occasionally, the children were not performing at the expected level and without closer inspection in the form of focussed observation, this would not become so visible.

With this in mind, it would make sense to keep a close eye on certain children's attainment throughout lessons. This could be completed in the form of selecting certain children in each subject, each week to pay closer attention to and informally interview them on how they deem their progress is going throughout the week. Although opportunities are granted for children to self assess and to highlight if they are having issues with any work, it is not always easy for the child to offer that they are struggling. If the children are asked in an open-ended manner, in a focus group environment, how they feel they are doing, such as in the interview for this study, they may be more open to letting the teacher know.

The Children in both schools agreed that they enjoyed the strategy for teaching used in this study of allowing the children to choose what level of difficulty activity they complete. With a verbal confirmation that they were happy that they had the choice, and with engagement and well-being observations increasing in the majority of the children observed, it would be sensible to use this approach with this class in the future. The three children interviewed in School A all agreed that they felt they had made more progress than normal in the lesson. This is the child's opinion and may not have any bearing on formative assessment results. The fact that the children believed they had made progress allows them to increase their confidence at the minimum. Their actual progress, academically, will need to be monitored for the

future with this strategy being implemented. This could be garnered using formative assessments at the end of a scheme of work.

It was observed that the children, occasionally with some guidance, were able to complete the work independently. Most children were able to choose a level suitable for them although, not in all instances immediately. This allowed the teacher to help any children that still required it and to monitor for any misconceptions. This complies with guidance on differentiation previously mentioned (Hayes, 2008).

The interviews post lesson gave us an insight into the thought processes of the selected children when making their choices and adapting the work they were completing. They were clearly self-evaluating their ability and making conscious decision about the level they should be working at – changing this when necessary. They were using this technique as an assessment for learning tool to help develop their learning and challenge themselves if needed and also choosing the work that was easier if this was applicable. They were in control of their learning and assessment in this instance as advised by Clarke (2014).

As eluded to in School B's focus interview, one child offered an opinion that they thought that some of the other children may not have been challenging themselves as much as maybe they should. Also, the inverse was observed by the teaching partner that one child not involved in the interview had chosen a level of difficulty that they seemed to struggle with and was potentially above their current attainment. This is one limitation to this method of teaching. There is a large amount of trust handed to the children to make sensible decisions regarding their choice. If the child chooses a task too difficult for them, this may dent their confidence or even cement an incorrect method of calculation if that is the reason for their struggle. Alternatively, if the child has chosen an activity that is not challenging them, they will not make progress and their learning will plateau.

The idea expressed previously by Tomlinson (2014) about children having a readiness as well as an ability level, can be applied to this strategy as the child can self-diagnose their ability level based on their own experiences, which may be extra-curricular and outside the knowledge of the teacher. Therefore, the child is not limited to a particular ability level and can change fluidly depending on the relevant task and topic of learning.

Conclusions

Using the Lesson Study approach to research allowed the research partners to gain different views of the lessons taught and allowed a discussion of our individual observations and also those of others. This approach helped us broaden our perspective and think from other points of view. This is a clear strength to this approach. We were constricted by time for this research and also restricted to having one partner instead of the three as recommended by Dudley (2014). A further lesson with adaptations from lesson two may have led us to make greater progress in this strategy modifying.

A limitation to using the Leuven scale to gauge well-being and engagement was that the value is created from just a small fragment of time observed. This may not reflect an overall view of how engaged the child is or how they are feeling. A strength of this observation technique is that it is quick to record and allows attention to be kept on the participant rather than writing down large quantities of field notes on the observed children. This correlates with previous documentation on observing children (Herr, J., 2016)

The cohort was deemed representative of the class due to ability. Although much care was taken to choose appropriate participants, this does not necessarily reflect that every other child in that ability grouping would act accordingly. There is also a wide range of ability within each ability group which may not be represented. The small number of participants was still the correct amount to be used to observe in one lesson as too many more, would have seen the research partners miss key moments of observation with certain children. There is a possibility that up to five children could be chosen to be observed. This feels that it would be manageable, but this would have to be trialled by the research partners to ensure it was accomplishable. This may also be affected by the children being observed and the class room dynamics. If a child was to move around the class room, this would be made more difficult to observe all of the selected children. Additionally, if the children are all based at different spaces in the class room, this would be more demanding.

My observation of one child in particular, my research partner was surprised about. My observation of him was objective and purely based on what I could see and how this linked with the Leuven scale. My research partner assured me that the child in

question was engaging more than I had observed and was enjoying the work more. As I did not know the child and had no previous observations of him, this was problematic to gauge. This is a further limitation to the lesson study method and also the observation techniques used. Although it is crucial to get an objective view on the children, this does not take into account their usual behaviour, as there is no knowledge of this.

Although we were not aware of any issues with the children observed, this may also have an effect on the child's engagement and well-being. There may be external concerns that the child may have which are foreign to the classroom but may influence them. This has the possibility to skew any observational data that is recorded, especially with regards to the Leuven scale.

Using the Leuven scale generated some issues in this study. The descriptions given for each value in the scale were largely inaccurate to represent the behaviours of the children in class. Retrospectively, we can see that the children did not fluctuate on the scale much during the study and were largely confined to values of three and four (occasional bouts of two). The values of one and five are extremely unlikely to occur in the classroom, especially at Key Stage Two. Therefore, this scale should be rectified for more mature learners or another used for future studies.

If we had piloted this scale prior to the research taking place, this may have allowed us to achieve this discovery prior to the study taking place. This would have given us time to adapt our scale accordingly. Future research shall be piloted to ensure reliability and also accuracy of. A pilot also allows the research partners to ensure they have an agreeance of opinion of what, in this studies case, a certain score would look like being present in a child.

The use of the teaching partner's reflections as part of the qualitative data has its strengths and also its limitations. A reflection can in some instances become quite subjective. The teaching partner may have pessimistic or optimistic tendencies and therefore, concentrate on negatives or positives, respectively, of the lesson. All parts need to be observed so therefore, both positives and negatives should be scrutinised. The reflections for this study also varied in detail which can occur with different approaches to the same objective.

As the focus group interviews involved the children sitting and being questioned with their peers, this may have led to some answers being slightly skewed. The children may have become embarrassed to say what they thought of the lesson if this did not conform to their two peers. We did manage to elicit some alternative responses, but this may have held back some. We did try and counteract this by alternating who answered first for different questions. This tactic was also used to stop the children just agreeing with each other. This did occur on occasion where one child would just respond with 'yeah, I think the same'. This may have been the case and the child did just agree with the previous statement, but this would not be known unless the child was interviewed alone. Due to the child's comfort we interviewed as a focus group, so it became a less intense and more friendly experience.

The interviews were recorded so they could be referred to at a later date. This allowed us to truly listen to the participants answers and probe further if needed. This gave the children more pride as they could tell that we were listening intently and taking notice of what they were saying. This hopefully led to them being more honest and open to offering their opinion to us.

Recommendations

This idea of setting work that children choose to do themselves is an interesting idea I feel I can incorporate into my teaching. The children reacted very positively and would hope this could be replicated in future classes. Going forward, I shall take into account the class I am teaching and their needs. With this in mind, the needs of work that the children should be working at need to be considered. Where there is a vast range of levels present in the class, this may not be manageable. If lots of children make poor decisions on the activity chosen and require an extensive amount of support, then too much time will be taken up with helping a selection of children whilst the remaining members of the class would be unaided. This would not allow myself, as the teacher, a chance to formatively assess any children during the lesson. This could be counteracted by actively encouraging children to change the level they are completing. I would be apprehensive to do this as I would not wish to dent their confidence. Additionally, the children may be doing more harm to their

progress by not changing activity so both sides would have to be considered to not harm the child's self-esteem and well-being.

Further research could continue once the children have had more practice at choosing their own activity. They may require additional experiences to have more confidence in their ability to choose the correct activity. They may also need further encouragement to change their mind if they think that is appropriate.

If progress academically is shown and engagement levels stay at a high level, this practice should be shared within the school. Other members of staff could trial the same method using lesson study within the school to see if their results differ and if there are any other successful recommendations. It would also be interesting to see if the results change in Foundation Phase.

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