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Introduction

Research context

Research question & hypothesis

A brief synopsis of the research tools

This study specifically examines the perceptions on Assessment for learning (AFL) from teachers, within a primary school. Cambridge International Education (N.D) provides a coherent definition of AFL, considering it as “an approach to teaching and learning that creates feedback which is then used to improve students’ performance”. Within this context, pupils are perceived as active contributors, who “should be able to evaluate their learning and mistakes, identifying areas for development” (WG, 2020a). The implementation of AFL is central to the purpose of the CFW and is significant in holistically creating “ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives” (WG, 2020b).

The rationale behind this study, evaluates whether a specific strand of AFL is effective within the classroom. Subsequently, the AFL strand examined was in the form of the research question, titled: Staff Perceptions on Feedback in the Classroom. Before this study, it was hypothesised that feedback was provided to pupils only in written form and not as a challenging concept to be acted upon or seen as a goal to improve. This perception has transpired from childhood experiences at school. The purpose of this study investigates whether the hypothesis was valid and to acquire a better perspective of teachers attitudes towards feedback. The “interpretivist” Mosaic Approach (Clark, 2005) was selected as the research design, which included interviews and questionnaires as the research tools for data collation.

Literature Review

In-depth discussion about your chosen Afl aspect

Different viewpoints. References to work of key authors

This study considers the impact of verbal and written feedback, examining which one maximises pupil’s learning. According to Kerr (2017, p.445) “verbal feedback involves interaction between learners and teachers with potential for questions and exploration in order to provide learning gains”. This elaborates on aspects of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development Theory, which addresses that through verbal feedback, pupils can be helped or “scaffolded” by a “knowledgeable other” and thus will enable them to comprehend exactly what is being asked and how they can improve (Pound, 2005, p.39). Moreover, Goddard (2015) believes that verbal feedback is “effective” if it is “quick in prompting pupils to respond to any misconceptions” in their learning. If feedback is “timely” and provided to pupils, when they are engaged, this produces a better response and can maximise learning (Gibbs and Simpson, 2005, cited in Heacademy,2013, p.14). According to Education Endowment Foundation (2018, p.2) for verbal feedback to be powerful, it must be “specific, accurate and clear”, and it must have capacity to challenge pupils, for them to develop a growth mindset.

Feedback that promotes a growth mindset, encourages pupils to make mistakes, persevere and “try new strategies”, to learn and become resilient (Dweck, 2015, p.20). In considering some teacher verbal feedback, Hattie (ND, cited in Waack, ND) questions its credibility,

Methodology

Outline of the
research design
& methodology

The aim of this research was to explore staff perceptions of feedback within the classroom. In considering this, the research tools used within the study was an interview and questionnaire. Both research tools adhere to aspects of the Mosaic Approach, which is a “multi-method” educational framework, that analyses the importance of “listening and acknowledging” the voice of the child (Clark and Moss, p.1). This holistic approach uses “several different ways of listening to young people through tools of observation and interviewing....and pupils’ perspectives are actively involved through their own photographs, books, and maps” (Maynard and Powell, 2014, p.249). Pupil voice “shapes” the Successful Futures Framework and would have been integral to this research study (Estyn, 2018). However, due to COVID-19, pupils were absent from this study and the focus instead was on the voice of the teacher.

Justify and critically
evaluate the research
tools, e.g. interview

The justification behind using interview and questionnaire as research tools, is that they provide “quantitative and qualitative data”, which allows the researcher to gain a more “holistic overview of their study” (Punch, 2014, p.119). An interview is a “discussion with someone in order to gather information, through facts, opinions or attitudes” on a subject or matter (Thomas, 2017, p.202). There are three types of interviews: “structured, unstructured and semi-structured” (QuestionPro, ND). This synchronous study was a semi-structured interview and was completed online, using Microsoft Teams. A semi-structured interview is beneficial, because the questions are provided to the participant beforehand, allowing the interviewee time to prepare. A variety of open questions were asked during the interview, which enables participants to provide their “opinions or prejudices” within their own time frame (Thomas, 2017, p.204). The “qualitative data” provided, depends on the reliability of the interviewee (QuestionPro, ND). Therefore, “validity” may be seen as an issue, especially if the interviewee “misunderstands a question that has been asked” (Cohen, et al 2007, p.150).

Justify and
critically evaluate
the research tools,
e.g. questionnaire

An online questionnaire is a “written form of questioning”, which provides both “open and closed questions” (Thomas, 2017, p.217). With regards to “closed questions,” they produce “yes/no, agree/disagree, fill in the blank’s answers,” which specifically provide quick definite responses to a particular question (ADJP Quad, 2016). Microsoft Forms was used to design and conduct the asynchronous questionnaire. The benefits of this, is that the questionnaire can be confidential, anonymous, completed quickly, with quantitative data being analysed through visual charts and graphs (Macfarlan, 2014). However, the negatives of an online questionnaire are that there could be “potential bias to those who do not own a computer and would not be able to respond” (Tymms, 2012, cited in Arthur, et al, 2012, p.236). This could affect the sampling of the research study.

Context...
details of the
Research Day

This study was completed by staff from a super school located in Wales, which consists of 1305 pupils aged from three to sixteen years old (WG, 2020c). For confidential and ethical purposes, the school will be addressed as ‘School A.’ The school is in a deprived area of South Wales where “23.5% of pupils, are eligible to receive free school meals, which is higher than the national average” (WG, 2020c).

Discussion of the ethical issues – references to the Ethics Form -Appendix

Ethics was paramount to this research study and the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines were adhered to throughout. Initially, an Ethics form (See Appendix 5), a consent form (See Appendix 6) and a consent letter (See Appendix 7) were created and provided to teachers to read and sign, to gain their “voluntary informed consent to be involved in a study” (BERA, 2018, p.9). It was made apparent to teachers that they had the “right to withdraw from the research at any time” (BERA, 2018, p.18). In accordance with the General Data Protection Act (2018) and the BERA guidelines (2018), “the confidential and anonymous treatment of participants’ data was considered...for this research” (BERA, 2018, p.21). If this research had been undertaken with pupils under the age of eighteen, then consent forms would have had to been signed by parents or carers, for them to gain assent to participate. In relation to assent, it is a vital “ethical and legal requirement of paediatric research” (Waligora, et al, 2014, p.1).

Details about the sample (participants)

Prior to the research day, the feedback questionnaire (See Appendix 1), was formulated and distributed to staff at School A, through an online collaborative link. Originally, the aim was to interview pupils, for them to voice their opinions of feedback in the classroom. This adheres to not only the Mosaic Approach, but to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) for pupils to have “the right to express their views”, in matters such as feedback, which affects their learning (UNICEF United Kingdom, ND). With the absence of pupils from this study, the sample included five teachers completing the online

Information about the data was presented and analysed

questionnaire and one interview from a Key Stage Two teacher. Qualitative data from the interview was transcribed (See Appendix 4) and quantitative data from the online questionnaires were imported into tables and graphs (See Appendix 3).

Discussion about the limitations of the study

There are definite limitations to the study, as there were only five teachers from the same school completing the questionnaire, which could suggest bias. Some of the responses from the questionnaires were undeveloped, due to some questions being repetitive. With reference to the interview, only one teacher was questioned and therefore, no comparisons were made against another teacher’s perception of feedback. In considering this, the quality of this data may not be valid. To prevent future limitations, a larger sample, from a variety of schools could be used and video observation of feedback being used in the classroom may provide richer data. If a video observation were conducted on pupils in the classroom, a consent form would be sent to parents to sign and pupils will be allowed to “opt-in or opt-out” if needed (BERA, 2018, p15).

Findings and Discussion

Question one of the questionnaire (See Appendix 3, questions 1a-1d) demonstrates that staff in School A deduce that feedback is a “useful technique”, with 80% believing that they can see “improvements on pupils’ work after they received feedback”. This indeed reinforces Sadler’s (1989, cited in Pearson, 2016, p.2) philosophy that feedback effectively, reduces the “gap” between present and future learning, enabling pupils’ to progress and improve performance.

The questionnaire responses also indicated that 60% of teachers provide written feedback to their pupils weekly, compared to 40% of teachers conducting it daily. This indicates that teachers from School A may have issues with managing time, with regards to providing written feedback daily. Spencer (2017) conveyed that written feedback is “time consuming” and this is further evidenced from the interview transcript (See Appendix 4, Q2), when the participant stated, “I’ve got 33 children in a class so it’s difficult to make my way around all of the pupils and see everyone”.

Description and explanation of the quantitative and qualitative data making appropriate links with the literature review

Conclusion

The essence of the study was to investigate staff perceptions of feedback in the classroom. It was firstly hypothesised that feedback was only evident in written form and not seen as a progression step in learning. Undoubtedly, from conducting the literature review, analysing the questionnaire (quantitative data) and the interview (qualitative data), the research findings revealed otherwise. Verbal feedback was highlighted by the findings, to be the most predominant form of feedback, because it can be managed effectively and can be implemented in a “timely” manner, which requires an immediate pupil response (The Heacademy, 2013, p12). Furthermore, verbal feedback allows some teachers to evaluate any “misconceptions” (See Appendix 4, Q3) in pupils’ learning, so that they can adapt teaching strategies to suit individual needs.

A summary of the aims of the study... conclusions drawn from looking at the findings of the lit review and research findings(data) as a whole

Reflection on the impact of this study on professional learning/practice

Throughout this study, professional learning has been developed and as such, feedback is portrayed as integral to pupils’ learning journey. Quality of pedagogy and refining research skills are paramount, so that pupils are provided with the best learning opportunities. This is evidenced by Kirsty Williams (2017, cited in Dauncey, 2017) that “teachers need to support all learners to develop the skills they need to thrive in their years at school and throughout their lives”. Therefore, effective feedback will be implemented for PTE2, along with the other strands of AFL.