

Title: How a school develops one aspect of its SDP:
a report that critically reflects on the actions, impact
and evidence base.

	Targets.	What have I done in this assignment?
Target 1	Many issues with referencing, look at the UWTSD guidance for this.	Within this Assignment I have engaged with the university guidelines for referencing.
Target 2	Increase the level of critically in your use of literature.	I have critically engaged with all my sources looking at both positives and negatives to each.
Target 3	Many points you make throughout your assignment are superficial and would have benefited from a deeper examination.	I have delved deeper into my research and looked deeper into my findings.

This essay will discuss how School A target 'questioning' as outlined in their SDP (School Development Plan). This essay will critically evaluate how they action change within their institution and the impact this action has as well as evidence to support this. This specific element of AFL (Assessment for Learning) within School A's development plan is outlined as needing improvement across the subject areas. School A has 35.1% FSM, one of the highest in their family of schools, with School B sitting at 27.2% and School C at 29%. 60% of pupils from School A live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales (Estyn, 2015.) The context of this school is important concerning the area and the children whom it serves (Mayo & Siraj, 2014) with its motto being 'If you believe it, you can achieve it', putting a huge emphasis on the passion and motivation the teachers show each day towards the pupils, not allowing their context to limit their possibilities. They are an 11-16 mixed gender school, also holding community status, allowing them to be a calling point for all members of their society as well as pupils. More specifically to my chosen area of the School Development Plan, assessment for learning is something they are always working on, with modelling playing a big part in setting the children up for success, and therefore assessing them after they have been set the correct example. Also, questioning can be influential when combined with modelling, this is something School A aim to achieve when both are developed.

A specific text that informed my discussion was one written by Dillon (1981, pp.42–48.) where he expands on the purpose of questioning and more specifically when it should be efficiently used. This is something that relates to my line of enquiry as School A specifically need to strengthen how they use AFL and questioning. In addition to this, a supporting text to this is written by J A Fishman (1976, p10-15) expanding on how the sociological perspective is critical for bilingual education but also in every other ALOE, this is important to AFL as within a classroom you must know your learners and their behaviour before being able to achieve maximal learning. In addition, an alternate perspective on the

sociological perspective is that it can be a disadvantage to those children who don't have a vast context and therefore don't receive the additional attention from the class teacher. However, this point of purposeful questioning is contrasted within an article written by King (1990, p. 664-87) expanding on a reciprocal questioning technique that was tested within an experiment. This particular extract goes on to expand on the success reciprocal questioning amongst peers within the classroom, therefore contrasting Dillon's point about purposeful and poignant questioning. I feel for School A to strengthen their questioning and AFL techniques a combination of purposeful questioning and reciprocal questioning amongst peers would be successful in aiding learning and recall.

The second article of upmost importance to my study is by Remier & Jacob (2011, pp.223–227.) where the authors expand on a further limitation to differentiation in a higher education setting, expanding on social inequality and what ramifications it has for learning. The study goes on to talk about whether differentiation causes lack of access for some children, who are separated from certain elements of education due to race, background or previous grading. Also, an article by Baska (2012, pp.42–48.) expands on how differentiation is more positive than negative, suggesting that differentiation paired with positive teacher attitude can make a large difference in learning within the classroom. However, Baska does expand on the limitations of differentiation and how if combined with a negative attitude, can have a long-standing negative effect on the pupils. This is further supported by a text written by Anning, Cullen & Fleer (2009, p21) the text expands on how questioning is key to a child's development and ability including 'ECE staff asking open-ended questions' as factors that are associated with competency. Expanding on this point by Anning, Cullen & Fleer, the influence of questioning within a classroom has been found in more than one study to develop prior knowledge and expand learning from that lesson onwards, shown in the above studies and research. This directly relates to School A's target improvement area of questioning, and how it is integral to maximise the potential it can develop.

Relating all of the above sources to Graham Donaldson's Successful Futures (2015) as supported by the above research, questioning reinforces all four of the purposes, due to

questioning creating independent individuals, whilst also creating ambitious capable learners as well as creative contributors and ethically informed citizens. It does this by encouraging children and young people to take responsibility for their learning, as said in Donaldson's report. Questioning in a classroom gradually enforces Donaldson's new curriculum, with literature to support this.

In school A, their SDP (School Development Plan) makes for pleasing reading, having initially been deemed as a school in 'special measures' over 10 years ago, School A has improved and developed in almost every area of their SDP. The school took on a more specific route when a new SLT (Senior Leadership Team) took over in the early '00s and began a new mantra of 'every grade counts' allowing even low achievers to feel a sense of accomplishment with whatever grade they were capable of, this is reflected within their most recent Estyn report, where the grade C and above achievement has improved drastically (Estyn, 2015). The process of forming an SDP includes self- evaluation, strategic planning, implementation and measuring impact (Welsh Government, 2014). School A implement self- evaluation in the form of formal lesson observations that take place one a year, conducted by the SLT, they are marked against an inspection like criteria to find areas for improvement, results are later discussed in staff meetings that take place in the weeks following on. Results are gathered using quantitative data, assessing key areas of improvement. This allows the SDP to reflect areas that need to be worked on and this is how I selected my focus. The school use lesson observations as a way of implementation and assess grades using the 'capped 9' system to measure whole school efficiency, however, the strength of questioning is measured via senior lesson observations to focus on AFL. This way of collecting data appears to be effective and on the surface targets key areas of overall improvement. However, it does not allow room for specific subject areas with specific areas to target. However, School A target this with their PLC (Professional Learning Community) meetings as well as departmental meetings, which are used to discuss key areas for department improvement. Referring back to the lesson observations, staff use the designated observation slot to present a detailed lesson plan, as well as targets set in the

previous observation (if applicable) as well as whole school areas to work on. School A is continuously involving stakeholders throughout the academic year, where possible. Thinking more critically regarding the relationship between school and stakeholder, although the school do a lot to include the stakeholder, they could spend more time on involving them within the transition phase between primary and secondary. With their status as a community school, they actively encourage parents to attend cookery lessons that the school hold, as well as managing money session, targeting its catchment area and where it can help target poverty and deprivation, it does. I was actively involved in the strategic planning that took place throughout the school's PLC meetings and inset days that contributed to the development of the School's plan. These sessions were integral to the monitoring and continuity of schemes of work and whole-school strategies. Specifically, in these meetings professionals discussed how they wanted to target strengthening questioning as a whole body and also specifically, in departments, and critically within English; the focus of Bloom's Taxonomy (1965, p20-24) and encouraging higher-order thinking. However, often a downfall of Bloom's taxonomy is used as a framework for questioning could include the rigidity of the structure, as within a classroom, children often all have various ways of thinking/learning. This links to my previous reference by Fishman, again highlighting why it is integral to have the sociological perspective of your classroom present when using AFL as a tool. Relating this to School A's SDP, throughout the document they refer to modelling and its relevance in every classroom. This is used within the lesson to scaffold for questioning, allowing the teacher to be encouraging challenge whilst modelling on a whiteboard.

In recent years School A has adapted a 'capped 9' approach to examinations, meaning that every grade counts within the cohort, an effort to increase motivation for exams across the board (Welsh Government, 2019). This is evidence of the school measuring impact, where they have clearly assessed that a large chunk of learners were losing motivation due to low target grades. However, as 'capped 9' is successful for lower-achieving learners, it can prove disheartening for higher achievers however it allows each

pupil to have equal significance. This supports their quest for stronger questioning as pupils can no longer meet teachers with a response where it relates to having 'no point' or that they will 'fail anyway'. The capped 9 scores allow for a change of attitude to learning for schools across Wales, as well as a change in attitude towards teachers.

Overall School A has made good progress in strengthening their questioning technique across the board. School A assesses the SDP every 6 months allowing time for improvement but also ensuring correct implementation. They have invested time and money into training their staff to facilitate progress across the entirety of the school as well as using inset days to standardise how the school achieve a strong questioning technique. With regards more specifically to my chosen subject, they did well to target questioning within the subject more specifically, using a separate approach to other subject areas. Using Bloom's in English allows for more creative thinking patterns emerge. This approach to separately attack questioning in different subject areas and then coming together to assess how they separately achieve success is an innovative and positive approach from the school.

However, in the future it may be useful to share techniques as good practice more widely with schools within the family, allowing for more widely applicable questioning techniques to emerge, therefore allowing a more standardised approach across Swansea. The literature within this essay suggests that questioning is a key part of learning and also expands on reasons why it is important, touching on the sociological impact of questioning on a child's education and why it is so integral to know your learners and your classroom. School A employ this idea well, with each teacher developing a functional pupil to teacher relationship within each classroom. However, it is often difficult to bare every child's sociological need in mind when questioning a class of 30 pupils, therefore the pastoral team remain a key element of learning as they provide a natural haven for children to rely on, and therefore support teachers in any key information they should keep in mind when carrying out lessons. School A support teachers and staff well by providing as much support as possible in line with the SDP and its priorities. Relying again heavily on the sociological theory to support learning, the school could carry out staff meetings with relevant members of staff to key

learners who need support, restricting the sharing of data to unnecessary parties and therefore building a support system that expands further than just the pastoral team. Although staff members are currently informed of contextual changes which affect the pupils learning, it would allow teachers who collectively teach the pupil to have an in-depth discussion about supporting the specific pupil more comprehensively. In practice, this would look like a lunchtime session every week noting changes to said pupil's behaviour and over time developing strategies to achieve maximum learning potential.

In conclusion, this assignment has expanded on the positive and negative impact that questioning in the classroom can have, also expanding on elements that School A are doing well to support, as well as areas that could be further improved. I have learnt that questioning as a form of AFL is integral to classroom practice and should be fully integrated wherever possible. School A is continuously evaluating and assessing elements that they need to work on, allowing them to emerge as a figurehead for Welsh Education, continuously improving and developing how they support education. However, after looking into the sociological impact, it can be seen that questioning should be used purposefully and to assess and encourage learning. From my own experience, it is often difficult to remember each child's specific context in a class of 30 when questioning, but it is important to differentiate across the lesson, which could aid and inform questioning. This might include lower order questioning for lower sets and higher-order questioning for higher sets, depending on the ability and again context of each cohort. This will influence my teaching as I will now carry out questioning more thoughtfully and specifically to achieve lesson aims.

References

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