

Is peer assessment is a beneficial assessment for learning (AFL) strategy to use in a classroom and if so, how effective is it?

Peer assessment in its simplest form is an AFL technique which involves students assessing the work of their peers against a certain criteria. This meaning that as opposed to a teacher marking the work of each student, the students take an active role and mark each other's work instead. This will be against a set criteria or following a mark scheme given by the teacher. This technique has both clear benefits and limitations, however I aim to delve deeper into these and gain a much broader knowledge on whether this strategy is overall a positive or negative. To fully understand my chosen topic, theories on such must be looked into and understood to result in complete understanding.

Peer assessment is a common strategy used in education for its benefits, however there are limitations that need to be considered. Peer assessment on the whole can consist of many different techniques and schemes individual to the school it's used in, some of which I have witnessed being used are the traffic light method, two stars and a wish, green for growth and emotion faces. Some benefits from peer assessment that I have come to learn is that first and foremost, it acquires the pupils to get involved in their own learning. It allows pupils to learn from their fellow students' work which will help them spot their own mistakes when it comes to their own work, which can sometimes be ignored. Marking a peers work gives pupils the chance to see another piece of work set on the same task and how every pupils' work varies. This is a great learning curve for pupils. Peer assessment allows pupils to instead of relying on their teachers, they gain a sense of responsibility and it sanctions them to give their own personal feedback, which can be done written or verbally and is not always individual but in pairs or groups. An example of where I believe peer assessment is beneficial is in the scenario of writing a draft piece of work before the final product. By allowing pupils to peer assess one another's work, this allows the pupils to not only get feedback on their work which will in effect improve their final piece of work, but will also benefit the pupils marking as it gives them other pieces of work to learn from and gain inspiration to make improvements in their own work. To support this, Topping (1998) researched peer feedback and determined when instruction to students is organised and outcomes are clearly set out, students are able to provide feedback which meets that of a trained educator. Furthermore, this type of feedback allows students to be introspective and create judgements about their own work. This leads me to believe that peer assessment results in pupils acting maturely and taking on responsibility for not only themselves but their peers. It allows pupils to become aware of their own and others mistakes therefore resulting in them working things out for themselves as opposed to being told or shown everything by their teachers. This can then help pupils avoid making these mistakes again. The work of Cheng and Warren (2000) support these factors and elaborate on the benefits of peer feedback suggesting that students who participate in this type of learning enhance educational relationships, experience deeper learning, perform better on assessments, become increasingly reflective learners and are less dependent on the teacher.