



5010 – RESEARCHING THE LEARNING: WHAT, HOW AND WHY AM I TEACHING?

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Targets	How have you worked on this?	An example can be found on...
Target 1: Synthesise research into your writing to aid the support of your key points.	I have read through the provided reading lists and resources, but I have continued to do further research in order to support the key points of the assignment.	This can be shown throughout
Target 2: Provide a counter argument for recommendations made or critically evaluate aspects to be cautious with.	After completing further research, I found limitations surrounding the project.	This can be shown throughout the methodology.
Target 3: Extend your reading to support your referencing.	I have closely followed the reading lists provided as well as completing my own research.	This can be shown throughout.

This paper will look to critically evaluate the impact of a chosen aspect of 'Assessment for Learning' (AFL) and the research tools used to retrieve data on learners. Being able to consider research topics in regard to AFL will assist in developing its efficiency and effectiveness by gathering intelligence directly from the children. The research carried out will be completed in the form of an online questionnaire for teaching staff in a 'Key Stage 2' setting further to this, an interview schedule will be used to gather information from pupils regarding the use and effectiveness of sharing success criteria in a classroom, which is a focus of AFL.

My research question used throughout this process is 'What is your involvement in using assessment for learning strategies in a KS2 classroom?'.

The importance of assessment is heavily discussed within the curriculum for Wales, it is essential to establishing that individual learners are challenged and supported when appropriate. This creates a holistic image of the children's core abilities including strengths, weaknesses and informs teachers of the next steps in their education. Therefore, practitioners in education can set learning criteria to support this (Welsh Government , 2022).

To execute the research, I applied the mosaic approach. The application of this multi method approach, where the children's ideas and work are used to gain an improved understanding of their perspectives as learners within their respected stages of education. Teachers benefit from this as they become more engaged with the ideas from children, creating the opportunity for more imaginative ways of listening to children (The Open University, 2023).

AFL does not have a single definition, it has been described as 'a means of assessing student achievement', however we can surmise that AFL is a process for gathering information in relation to pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of various topics, which in turn allows teaching practice to be tailored to an individual's needs. This can take place throughout the year or used at the end of a term in order to monitor progress (Structural Learning, 2022).

Further to this, Florez and Sammons (2021) suggest that AFL is not only a tool for assessing prior knowledge, it is also concerned with future teaching. Teachers who apply this format are not only able to confirm what their students have learnt, but they can help their students and themselves to understand if their learning and teaching has been effective.

In order to pursue effective AFL, I chose to apply and focus on the use of success criteria. This is usually established at the beginning of a lesson so that pupils know what the aims of the lesson are. These are a benefit for both teacher and pupil in the classroom, providing students with goals for the lesson, this acts as encouragement as they can imagine an end point. As a learning practitioner, having a goal ensures that your class stays on topic and is an efficient tool for monitoring progress and reflect on what works within that lesson (Twinkl, 2020).

A benefit of using success criteria is that you allow the opportunity to provide differentiation within the criteria itself. An example of this is the, you must, should and could model, or a colour coding system that the pupils will understand. In addition to this, another benefit is that pupils will be able to make faster progress through their work, this is possible as they can visualise their milestones, and what they will be assessed on. Goal setting is an essential skill for a learner's development, this observes when learners start to build self-confidence and self-esteem, this positive mental health will boost their ability to fast track their work, further this point faster progress allows for any time spare to reflect and work on any specific parts of the lesson that could be developed. By utilising success criteria and displaying the intentions and success into teaching throughout all AFL strategies both students and teachers can benefit (Future Focused, 2020).

However, Durran (2023) highlights that, there are some disadvantages proposed to the use of success criteria, when tackling a piece of writing the use of success criteria in the form of a list often includes what is 'required' in order to be successful, such as full stops or punctuation. When displayed in this way it becomes narrow, and so they are tied explicitly to one part of the curriculum. While it can be agreed that the list can be useful in reminding pupils what is needed for effective writing and reinforce learning, however further discrepancies have been highlighted, such as it can engage pupils with a 'writing by number approach', this can encourage learners to become narrow minded when writing, and limit what can be achieved, as some may just follow what is on the criteria. So, in this instance they are not success criteria, as a piece of comprehensive writing is measured by how well it communicates to the reader and how it was received by its intended reader. Together these factors could work against the pupils development, as it can act as a barrier to writing for a 'real life' extract, such as writing a letter or a story, as well as acting as an obstacle to being an authentic writer.

Criteria that are set with the aim for success must be understood by the pupils and relayed to them in a format they can comprehend, and not only understood by the teacher. As well as encouraging pupils to achieve higher standards in their group and written work, pupils can also build their confidence and ownership of the

assessment process and in turn they take control of their own learning, this will set a foundation for learners becoming independent (Burke & Hall, 2003).

Research is a development of organised analysis that includes a collection of data and documentation of crucial information in accordance with various appropriate techniques agreed by academic disciplines. The purpose of conducting research is to collect knowledge and findings to help and share the information in a useful manner (Hampshire Education, 2023).

Research within education must be a more disciplined and measured way of carrying out research. Once a research topic has been chosen, the data will be collected, sorted, and critiqued until eventually a conclusion has been reached (Austin, 2016).

Educational research is solely designed to inform practice or action. The research should aim to create high quality results that complement the study. When carrying out educational research it requires effort and time, as research necessitates decision making from participants involved to ensure all evidence collected is reliable and useful. It is important to consider any risks or consequences of concluding with inadequate evidence (Benefits OF, 2018).

In contrast to this, Waikusa (2020) shows that a disadvantage of carrying out research is how much time is consumed throughout the process.

When completing research, it is important to gather information and evidence from various sources. You can use either primary or secondary sources. Primary sources provide first-hand experiences and organic information such as, interview transcripts and statistical data. Using these methods presents you with direct access to the subject you are researching.

However, secondary resources serve second-hand information as well as commentary from other researchers. Journal articles, reviews and academic books are all examples of secondary sources, and it helps you to interpret or synthesise any primary sources (Streefkerk, 2023).

Traditional data collection methods aren't always the best approach when completing research within a classroom setting. Interviewing young learners can be

too long and profound, as well as other learners potentially finding expressing themselves and their opinions difficult. If the research method isn't suitable for the participants, their behaviours may change which will result in an un-truthful depiction of their classroom experience. Alison Clark and Peter Moss created the Mosaic approach for these reasons. Individual research sources can be creative and exclusive but only if they are appropriate for the participants and the focus of the research. Clark and Moss created various methods that can be used to collect research through learners such as, children's conferences, role plays, tours, and mapping to help generate conversations between them and relevant adults. On the other hand, a criticism of this approach could be the lack of scientific evidence to prove its success and the data cannot be generalised accordingly (Brown, 2023).

Qualitative research allows the user to practice the use of open-ended questions when conversing with pupils, these questions are provide the opportunity to collect data on a specified area of research. A benefit of this is that it can be performed in an interview style approach or focus groups. Information that is gathered in this format is effective, as it surveys a target market and does not create a barrier for who is asked questions (Bhat, 2022).

Quantitative data however Mcleod (2023) tells us that it is research that collects numerical data, and this process uses statistical methods when investigating our aims. A key element of quantitative research is that the data received can be measured and later used to test hypothesis, identify patterns, and make predictions. Whereas qualitative data collects non numerical data such as words, image and sound. Its focus being subjective on a person's past experiences, person opinions and their attitudes towards topics, this is regularly monitored through interview and observation.

The main goal if this style of research is to attain plentiful and refined data that grants insight into social experiences or create opportunity to improve the development of theories and hypothesis. When understanding in depth the perspectives and experiences of those who are involved with tis research, the ability to gain an effective response to criteria and expertise is greatly improved. The main types of interviews that can accomplish these aims are firstly direct and indirect interviews, the direct approach asks questions the respondent can apprehend the

goal of the interview and is able to anticipate its response provided, and in direct is where the respondent is unaware of its purpose. Interviews can also be conducted in a structured and unstructured approach, structured questions have a specified format and closed ended questions are used, on the other hand unstructured interviews often are flexible and can be modified due to the answers given, this benefits the quality of data received; by gathering a deeper understanding of the answers. Finally, focus groups include a particular selection of participants, with the aim of understanding individual social issues, to perform these exercises the practitioner must be able to build a rapport with the group so that each individual can contribute, a huge advantage of this is that the researcher gains unique data directly from its target audience, as well as being able to reach out to large groups, when structured properly data can be retrieved easily (Clements, 2021).

A critique of interviews is that studies performed in this manner often provide less anonymity, which can often be concern for participants. Without this, some individuals may not express their true and unique perspectives and aim for the anticipated responses. Further to this, interviews may lead to cases of bias, an example of this being that a participants answer may be affected by their reaction to the practitioners race, class, age, or physical appearance, affecting the authenticity of their answers (SociologyGroup, 2022).

Similar to interviews, questionnaires can be a method itemised as a quantitative and qualitative method, depending on the style of answers provided by the researcher. Where quantitative data can be displayed as pie charts and bar charts, where the questions are answered in a closed ended approach. The use of qualitative methods in questionnaires will create opportunity for critical analysis through discussion and not the study of numerical data. Questions may be styled as multiple choice, respondents are offered sets of answers, which may be dis engaging for some readers. Dichotomous questions only provide two answers often 'yes or no', which can often be an efficient way of gathering information. Finally, a researcher can use scaling questions that a provides the option to rank the available answers, providing a little more depth to answers (Buisness Research Methodology, 2020).

A challenge that researchers can be met with is that participants can often provide them with dishonest answers, and it is often observed that certain individuals may

ignore questions as they fail to see their importance from their perspective. This may be occurring due to the questions not being clear in their intent, respondents may find the question irrelevant to them, the question may be difficult to answer, or the layout of the questionnaire may not be appealing to the reader; facilitating this can often be difficult. Researchers must have an understanding of their target audience, this can hopefully eliminate questions that may appear unnecessary and, in some cases, avoid offending readers (Cornell, 2023).

It is an important principle to ensure that the rights, welfare and dignity are upheld for the participants that operate within research (World Health Organisation, 2023). In order to achieve this, it is recommended that that all stages of the process, the educational researches must utilise consultations to identify ethical issues. This allows for ethical decision making deliberate, so that any issues that arise can be challenged and changed. The use of guidelines being made clear to participants and recipients of data encourages positive steps towards ethical engagement. It is a standard practice for researchers to form consent from participants and educate them on their involvement with the study, and practitioners must remain sensitive and open to the possibility of people withdrawing from their investigation, and finally researchers must aim to be open and honest with non-disclosure agreements unless the specific objectives are outlined as otherwise. The confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research (BERA, 2019)

My research question for this task was 'What is your involvement in using assessment for learning strategies in a KS2 classroom?'. I created an online questionnaire for members of KS2 staff from the school to complete that focused on AFL generally, but mainly focusing on the use of success criteria in the classroom. I created an interview schedule suitable for the learners to answer and this focused purely on success criteria and their experiences with it in school. In my initial plan, I had decided to interview one male, one female student and an additional learning needs (ALN) student from each KS2 class, however, due to time restraints I was unable to interview pupils from every class, so the decision was made to interview from the one Year 4 class, this meant that I needed to interview more pupils, so I focused on their ability groups. Altogether, I interviewed two more able learners

(MAL), two less able learners (LAL) and two ALN learners to ensure I had a variety of data to analyse.

I applied the methods discussed previously on my research day and my findings were as follows, if you refer to 'appendix 3' you can see the graph results for my online questionnaire. From the results, it can be determined that all the KS2 teachers use AFL strategies throughout their lessons as they believe it has a positive effect on the pupils learning. This is supported by the Welsh government as they believe schools who have considered the role of assessment within the curriculum will have the most effective arrangements. It is important that there is a clear understanding of the purposes of assessing and how it supports the pupils learning and its role in clarifying the teaching. Evidence of the learner's academic progress is considered alongside information on their well-being and their attitudes to learning, this presents a helpful contextual background for teachers when considering multiple approaches to teaching that helps overcome any challenges that may arise during a pupils learning and targets any underachievement (ESTYN, 2021).

It is clear from the results that success criteria is used within the school and it used a minimum of once a week, however, 29% answered that they don't allow pupils to create their own success criteria due to the pupils age, needs and restrictions to freely be creative. This is backed by as they believe if the teacher shares the success criteria right at the start of the lesson, this will no longer promote independence for pupils.

They will already know what to expect, which leaves little room for exploration and creativity (Lil Media, 2022).

If you refer to 'appendix 1' you will find the blank interview schedule that I created in order to gather information from the learners specifically. If you refer to 'appendix 2' you will find a transcript or an interview I had with two anonymous learners. From the interview response, it is clear that learners only find success criteria useful when they fully understand what the objectives are. Freibrun (2021) suggests that when learners know what they need to achieve they are more likely to plan, estimate, set their own goals and earn a stronger sense of how to self-reflect. Using success criteria provides learners with an opportunity to assess their own learning.

Both 'pupil a' and 'pupil b', mentioned how they enjoy creating their own success criteria as it is tailored to their specific needs, it has been suggested that when teachers and learners work together to create a success criteria, a clear learning target is identified. It improves the learners understanding of what they will be learning, what will be assessed and how it will be assessed. Co-constructing success criteria is a student-centred process that inspires learners to establish their own understanding of what counts in their work (Champ, 2009).

'Pupil B', mentions the support of the teaching assistant (TA) in their answers and how unless the task is explained on a 1:1 basis 'pupil B' finds it hard to understand the success criteria. Teaching assistants have a crucial role to play in making a positive impact on learners in the classroom. Learners will excel in a safe, nurturing, and happy environment and this relies heavily on support both in and out of the classroom (Tradewind Recruitment, 2021).

To conclude, the arguments that support the use of research within an education setting suggest that it has a significant impact on the effectiveness of teaching as the individual and unique perspectives of children and staff are considered in the process of developing lessons within the classroom.

This is shown as research can help identify specific problems within the classroom, assist in retaining professional and essential learning knowledge, skills and understanding. As well as this, it can connect you with various sources of information and professional support from networks (SagePub, 2019).

After completing the research, it is clear that co-constructing success criteria with learners is beneficial and is heavily linked within the Welsh curriculum. It has a direct link to the four purposes which help to support the learners to become, ambitious, capable learners, healthy and confident individuals, ethical informed citizens of Wales and the world and enterprising and creative contributors. ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world. As schools support their learners to understand the importance and purpose of the four purposes, pupil voice will play an essential role and the input of learners is an important consideration throughout the design process (Welsh Government (B), 2023).

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