

Research Question – ‘To what extent does the use of open-ended questions as a pedagogical tool impact on pupil participation during class discussions?’

This research project is based upon the impact of the use of open-ended questions within a classroom environment and how this pedagogical tool can impact on pupil engagement. But what are open ended questions? The questioning technique of open-ended questions requires an elaborate response, instead of the basic ‘yes’ or ‘no’ responses. Jaynes (2015) connotes that the strategy requires a deeper level of thinking, due to the extended response that the pupils will have to give, which would encourage a greater depth of learning and could potentially raise standards, which is what Donaldson (2015) encourages. It is vitally important that we as educators use this strategy in order to encourage pupils to delve deeper into their knowledge, in order to promote progression in learning and encourage pupils to reach their full potential.

Furthermore, there are many theories that would support the use of using the pedagogical tool of open-ended questioning such as Piaget. Yue (2013) suggests that using Piaget’s ‘stages of cognitive development’ would promote the use of this tool within a classroom environment. She presents the theory and portrays that Piaget came to the conclusion that there were four stages of child learning development. However, for this specific area, Piaget would support the use of open-ended questions, as following Piaget’s theory, educators should include questions that will form their own knowledge and their own idea’s, which is exactly the purpose of this pedagogical tool. Piaget’s theory would further support the use of this strategy as she suggests that children should learn through experience, and this can be conducted by providing pupils with the opportunity to discuss and talk through answers/ideas such as responding to open-ended questions. Similarly, Dewey (1986) would agree with the idea of educators asking open-ended questions, as this provides pupils with the opportunity to build on their experiences and knowledge. It is clear from these two theorists that the use of open-ended questions can use this tool to enrich learning, and a constructivist theory would also support this idea. Bloom’s Taxonomy (2001) can assist educators to think about the level of critical thinking that occurs from each question asked, by analysing the chart (see Part 2 - 2) to see what their question can provide for the pupils. By devising open-ended questions that are present in the higher levels of ‘Bloom’s Taxonomy’, then it is suggested that the students will develop their critical thinking skills and be a more effective way of developing pupils skills and knowledge, compared to simple questions which only focus on the lower levels. Therefore, Bloom would agree that the use of open-ended questions can be an effective way of developing vital skills and would recommend educators using this pedagogical tool as it can ensure that all students are stimulated at all six levels of the cognitive domain.

But why else should educators use this pedagogical tool? Asking this genre of questions can clearly stimulate useful discussions for the students, allowing them to really think about their knowledge and opinions and also understand their peers’ views and opinions. Furthermore, Costa (2007) further suggests that if educators ask open-ended questions to their students to encourage them to be a part of the important discussions, then they will be more inclined to be active during their lesson, as a study was conducted which suggested relayed the view that when a discussion is present, the pupils preferred the style of teaching more, compared to when discussions were not included. This therefore suggests that questioning and discussions should be used by educators as it could encourage pupils to be more active and intrigued in the lesson. Furthermore, the pedagogical tool of open-ended questions are regarded as a powerful and worthwhile way of challenging students and encouraging students to reach their full potential, as Neely (2019) implies. Open-ended questions are also considered to be useful within the classroom environment as the pedagogical tool can assist educators to create an enriched learning environment, by developing a range of skills,

such as independence and communication. Collier (2018) would agree with the previous statement as she implies that they are a dominant and powerful tool. However, even though this specific tool is promoted as being a useful pedagogical tool by many, it is important to note that this strategy may not work as well for some educators as pupils may not wish to contribute or respond to the open-ended questions that have been asked, which could cause problems or may not enrich the learning environment as suggested.