Student Number: 2103376

Word Count: 3398

Targets	How have you worked on this?	An example can be found on
Target 1	Make synthesis and critical analysis and evaluation a frequent and consistent feature of your writing.	See literature review.
Target 2	Please ensure that you anonymise the school's name throughout the entire assignment (in the references section).	See reference list.
Target 3	Endeavour to select a greater depth of appropriate peer reviewed sources of research for your writing to aid academic support of your key points.	See reference list.

Does peer assessment effect positively pupil perception in a year three classroom?

Introduction

The research question aims to investigate whether peer assessment has a positive impact on pupil perception in a year three classroom. According to Tillema (2010), peer assessment is a process where learners rate their peers work and is of subsequent relevance to pedagogical development. Peer assessment is a form of assessment for learning (AFL), otherwise known as formative assessment. AFL is arguably an integral part of the curriculum as a result of its inclusion within the pedagogical principles outlined by Graham Donaldson (2015). Specifically, principle seven, which recommends the use of AFL as an element of good teaching and

learning due to its apparent doubling of learning rates (Donaldson, 2015). A large advantage of AFL is the regular feedback it provides, allowing for adaptation during planning and lessons (Black and Wiliam, 1998). This is demonstrated in the curriculum by the inclusion of "personalised assessments" that provide feedback on learners' numeracy and literacy skills. It should be noted that these assessments are to be used alongside other AFL approaches, therefore further demonstrating its use within the curriculum (Welsh Government, 2019).

My initial hypothesis regarding the research question is somewhat mixed. Personally, I have some initial reservations about peer assessment, which I will investigate further. For example, pupil bias towards friendship groups, differentiation of work limiting mixed ability marking, time constraints, and marking being subjective to pupil knowledge. However, I also acknowledge that peer assessment has strengths that have been proven to raise standards. Overall, my hypothesis is that pupils will have a positive outlook on peer assessment; however, they may also lack the understanding required to give effective feedback to peers. I plan to investigate this further by completing background reading, conducting pupil interviews, and giving staff questionnaires about peer assessment. This is largely inspired by the mosaic approach, which uses a range of child-led research approaches and perspectives (Clark, 2011).

Literature Review

Formative assessment is generally considered a continuous form of assessment that regularly tracks learner progression, which, as a result, can inform planning decisions while simultaneously giving pupils and practitioners reliable feedback. Whereas summative assessment is considered a more formative type of assessment that takes place at the end of a learning journey (Berry, 2008). While summative assessment also tracks pupil progression, it is often comparative and does not allow for external circumstances. Therefore, it is not as reliable as information collected through formative methods (NFER, 2022). Assessment for learning (AFL) includes a variety of methods often used by teachers. These methods include sharing criteria with learners, peer assessment and self-assessment, questioning, and giving feedback (Black and Wiliam, 1998). Sharing criteria with learners allows for specific,

measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) objectives to be met within a lesson (Ogbeiwi, 2017). This can be beneficial for both learners and practitioners by giving them guidelines on how to complete their task in addition to measurable feedback for practitioners to act upon and influence their planning (Ritchie and Carpenter, 2022). Questioning is often used to identify any misconceptions during pupil learning, consolidate knowledge, and encourage participation. Questions used during lessons can be either open or closed depending on their purpose as either a prompt or a check for understanding (Royal Society of Chemistry, 2023). However, questioning can also be misleading and intimidating for some pupils. Practitioners should also be aware of the added thinking time required by pupils by using this strategy (Wasik and Hindman, 2018). AFL allows for greater opportunities for deeper learning, by shifting emphasis from summative to formative assessment (Berry, 2008). Similarly, the Department of Education (2010) referred to an enhanced understanding of learning, especially regarding peer assessment. Furthermore, peer assessment provides an opportunity to learn through social interaction that can be tailored to mixed ability groups and subsequently increase pupil confidence (Chin, 2016). This again arguably aligns with the Department for Education (2010), in promoting a greater confidence in pupils. Although Lan (2011) disputes this, suggesting that it is difficult to collaborate in groups of mixed ability due to the wide range of abilities and vastly different learning paces.

The number of research studies on peer assessment has shown an increasing trend since 1996, although it is not a dominant measure of formative practise. The majority of these studies are focused on perceptions of peer assessment rather than its effect on academic progression (Double, McGrane and Hopfenbeck, 2019). For example, a study researching student perception and definition of peer assessment found that generally, students thought it improved learning, however, this had differing levels of agreement (Brown et al, 2009). Furthermore, several studies have concluded that peer assessment is subjective to pupil knowledge. Therefore, it could be more effective with pupils who have greater experience using peer assessment (Double, McGrane and Hopfenbeck, 2019). While many studies have an overall positive outlook on peer assessment, some suggest that a learner’s perception is dependent on its quality (Alqassab et al, 2017).

An example, of peer assessment being used in a school resulted in a refinement of pupil development in giving constructive feedback to their peers. Here, peer assessment had been introduced in conjunction with other AFL methods, with a particular emphasis on sharing the success criteria with learners (Estyn, 2018). This correlates with Dylan Wiliam (2016), who argues that pupils must use a set success criteria in context with another's work. By marking a peer's work, their subsequent knowledge could increase due to seeing an additional approach to the same task. Consequently, this benefits both parties of the assessment (Wiliam, 2016). Another AFL strategy similar to this is "What a Good One Looks Like" (WAGOLL) (Main, n.d.). This involves showing pupils a good example of a task. Thereby, giving them further context for understanding, as Wiliam (2016) stated, allows pupils to see an additional approach to a task. WAGOLL is also an example of scaffolding, first introduced in Lev Vygotsky's (1978) theory of sociocultural development. This outlines that cognitive development is guided through social interaction, such as that provided by peer assessment. According to Vygotsky (1978), learners have a zone of proximal development (ZPD), which outlines what a learner can achieve on their own with guidance and what they cannot achieve. Guidance is often presented as a more knowledgeable other (MKO) or as scaffolding provided by a practitioner. An MKO is not restricted to a practitioner, and peer assessment could be extended to pupils (Mcleod, 2023). Another Estyn (2023) primary case study allowed pupils to lead reading group sessions. Pupils each have a different role within the group, including a "predictor, clarifier, questioner, and summariser." This leads to pupils becoming increasingly active in both their peers and their own cognitive reading processes during the sessions (Estyn, 2023). While this is not a traditional peer assessment method, it does allow pupils to rely on the support of their peers and critique their own and their peers reading skills. Thus, proving the effectiveness of the aforementioned social learning encouraged Vygotsky (1978).

However, despite this peer assessment is often treated with caution. This is perhaps due to it being time consuming and difficult to implement in a real classroom scenario, in addition to curriculum constraints that are argued to cause further difficulties (Chin, 2016). Although the Curriculum for Wales (2022) somewhat disputes this by recommending a range of assessment approaches. Another drawback to using peer assessment is often a lack of experience in its utilisation.

Consequently, pupil marked results could be considered less valid in comparison to work marked by a teacher, who likely has a greater understanding of learning outcomes and assessment criteria (Bouzidi and Jaillet, 2009). Pupil bias may also affect the validity of peer marking. In a realistic context, pupils are likely to have a personal bias towards friends and, with social pressure, mark overly generously, or alternatively downgrade pupils they are in dispute with (Brinley and Scoffield, 1998). However, this could be partially countered by having guidelines for pupils on how to give formative feedback. This would also mitigate the potential for vague and generalised comments that are often associated with peer assessment (Wen and Tsai, 2006).

Methodology

For the investigation, several research methods should be considered, including data types such as quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data is a numerical form of data often generated by surveys or questionnaires (Streefkerk, 2019). This type of data can be considered empirical due to the statistics that it presents, and it is easily interpreted when presented in graphs or charts. With large sample sizes, quantitative data can allow for generalisation and subsequently lead to comparisons and correlations being concluded. However, quantitative data can occasionally be open to misinterpretation and misrepresentation. Whereas qualitative data cannot be to the same degree (Almeida, Faria and Queirós, 2017). Qualitative data is an analysis of non-numerical data that is often considered descriptive (Streefkerk, 2019). This can make it harder to interpret. Qualitative data can be more malleable and take other circumstances into account. This can also add context to the results. However, qualitative data is often associated with small sample sizes, which may not give an entirely accurate representation of a wider group (Almeida, Faria and Queirós, 2017). Having researched both quantitative and qualitative data, it is apparent that there are advantages and disadvantages to both. Consequently, there is merit in using a pragmatic or mixed-methods approach (Austin, 2016). Therefore, the appropriate research methods to use would be questionnaires and interviews in order to generate both types of data.

A pragmatic approach relating to research and education is the mosaic approach. The mosaic approach was initially developed during the study of the voice of the child and later refined during spaces to play. Both studies took a child-centred approach, endeavouring to treat children as experts on their own experiences (Clark, 2011). The mosaic approach uses a range of approaches to find a conclusion, such as child interviewing and observation, in addition to some non-traditional methods. Examples include photography, child map making, and tours. Due to the mosaic approach being child-centred, traditional methods may be too intense for young children (Clark, 2011). For example, a questionnaire could be too complex for children due to the application of external skills such as reading and understanding of a question before writing an appropriate answer (George, 2022a). Consequently, the mosaic approach lacks quantitive data, making it difficult to measure, and therefore cannot be described as a scientific research approach. Nevertheless, the broad range of research methods encourages a range of pupil perceptions in relation to this study (Clark, 2011). Therefore, the use of the mosaic approach and methods such as child interviewing and observation should be considered as part of this study.

As aforementioned, I would conduct interviews with year 3 pupils in an attempt to gain some insight into their perspective on peer assessment. This would have a fairly small sample size of around 10. Therefore, it would be open to either solo interviews or focus groups. By using focus groups of up to five pupils, it would be more efficient for a classroom, possibly becoming more favourable for a fast-paced environment. Moreover, some pupils may feel more comfortable answering in a group than individually (George, 2022). Despite this, there is also a higher risk of bias when answering in a group, in addition to the fact that the conversation could perhaps be dominated by the most confident pupils. Nevertheless, focus groups remain a viable choice and arguably the more appropriate choice for a school environment. Furthermore, there are three types of interviews: structured, unstructured, and semi structured. Structured interviews have questions prepared in a set order, often featuring closed questions (George, 2022). While a structured interview somewhat mitigates the potential for bias, it can be presented as overly formal (George, 2022). An unstructured interview takes a more conversational tone, whereby questions are unset, leading to an opportunity for spontaneous questions based on previous

answers. Although, the flexibility of these can be advantageous, it should be noted that they are open to biased results, which can lower the reliability of the study (Business Professor, 2021). A semi-structured interview could be considered a blend of structured and unstructured. They are generally planned but are open questions, allowing for some of the flexibility demonstrated by unstructured interviews. Additionally, regarding a mixed method approach, semi-structured interviews can add depth when combined with the quantitative data generated by a questionnaire (Newcomer et at, 2015). Considering this information, a semi structured interview conducted with a focus group would be an appropriate method to further investigate and generate qualitative data. The data collected here could be presented in an interview transcript or an audio recording. Both methods would be suitable in accordance with BERA (2019) guidelines, as they could easily be anonymised. Perhaps a more efficient method for the transcript would be coding, whereby important phrases or sentences are highlighted to make data analysis simpler (Delve, 2022).

In keeping with a pragmatic approach, a questionnaire would also be used to gain quantitative data (Austin, 2016). Questionnaires would be given to the staff of the school in order to gain statistical information that could be limited by pupils' knowledge, such as how often peer assessment is used throughout the school year. Questionnaires can provide a large sample size, especially when presented online (Jones et al, 2008). Therefore, it would be appropriate for this research study to present a questionnaire using Microsoft Forms. In addition to this, questionnaires are mostly cost effective and considered easier to arrange compared to an interview, again partially due to them being completed online (Jones et al, 2008). However, questionnaires are subjective to the participants understanding of the questions. Moreover, they can have low response rates as well as appearing impersonal, which could also adversely affect response rates (Jones et al, 2008). Given that my sample size is based on the staff from my PTE2 school, the sample size is going to be relatively small due to the limited number of staff employed by the school. At maximum, the number of questionnaires answered will be 10. Although, as a result of the low response rate associated with questionnaires, I would expect less than this. Questionnaires are often restricted to closed questions, which gives little opportunity for explanation or further questioning. Although, it does allow for

numerical data that can be presented in graphs such as bar charts, pie charts, or graphs. The use of which can provide an opportunity to detect any correlations or comparisons of data. If I were to present this data, I would use bar charts and pie charts, as these are the simplest for the reader and researcher to analyse in comparison to other more complicated graphs, such as a cumulative frequency graph. This gives a sense of empirical evidence that would support the information gathered during the interviews (Austin, 2016).

Another research method to consider is observation. Observation is generally A qualitative research tool, although it can sometimes be presented in a quantitative manner, subsequent to ranking methods such as the Likert scale. The likelihood scale could be used to measure attitudes or perceptions by ranking them on a scale of 1 to 5 for particular elements observed during peer assessment. For example, the level of pupil engagement or involvement (Joshi et al, 2015). In relation to this research question, it would be observing peer assessment during a year three lesson. In comparison to other research techniques, a researcher has a relatively low amount of control over the study (Ciesielska et al, 2018). That being said, they can provide additional information on subjects that would otherwise be difficult to manage. However, observation as a research method is open to observer bias, affecting the reliability of results. The validity of results can also be affected by the often inconclusive results produced through observation (George, 2022b). While observation is a valid research option, it will not be included in this investigation due to the high level of bias and lack of control adversely affecting the reliability of results. Additionally, observation of peer assessment may not be a practical consideration for the school, as this would need to be planned into a lesson and can be time-consuming in the fast-paced environment. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to use these research methods as part of this study.

Before the use of interviews and questionnaires, ethical considerations must be contemplated (see Appendix 1 for the ethics form). For example, regarding the interviews, parental consent in addition to assent from pupils would be required (BERA, 2019). Consent is required because children under 18 are not considered to have the emotional or cognitive development to give a fully informed consent (see Appendix 2 for the consent form). Despite this, they do have the right to decide on

their participation in the research (Sibley et al, 2012). Similarly, participants should also have the right to withdraw throughout the investigation, which, along with the purpose of the investigation, should be made transparent in order to give an informed consent (BERA, 2019). Furthermore, participants should remain anonymous, which a researcher should endeavour to protect in addition to confidentiality. Researchers must also consider external scrutiny, further highlighting the importance of confidentiality and anonymity of research and data (BERA, 2019).

Conclusion

The research design for the investigation involved the use of a questionnaire and semi-structured child interviews due to the combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The sample size for the questionnaire was relatively small, at a maximum of 10. Questionnaires were included to provide statistical data that could act as empirical evidence for the study, in addition to their convenience when presented in an online format such as Microsoft Forms (Austin, 2016). However, questionnaires are subjective to the participants understanding of the questions. Moreover, they can have low response rates as well as appearing impersonal (Jones et al, 2008). The use of interviews somewhat combats this, hence why a pragmatic approach is appropriate. Despite the higher risk of bias, semi structured interviews can provide an added layer of qualitative depth to the research. Perhaps providing context for the pupil's perception (George, 2022). The research design was partially inspired by the mosaic approach (Clark, 2011). The mosaic approach is a range of child-centred research approaches used in combination to find a conclusion, such as child interviewing and observation. The mosaic approach argues that traditional methods may be too intense for some children and therefore uses them in a non-traditional manner (Clark, 2011). Therefore, observation was considered part of the research design, although it was not included in the final research methods used due to the time constraints it posed. However, observation remains a technique that I would use in future research projects, in addition to an increased sample size for the questionnaire.

Peer assessment is an AFL strategy that can generate feedback (Wiliam 2016). The perception of which is likely to be favourable due to the apparent increase in pupil

confidence brought about by its use (Chin, 2016). Theorists such as Vygotsky (1978) claim that social learning is detrimental to cognitive development, which can be demonstrated by another pupil acting as an MKO. Case studies demonstrate a particular effectiveness of peer assessment when combined with sharing success criteria, another AFL strategy (Estyn, 2018). The research question aimed to investigate whether peer assessment has a positive impact on pupil perception in a year three classroom. My original hypothesis of the research question was that pupils would have a positive outlook on peer assessment; however, they may also lack the understanding required to give effective feedback to peers. Having researched this in detail, I can conclude that this was somewhat correct. Pupils do have an overall positive perception of peer assessment, and it can be used to give effective feedback. However, the effectiveness of the feedback is determined by how well the concept of peer assessment is understood by the pupils. Other research studies similar to this have had comparable conclusions. For example, several studies have concluded that peer assessment is subjective to pupil knowledge. Therefore, it could be more effective with pupils who have greater experience using peer assessment (Double, McGrane and Hopfenbeck, 2019). Another study determined that the perception of peer assessment is determined by the quality of its instruction (Alqassab et al, 2017). Consequently, I would continue to use peer assessment as part of a range of AFL strategies during my teaching practise. Additionally, peer assessment would be combined with sharing success criteria, which could act as a checklist for pupils to give effective feedback.

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