

The aim of this research project is to answer the question "What are staff and learners' experiences and perceptions of sharing success criteria as a form of AfL, in a KS2 setting?". Assessment for Learning (AfL) is often described as a way of getting students more involved in the learning process, allowing them to give feedback throughout their learning in a variety of different ways, as planned by their teacher (The ARG, 2021). It then allows the teacher to adapt the lesson in order to benefit the students, teachers can understand the students' knowledge at the beginning, end, and throughout a topic by using the feedback from the AFL tactics implemented into the sessions.

I chose this research question as I personally believe AfL is a very important aspect of a child's learning and should be essential within a classroom. Assessment for Learning is mentioned within the twelve pedagogical principles of the Welsh Government's national Curriculum, (Curriculum for Wales, 2022). When utilised correctly it can be a very effective tool to help teachers improve the quality of their lessons, ensuring that every individual pupil has a way of understanding the work. "Formative assessment is an essential component of classroom work and that its development can raise standards of achievement," concluded Black and Wiliam (1996), authors of the book 'Inside the Black Box'.

The research tool I will be using to is the Mosaic approach. The Mosaic approach is when researchers use a variety of methods to collect data, (Brown, 2022). Interviews and questionnaires are the tools I will be using to collect the data asked in the research question. I have chosen to use these tools as I feel they best fit the requirements of the tasks. Questionnaires regarding AfL and specific elements of AfL, will be sent out to KS2 staff. And informal, semi structured interviews will be carried out by myself with six KS2 pupils.

Summative and formative assessments are the two basic categories of assessment within a mainstream school setting. These are often referred to as assessment for learning or assessment of learning. Summative assessment is a way of understanding a learners overall understanding of a topic, often done as exams or tests, Nfer (no date). Whereas, providing feedback to students throughout the learning process, resulting in improved learning outcomes, is known as formative assessment and is intended to support learning. Opportunities for formative assessment have been acknowledged by researchers, such as Black and William (1998), as having a major positive impact on student learning.

In 1994, "The Assessment Reform Group" introduced the terminology of Assessment for Learning to educators and the education industry, as the term was not widely acknowledged. Before this terminology, AfL had been used for centuries. The ARG examined and explored the idea of AFL and conducted research on the impact assessments had on students. The ARG was able to introduce and broaden the concept of Assessment for Learning throughout the educational system by focusing on policy makers in the government, authorities, and schools, as well as teachers and other educators, (The ARG- Nuffield Foundation, 2021). According to Black and Wiliam (1996), pupils can learn at a rate that is thought to be nearly twice as fast, if teachers were to incorporate formative assessments into their lesson plans. According to Hattie's study, formative evaluation in the classroom causes actual differences in student achievement. John Hattie is a researcher in education and is known for the publication of his two books, *Visible Learning* and *Visible Learning for Teachers*. "Visible Learning" discussed the findings of more than 800 meta-analysis relating to the achievement of pupils, (Hattie, 2009). He claims that one of the most important factors in a child's success is feedback which is based on 15 years of educational research. Hattie also claims that feedback needs to be useable and useful when helping a student to improve, (Hattie & Anderman, 2020). In order to

maximise learning potential, Visible Learning encourages teachers to evaluate the progress of their pupils and continuously improve their teaching strategies, (Structural Learning, no date).

Live marking is frequently regarded as a beneficial method of assessment in learning (AfL) because it is done in-lesson and gives students immediate feedback, allowing them to immediately improve their work. This is contrasted with providing written feedback or marking work after a lesson, (McKenzie, 2022). According to Carol Dweck, American psychologist known for her work on motivation and mindset (Dweck, 2012), a student's ability to achieve more depends heavily on their mindset. The feedback that teachers provide their pupils can either inspire a child to select a challenge and boost achievement or push them to do the opposite, (Dweck, 2017). Teacher practise has a significant impact on student thinking, (Armstrong, 2019).

Although my research topic focuses on AfL as a whole, it does delve further into some of its more particular components. AfL is often described as having four components: questioning, feedback, peer and self-assessment, and sharing success criteria (Flórez & Sammons, 2013). I've chosen to focus a portion of my research on the idea of "sharing success criteria." I have done this since the majority of the students have responded well to my own experiences in which I've shared the success criteria. I did this in a variety of ways, such as by always sharing the learning objective, letting the class decide together what success would look like, giving them a checklist of work they needed to include with space for them to add their own, and providing them with access to "WAGOLL's" (what a good one looks like) or "WABOLL's" (what a bad one looks like). Therefore I wanted to use this research opportunity to collect data from teachers about what their experiences and opinions are in regard to AfL, and more specifically the sharing of success criteria.

According to John Hattie, the need of communicating learning objectives is crucial since it can then be assumed that both the teacher and the students are aware of what is happening in the classroom and what the students should be learning as a result of their actions, (Hattie, 2010). With no learning aim or objective, students could struggle to understanding the purpose of the lesson and therefore not reach their potential for that lesson. This can be discouraging for the pupils and, as suggested by Carol Dweck, can alter the mindset for motivation, leaving them more likely to be unsuccessful in achieving the lesson aim, (2. Dweck, 2012).

The research design I used was the Mosaic approach. In an effort to incorporate the "voice of the child," Alison Clark and Peter Moss created the mosaic approach. This was due to problems in other common study methods, like questioning children for extended periods of time or doing observations, which were deemed to impact the children's behaviour and produce less accurate, trustworthy data (Clark & Moss, 2022). The concept behind the mosaic approach is that data can be gathered through a variety of techniques, and at the end, the researcher will put everything together to get the final conclusion. When the sources are appropriate for the participants and the research topic, they can be creative and unique, as long as they are relevant, (Dr Nicole Brown, 2022).

I decided that the methods I would use to create the mosaic approach are interviews and questionnaires. I interviewed six pupils aged eight to nine, in groups of two. I wanted to gather the thoughts and opinions from the whole class, however this would not have been possible due to time. Therefore, I thought it would be beneficial to choose two pupils from each "ability" group, as grouped by the class teacher. These pupils were to be chosen at random from within their ability group as I thought this would give me the fairest chance at gathering the opinions from a range of

pupils. The questionnaires were sent out to eight staff members across the Key Stage 2 classes in order to collect data regarding the perceptions and experiences of the staff. I had chosen to interview the children in a semi structured, relaxed, informal interview style as this could help to get reliable, truthful information. As previously discussed by Clark and Moss (2001), observers have noticed that more formal, stricter forms of research tools can alter the children behaviour, perhaps giving answers they think might be desirable, (2. Dr Nicole Brown, 2022).

In order to try and avoid this, I opted to use a relaxed environment with a semi structured interview, fully informing the participants of their right to withdraw and their right not to answer should they chose not to. I chose to do a semi structured and informal interview with the pupils as I wanted them to feel relaxed and give me their honest answers. Semi structured interviews can feel more like a flowing conversation rather than a formal set of questions. A semi structured interview allowed me to have a list of questions to guide me, however it opened the opportunity to further discuss and understand the answers the pupils were giving. This was beneficial in this instance as the purpose of the interview was to collect the thoughts and opinions of the pupils. If another question was raised, or the conversation went slightly off-topic, it opened up more opportunities for talk and discussion between the pair of participants, which gave me richer quality information. Although the semi-structured interviews were all kept within the desired time frame, it is important to keep in mind that with a semi structured approach, it is likely to be time consuming and therefore may not be appropriate when interviews large groups or a large quantity of pupils. It is also important to not allow the answers or questions to go completely off-topic. Whilst this can sometimes be beneficial and allow for more in-depth answers and richer data, it is important to stick to the topic of the research and have the research question to hand, (Vshakespeare, 2023). Another disadvantage of interviews, specifically semi-structured interviews is the possibility of asking leading questions. During a structured interview, the questions being asked are all prepared beforehand and checked over to ensure they are ethical and non-leading. However, during semi structured interviews its common to ask questions that have not been prepared but have become of topic during the interview itself.

The staff in KS2 were sent a questionnaire via email that was created by myself, as the researcher, exploring the perceptions and experiences the staff have on using AfL within their classrooms. I chose a questionnaire as it the most time efficient way of gathering this data, staff could complete it in their own time rather than having to disrupt their lessons. I included the approximate time it would take the staff to complete the questionnaires, explained what their data would be used for and made them aware of their right to withdraw and anonymity. I chose to send questionnaires to the staff as it is quick to send via email, economical as there is no paper wastage or expenses, data collected would be automatically uploaded to the software I used to create the questionnaire, therefore making it more easy and efficient to read and understand the data, allowing me to easily analyse and convert the data into graphs, (Prasanna, 2023) (Jones et al., 2008).

Some drawbacks of using questionnaires are that they can be unreliable, respondents may be giving answers they believe are desirable, rather than true answers. Questionnaires lack the element of personal interaction and face to face conversation, which could lead to a lack of honesty and lack of effort in answering questions. Anonymity, even though could be seen as a positive due to being unable to track the answer back to who wrote it which could lead to a more honest answer, could be seen as a disadvantage also as respondents may not give personal, in-depth answers (2. Jones et al., 2008). Another common problem with questionnaires is the lack of response or engagement. Online questionnaires can take away the sense of urgency and need to respond, compared with a face to

face interview where a participant is much more likely to respond to a set of questions (2. Prasanna, 2023).

In order to ensure all research carried out was ethical, we completed an ethics form. Research ethics are moral guidelines that help researchers do and publish research without lying or intending, consciously or unknowingly, to hurt participants or other members of society. To ensure the validity of a study, it's important to follow ethical standards when doing and reporting your research, (World Health Organisation). The rules of conduct for researchers who perform research are governed by research ethics. Respecting the dignity, rights, and wellbeing of study participants requires adherence to the standards of ethics, (Singh & Editage Insights, 2023).

To comply to ethical guidelines, it must be ensured that rules of confidentiality are followed, the participants are fully aware of what the study entails and are made aware of their right to withdraw at any time. Participants must also be made aware of their right to not participate should they not wish to do so, and all names be kept anonymous if applicable. It should not be possible to trace an answer back to a particular participant and all participants should be fully informed with given consent, or assent for children under the age of 16. Completing the ethics forms allowed me to ensure that all of my research was kept ethical, and participants were kept fully informed. All of the information I had collected throughout my research study is kept in files on a password locked device, as well as the responses from the questionnaires, this is to ensure I do not breach the ethical guidelines.

The research day was a carefully planned and put together activity. There were several restrictions and alterations despite numerous preparations taken to guarantee everything went as planned, including having a list of questions to use as a guide throughout the interviews, a device for voice recordings, a prearranged, specific space to conduct the interviews in, and more. I intended to pick two students at random from each ability category to participate in the interview process. However, due to absences and students being pulled out of the class for interventions, this was not practicable. There were just two students in one ability group when I arrived, making random selection impossible. Another ability group had a relatively small number of students because of a mathematical intervention. Therefore, I concluded that choosing students at random from the entire class rather than in ability groups would be fairer. Another issue I ran into was having to share a space with another researcher to do our student interviews because the previously scheduled room was no longer available due to unanticipated events. However, the room that was initially set up as my interview room was a quiet, calming place with sofas and was supposed to be used as a casual, relaxing space where I could ask them some questions. This was overcome since we took turns using the room and tried to make the new room as casual as we could. We also rearranged the chairs and tables so that we were sitting next to the pupils rather than in front of them. During the interviews themselves I found it difficult to avoid asking leading questions that I had not already prepared for in my existing list of questions, it was hard to overcome this in the moment as the conversation between me and the pupils were flowing nicely, and I did not want to interrupt that. I noticed this particularly during my first pair of interviewees so therefore I took a few minutes between the next set of participants to write down some of the questions I found myself needing to ask and tried to make them as neutral as possible.

Only seven staff members in key stage two were able to provide their emails as part of the questionnaire process and collection of staff members to deliver the questionnaires to. However, three of the teaching assistants had already retired, and there was only cover staff available to take their places. It was hoped that some teaching assistants may be included in the selection of staff members, but this was not possible, therefore, it was agreed to send the surveys just to teachers.

The drawback of surveys is the number of responses, and unfortunately, the number of responses on the questionnaires I distributed was low.

During my research study, I collected data from a mixed ability group of six pupils, ages 8-9 years old. I conducted a semi-structured interview where I was able to gather valuable data about the perceptions and experiences of AfL from pupils. The data I gathered from the interviews was listened to and analysed by myself. There was an overall consensus throughout the group that I was able to recognise as I listened back to the recordings, despite the slight differences in perspectives among the six students I interviewed. The students were given questions on the methods their teacher used in class to help them understand what was being taught. The questions initially focused on generic AfL strategies but later became more focused on sharing success criteria. Naturally, I had age-appropriate questions prepared in advance so that the students would understand the terminology and wording. Overall, it was clear to see that the most common techniques were sharing the learning aim of each lesson and allowing children time to write the learning aim down at the beginning of the lesson, showing the pupils examples of the work (a WAGOLL), and allowing pupils to create their own success criteria. Other responses were hot and cold tasks, and allowing pupils to discuss what they think the success criteria is with a partner. When asked how these techniques made the children feel and if they thought it benefited them in their work, the answers were most commonly, yes it did help them. There was one reply which disagreed and stated that it doesn't necessarily help them, or not help them. Their feelings were neutral in regard to the AfL techniques.

Responses from the questionnaires were similar, with all answers saying "yes" to "Do you use AfL in your classroom?" From there, answers differed slightly. Out of the four responses, 2 replied with they use AfL in every lesson, and 2 responses were that they use it daily. All four responses answered yes to using sharing success criteria and they all rated it a four for effectiveness. Answers collected from the "please give examples of the type of AfL strategies you use" were that pupils devise their own success criteria, the use of WAGOLLs and WABOLLs, hot and cold tasks and peer and self-assessment. From the data I collected it gave me an insight into what other teachers opinions are on certain AfL strategies. It was useful to collect this data and begin to understand the perceptions of others, however it would have been more beneficial to have had more responses.

The responses I collected from the interviews and the questionnaires were overall as I had expected them to be. AfL is an important aspect of successful pedagogy and is now mentioned in the 12 pedagogical principles of the Welsh Curriculum, (HWB Wales, 2022). It is highly encouraged and has been used for centuries (The ARG, 2021) as a way to help educators identify barriers in learning and who needs more support, therefore the answers I collected were to no surprise. It would have been more useful had there been more responses on the questionnaires and more of the optional, long answer question been answered. However, the research question "What are staff and pupils' perceptions of success criteria in a KS2 setting?" has been answered and it is clear to see that from the data I collected, AfL and sharing success criteria is a valued and effective technique that many teachers use daily, if not every lesson in order to ensure the learning potential of the students is met.

To improve my own personal professional practice, I have now discovered the opinions of pupils and the techniques they find useful and not useful. I have also been given an insight into professional teacher's opinions and views and this will help me to continue to develop my professional practice. I will continue to use assessment for learning strategies and keep in mind the opinions of the pupils

when planning my future lessons. I can now see how important it is to know the opinions of the pupils you are teaching, and I will ask my future students their preferred way of getting help, for example using WAGOLs or creating their own success criteria.

Word count- 3,456

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