

**Design and conduct a small scale research study,
and critically evaluate the impact of chosen
research tools and data/findings on the learner and
on your professional practice.**

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Targets

Targets	How you have worked on this	An example can be found on
Target 1 Continue to include more critical analysis when discussing theories.	To work on this, I have tried to find more than one point of view when discussing key points within my assignment.	Literature review
Target 2 Endeavour to use a synthesis of research to support the key discussions.	For this, I have also as above found more than one point of view when discussing key points and have ensured to analyse both points.	Literature review
Target 3 Continue to read a wide range of literature and ensure consistent referencing throughout your work.	Throughout the reading part of this assignment I used more journals and articles to achieve a wider breadth of sources.	Throughout assignment.

What are staff and Years 5 and 6 learners' perceptions of self-assessment and peer-assessment?

Introduction

This assignment will focus on what the perceptions of teachers and year 5 and 6 pupils are of self-assessment as an Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategy. Composing this research will allow improvements in professional practise through enabling new methods to be implemented into the classroom and learning more about teaching and learning, which can contribute to improvements throughout the whole school (NFER, 2007b).

Donaldson (2015) explains that more work must be done to ensure that AfL is integrated into education in Wales since the Welsh Government has admitted gaps in its assessment system, and that AfL techniques are not well understood and incorporated in the classroom. The AfL method of education gives practitioners insight into the efficiency of learning, entails giving relevant feedback, and personalises instruction and learning resources to suit each student's needs. When learners receive feedback that encourages them to consider their concerns and offers advice on next steps, as AfL allows, learning can be especially effective.

"AfL is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go next, and how best to get them there" (Cox, 2022).

Both self-assessment and peer-assessment fall into one strand within AfL; self-assessment is referred to as the practise of asking students to critically evaluate, track, and possibly grade their own learning; similarly, peer assessment is the practise of having students reflect critically on and maybe assign grades for the learning of their peers (University of Bristol, n.d.).

The Mosaic approach, developed by Alison Clark and Peter Moss for use with children, brings together a wide range of methods and tools that can be used in combination to gain an understanding of children's views and experiences of their environments (Open Learn, 2020). Within this research, the Mosaic approach will be used, and the tools within this will be questionnaires and interviews.

For this research, my hypothesis is that perceptions will match up with the definitions of self- and peer-assessment. In my opinion, the research will demonstrate that students have a

greater knowledge of self-assessment, but teachers and students will both think that peer-assessment is used more frequently.

Literature review

AfL is a type of assessment that takes place throughout the learning process. It is frequently referred to as formative assessment and is integrated into good classroom practise (NFER, 2007b). According to NFER (2007b), the two titles also share traits such as communicating learning objectives with students, assisting students in understanding and recognising the standards they should strive for, and offering feedback that enables students to understand how to develop. AoL (Assessment of Learning), which is comparable to summative assessment and examines how students have developed over time with respect to learning objectives and national standards, should not be confused with AfL. The duration of the assessment may vary depending on what the teacher desires to teach (NFER, 2022).

The four strategies of AfL, according to Cox (2022), include sharing criteria with learners, quality questions and discussions, using and providing quality feedback, as well as peer and self-assessment. In order for formative assessment to be successful as part of an AfL approach to teaching, academics from Bath claim that there are four pillars that must be present. They recognise that effective questioning, effective feedback, and effective support for self- and peer-assessment are all essential components of successful AfL (Learning and Teaching Hub @ Bath, 2022). Despite this, they see the formative use of summative assessment as a pillar, while Cox (2022) sees sharing criteria as a pillar. Both of these competing viewpoints are acceptable pillars and are consistent with the idea of AfL. According to William (2011), who summarises this, the principle of formative assessment, expanded into AfL, is that teachers use the information they have about a student's learning to modify the instructions they provide them in order to satisfy their requirements.

The Great Teaching Toolkit's fundamental tools for self and peer-assessment encourage critical thinking, metacognition, and active learning. A more inclusive and collaborative learning environment can be developed through the effective application of these strategies, which can also yield insightful data on student learning. To ensure the success of these practises, however, extensive preparation, direction, and support are needed before they are implemented (Coe et al., 2020).

Self-assessment, the process through which students examine their own learning and development, is a useful technique for increasing student engagement, metacognitive abilities, and academic success. According to Black and Wiliam (1998), when students are

given the chance to evaluate their own work, they become more engaged in their education and are more inclined to establish goals for their own learning. Siegesmund (2017) explains that the process of self-assessment increases metacognition. Metacognition is where learners plan, monitor, evaluate, and make changes to their own learning behaviours (Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2014). Self-assessment aids in the development of students' metacognitive experiences, which are the mechanisms used by active learners as they regulate their own attempts to solve problems (Cremin and Burnett, 2018, pp. 81–83). Furthermore, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) state that when students have the chance to assess their own work, there is a greater chance that they will recognise areas for improvement and take steps to do so.

Peer assessment is the process of pupils assessing the work of their peers and providing feedback to enable the peer to improve their work. Peer assessment provides pupils with critical thinking skills (teach.its.uiowa.edu, 2016). Critical thinking skills entail applying, analysing, synthesising, and evaluating information that they have accumulated to guide their next actions, behaviours, and beliefs (University of Louisville, 2023). Peer assessment can also help students become better at self-assessment because, when a student evaluates a peer's work, they frequently find it simpler to recognise weaknesses in their own work and how they could make improvements (NFER, n.d.). Peer assessment can benefit pupils from all backgrounds, especially as it provides pupils with an opportunity to learn from one another and gain an understanding of differing perspectives (Yin, Chen, and Chang, 2022).

Self-assessment, according to Black and Wiliam (1998), is a method that helps students perform better when they actively participate in the evaluation of their own learning. In a similar vein, Topping (2009) discovered that students who participate in peer assessment are more active in the learning process and are more likely to take control of their own learning. Boud and Falchikov (2006) imply that deeper learning and ownership of pupils own learning are supported and become more likely through participation in self- and peer-assessment. This suggests that pupils within education should be provided with opportunities to participate in self-assessment and peer-assessment to aid in their academic growth.

Despite the advantages of self and peer-assessment, there might also be difficulties that arise. Students' bias in assessing their own work dishonestly and against learning objectives is one difficulty. In addition, students' peer evaluations of their peers' work, which are impacted by friendships, popularity, and social dynamics, may also be biased (Stonewall,

Dorius, and Rongerude, 2018). Clear criteria for self and peer-evaluation should be conveyed to the students in order to overcome this challenge and produce successful assessment results. Another issue that can come up is that students might feel awkward giving criticism to their peers because they might worry that they'll offend someone, as Chan (2010) suggests.

Methodology

The aim of the research study was to explore the perspectives of learners and teachers in year 5/6 on AfL strategies self-assessment and peer-assessment. The research that was carried out, used the Mosaic approach, more specifically using interviews and questionnaires. Clark (2005), describes the Mosaic approach as a mixed method approach to collect data with children's perspectives being the focus. The Mosaic approach was developed to project the 'voice of the child' using observations and interviews. The Mosaic approach has three stages, stage one consists of gathering childrens' and adults' perspectives. Stage two is reviewing what has been found out in stage one, finally stage three is deciding on areas of continuity and change. Clark and Moss (2011), explain that the three stages of the mosaic approach highlight the practical nature of this method for doing research with participants and is consistent with using a participation paradigm. Working in this manner still relies heavily on dialogue, reflection, and interpretation, but it has emphasised how listening may lead to change. As stated previously, the mixed research methods chosen were interviews and questionnaires. Using the two different methods of research combined provides a wider outlook on the responses got, in addition to a consultation process that reflects diversity of pupils' expression (Clark, 2001). Brown (2015) outlines the criticisms that the approach is not sufficiently scientific, making it unfit to generalise the data. The mosaic approach is most useful for the present subject matter in terms of gathering the necessary data since it provides insight into people's lives in a manner that scientific research approaches cannot, in this research it is providing an insight into self, and peer-assessment within the classrooms of year 5 and 6.

The reasoning behind using both interviews and questionnaires was to provide qualitative data and quantative data, which ultimately provides a holistic view on what the perspectives are from the participants. An interview is described by Easwaramoorthy and Zarinpoush (2006) as a conversation for the purpose of acquiring information. In a research interview, both the interviewer and the interviewee participate in the conversation and answer the interviewer's questions. When it's necessary to gather in-depth data about people's opinions, thoughts, experiences, and feelings, interviews are employed in research. When the subject

of the inquiry involves issues that call for in-depth questioning and extensive probing, interviews are helpful. Stuckey (2013) outlines the types of interviews, structured interviews, semi-structured and narrative interviews, this synchronous research study will use a semi-structured interview format. Delve (n.d.) explains a semi-structured interview, which is where participants are asked a series of open-ended questions before being asked follow-up questions that probe deeper into their answers and the research topic. A questionnaire, which consists of a set of standard questions that follow a pattern in order to collect data (Lavrakas, 2011), is a very practical technique to get information from many people over the course of a short period of time (Jenn, 2006). In this study, a questionnaire that can be completed online at any time within a set window of time was utilised (Van Selm and Jankowski, 2006).

The school that the project was carried out in is a urban city school (Welsh Government, 2023), with 336 pupils on roll. The school is located in a deprived area with 48.4% of pupils eligible for free school meals, which is 25.4% higher than the national average (ESTYN, n.d.). The British Educational Research Association (2018), guidelines on Ethical considerations was a consistent tool when planning the research, using it to understand what was required to ensure that the research was carried out in an ethical manner. Consent, assent and withdrawal is an ethical consideration for all research projects, especially when carrying out research with children. Consent was given by the headteacher of the school (see Appendix 2), and assent was given by the pupils before starting the interview process with them, with constant questioning to see if the students wanted to have a break or wanted to stop the interview all together. Ensuring total transparency with the pupils was a vital to ensure the pupils understood why they were being pulled out of class to engage in the activity, whereby an outline of what was being done, and why was discussed before starting the interview questions. The interviews were carried out in the schools assembly hall, on a dinner table in a informative setting. The questionnaires were emailed to the class teachers of year 5 and 6, with an outline of what my research was and information about the anonymity of their responses if they wish to participate, along with this a comment about their right to withdraw was also included. The research that has been carried out was interviews for pupils, and questionnaires for their teachers. Three interviews were carried out with 4 pupils of mixed abilities, each interview consisted of a group from the three different year 5/6 classes within the school, the reason behind this selection was to see the difference in the perspectives of pupils across the same age, and who were learning about the same topics. Carrying out group interviews was effective in revealing consensus views and generating richer responses in addition to the pupils challenging each other's opinions (Lewis, 1992). Online questionnaires were emailed out to the three year 5/6 teachers, with a

timeframe to fill it in by along with rights of withdrawal, and consent. The limitations of the interviews was that the researcher had to use previous knowledge of the classes to provide scenarios to ensure that the pupils fully understood what was being asked, and to be able to answer with an understanding of why they were being asked. In addition, on reflection of the research day, more group interviews should have been carried out to have a wider sample of perceptions. A limitation of the questionnaire was only receiving two responses, which has altered the viewpoint of the researcher.

Results and Discussion

The research that was carried out, found that pupils understood what self-assessment and peer assessment was, and understood what strategies they use in class, this matches the first point of the hypothesis discussed previously. Additionally, the hypothesis discusses that students will have a greater understanding of self-assessment, which was proven to be true throughout the interview process there were less probe questions when discussing self-assessment, as pupils had a greater understanding. On the other hand, it was also noted that they used peer-assessment less than self-assessment, which does not match the hypothesis for the research. Despite this, two themes stood out throughout the analysis of the interviews and questionnaires. The first theme was challenges of self-assessment and peer-assessment; the second was student responsibility over their own learning.

One challenge that was found was “presentation in peers work” (Appendix 6), one child said

“Marking other people’s work makes me feel nervous that I might mess up their work with my handwriting.” (Appendix 4)

This implies that pupils feel embarrassed, scared and generally uncomfortable when participating in peer-assessment that is written in peers books, which suggests that pupils and teachers, all have a priority on the presentation in books, rather than the content within the books. Another child indicated that when they do not know their peer really well they feel “awkward” when marking the peers work, which suggests that relationships within classrooms are vital to ensure full honesty is portrayed when peer-assessment is carried out. This agrees with the consensus that peer-assessment is impacted by friendships, popularity and social dynamics, which was suggested by Stonewall, Dorius, and Rongerude (2018). Furthermore, peer-assessment has been outlined as a process which either pupils find scary, due to the unknown reaction of their peers, or as a process which pupils find enjoyment in, and find useful.

Another challenge that has been presented, is personal bias, and dishonest marking this drawback was discussed previously by Stonewall, Dorius, and Rongerude (2018). One teacher stated in the questionnaire response “Children being honest!” please see Appendix 6. After analysing the responses from the interviews with pupils, it is clear that friendships is a key indicator to the honesty of pupils. One pupils explains one technique of self-assessment used in class,

“We do blind 5 a lot, it’s when Mr _____ explains the lesson to us and then asks us to show our understanding through the blind 5, I like using blind 5 because Mr _____ can see what we understand but our friends can’t because all of eyes are closed. We also use other things like the coloured dots.” (Appendix 4)

This highlights how much of an impact others have on pupils, therefore it is imperative for pupil development for self-assessment and peer-assessment to be addressed as a tool used to support pupils with their development and not a competition against their friends to see who is the best, or the smartest.

Self-assessment and peer-assessment can help students perform better and take control of their own learning, and should be provided to aid in academic growth, as suggested by .

“It (self-assessment) helps me see where I am struggling in my work and where I need to improve my work” (Appendix 4)

Is one comment a pupil made in regards to self-assessment supporting them in their own development, one teacher explains

“Pupils can also seek to achieve a better understanding if they realise personally that they have struggled, motivating them to learn further.” (Appendix 6)

In agreeance with Black and Wiliam (1998), who believe self-assessment is a method that helps students to actively participate in the evaluation of their own learning. Pupils participating in self-assessment motivates them to be more reflective in their work.

Conclusion

The perspectives of learners and teachers on self-assessment and peer-assessment are divided, with pupils who either enjoy participating or pupils who don’t enjoy participating. However, on the contrary the perspectives of teachers seem to be positive, with a good understanding of the context to why implementing self, and peer-assessment strategies is vital for pupil progression. It is said that pupils monitoring their own progress and being able to reflect on their learning (Make Learning Personal, 2018), self-assessment and peer-assessment enable pupils to do this simultaneously. The research carried out agrees with this, and has also found that the perception learners and teachers have on self-assessment

and peer-assessment is overall good. All students in the sample found self, and peer assessment beneficial to the development of their learning, as one pupil concludes

“I do find it helpful, it helps me see where I am struggling in my work and where I need help to improve.” (Appendix 4).

Additionally, one teacher responded to the questionnaire agreeing with the pupils explaining that “Pupils can also seek to achieve a better understanding if they realise personally that they have struggled, motivating them to learn further.” (Appendix 6). This concludes, that deploying self-assessment and peer-assessment tools is effective to motivating pupils to take control of their own learning.

Personal practice

Throughout this research project I have found myself truly invested in learning how typical classroom activity impacts learners' perspectives on their own learning, and how it encourages pupils to act upon what needs to improve. This has impacted my future practice by ensuring that I use self-assessment and peer-assessment tools as effectively as possible to keep my pupils motivated to learn. The professional standard that this assignment has met is the Professional learning, wider reading, and research findings, which is improving day-to-day practice through using what you find from research. Completing this assignment has given me confidence in myself, that I will be able to carry out research in the future. Knowing that I have experienced interviewing once, I now know that I would be confident in improving my interviewing skills the more I carry interviews out for research purposes.

Word count: 3190

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