

Examples – Paragraphs

ECAD5014

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INTRODUCTION

Research
context



Research
Question &
School Context



This research study explores teachers and pupils' perspectives of Assessment for Learning (AfL), with a particular focus on peer and self-assessment. According to Donaldson (2015, p.67) in his report on evaluating the curriculum and assessment processes, an AfL approach involves “providing regular and meaningful feedback and adapting teaching and materials to meet the needs of individuals” and recommended AFL as one of the twelve pedagogical principles. This recommendation has been embedded with the Curriculum for Wales by stating that these pedagogical principles should be built upon by practitioners to support learning progression (Welsh Government, 2022). The rationale behind this study, explores whether peer and self-assessment can be used effectively within the classroom to aid pupil progression. The research question underpinning this study is ‘What are staff and Year 5 pupils’ perceptions of peer and self-assessment?’ The purpose of conducting this study was to gain a better understanding of how peer and self-assessment is used in a classroom and school environment to improve professional practice. The research was conducted in a primary school in an urban location in South Wales, consisting of approximately 350 pupils. For confidential purposes this school will be addressed as ‘School X’ (BERA, 2024).

Literature Review

In-depth
discussion about
your chosen AfL
aspect



Different
viewpoints.

Reference to work
of key authors

This study considers the impact of verbal and written feedback, examining which one maximises pupil's learning. According to Kerr (2017, p.445) "verbal feedback involves interaction between learners and teachers with potential for questions and exploration in order to provide learning gains". This elaborates on aspects of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development Theory, which addresses that through verbal feedback, pupils can be helped or "scaffolded" by a "knowledgeable other" and thus will enable them to comprehend exactly what is being asked and how they can improve (Pound, 2005, p.39). Moreover, Goddard (2015) believes that verbal feedback is "effective" if it is "quick in prompting pupils to respond to any misconceptions" in their learning. If feedback is "timely" and provided to pupils, when they are engaged, this produces a better response and can maximise learning (Gibbs and Simpson, 2005, cited in Heacademy, 2013, p.14). According to Education Endowment Foundation (2018, p.2) for verbal feedback to be powerful, it must be "specific, accurate and clear", and it must have capacity to challenge pupils, for them to develop a growth mindset.

Feedback that promotes a growth mindset, encourages pupils to make mistakes, persevere and "try new strategies", to learn and become resilient (Dweck, 2015, p.20). In considering some teacher verbal feedback, Hattie (ND, cited in Waack, ND) questions its credibility,

Methodology

Outline of the research design & methodology.

Justify and critically evaluate the research tools, e.g. interview

The justification behind using interview and questionnaire as research tools, is that they provide “quantitative and qualitative data”, which allows the researcher to gain a more “holistic overview of their study” (Punch, 2014, p.119). An interview is a “discussion with someone in order to gather information, through facts, opinions or attitudes” on a subject or matter (Thomas, 2017, p.202). There are three types of interviews: “structured, unstructured and semi-structured” (QuestionPro, ND). This synchronous study was a semi-structured interview and was completed online, using Microsoft Teams. A semi-structured interview is beneficial, because the questions are provided to the participant beforehand, allowing the interviewee time to prepare. A variety of open questions were asked during the interview, which enables participants to provide their “opinions or prejudices” within their own time frame (Thomas, 2017, p.204). The “qualitative data” provided, depends on the reliability of the interviewee (QuestionPro,ND). Therefore, “validity” may be seen as an issue, especially if the interviewee “misunderstands a question that has been asked” (Cohen, et al 2007, p.150).

Academic literature to support discussion and evaluation of research tools,

e.g.
Denscombe,
Thomas,
Cohen &
Manion.

The justification behind using interviews is that interviews have various advantages. Interviews require simple equipment, produce data on topics in depth and have a more personal element than other methods (Denscombe, 2021). However, interviews can be time consuming and may not be suitable for children with language problems or not confident speakers (Cohen & Manion, 2018). Furthermore, due to the imbalance of power between a teacher and children, there is risk of coercion, and children may feel under pressure to give correct answers (Forster and Eperjesi, 2021). These limitations were considered, for example pupils were encouraged to provide honest answers. This study used semi-structured interviews which involve a set of prepared questions and sub-questions to probe ideas further (Thomas, 2017). Prior to the interviews, a list of key questions and prompts was prepared (See appendix 1). Semi-structured interviews allow interviewers to adapt questioning to suit the needs of the interviewee such as their level of understanding (Fielding and Thomas, 2008, cited in Mukherji and Albon, 2015). This suggests that wording can be adapted to enable interviewees to better understand questions. Robert-Holmes (2018) suggests that children can feel intimidated in one-to one interviews whilst groups make children feel more comfortable and generate new ideas through interactions. Therefore, it was decided to conduct group interviews. However, people behave differently in groups, for example some may become more talkative and take the lead, whilst others are less talkative (Thomas, 2023). This became apparent following the interviews as individuals provided more detailed answers whilst others provided short answers. Despite this, all pupils were given time to answer each question. The interviews allowed participants to provide individual answers which they could expand on and to also build on each other's ideas. The interviews were audio recorded to ensure data was reliable. It is recommended to electronically record interviews as notetaking can be slow and questionable regarding validity (Fielding and Thomas, 2008, cited in Mukherji and Albon, 2015). Coding can be used for analysing qualitative data and is used to identify key features, themes, and categories of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Qualitative data from the interviews was transcribed and colour coded to identify recurring themes (see Appendix 2).

The second research tool used was a questionnaire. Questionnaires can include closed or open-ended questions or a combination (Hall, 2020). The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions, both open and closed, to gather qualitative and quantitative data (see appendix 3). Questionnaires are good for finding out discrete facts and gathering quantifiable data, and the data from questionnaires can often be represented in tables and graphs (Austin, 2016). Microsoft Forms was used to design the questionnaire which was sent to staff through an online link. Online surveys are less time consuming, eliminate costs of printing, can speed up data processing and provide an environmentally friendly approach to conducting research (Denscombe, 2021). However, there are potential limitations to using questionnaires. Response rates can be too low to ensure a valid research outcome and responses can be influenced by what respondents think the researchers wants to hear (Cohen & Manion, 2018). This suggests that the validity of data can be unreliable. Furthermore, respondents can lose enthusiasm as they progress through the questions, which can result in questionnaires being returned not fully completed (Denscombe, 2021). Following the questionnaire, it became apparent that this is a limitation as one respondent did not fully complete the questionnaire, with responses provided to only half of the questions. Despite this the questionnaire was able to be easily and quickly distributed. Data from the questionnaire has been imported into tables and graphs for ease of analysis (see Appendices 4 - 11).

Justify and critically evaluate the research tools, e.g. questionnaire

Context.. Details of the Research Day

An online questionnaire is a “written form of questioning”, which provides both “open and closed questions” (Thomas, 2017, p.217). With regards to “closed questions,” they produce “yes/no, agree/disagree, fill in the blank's answers,” which specifically provide quick definite responses to a particular question (ADJP Quad, 2016). Microsoft Forms was used to design and conduct the asynchronous questionnaire. The benefits of this, is that the questionnaire can be confidential, anonymous, completed quickly, with quantitative data being analysed through visual charts and graphs (Macfarlan, 2014). However, the negatives of an online questionnaire are that there could be “potential bias to those who do not own a computer and would not be able to respond” (Tymms, 2012, cited in Arthur, et al, 2012, p.236). This could affect the sampling of the research study.

This study was completed by staff from a super school located in Wales, which consists of 1305 pupils aged from three to sixteen years old (WG, 2020c). For confidential and ethical purposes, the school will be addressed as ‘School A.’ The school is in a deprived area of South Wales where “23.5% of pupils, are eligible to receive free school meals, which is higher than the national average” (WG, 2020c).

ETHICS

discussion of
ethical
issues –
references
to the Ethics
Form -
Appendix

Ethics was essential to this study, and the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2024) guidelines were adhered to throughout. Prior to the research day, an ethics form was completed (see appendix 1) to ensure that ethical guidelines were being followed correctly. A blanket consent form and letter of information (see appendix 13) was sent to and approved by School X to obtain fully informed consent and to provide information about the research and role of participants. This adhered to the BERA (2024, p.9 - 17) guidelines which emphasise the importance of gaining consent, which apply to both adults and children. Staff were informed that their participation was completely voluntary. In addition to gaining blanket consent, it was decided to gain the pupils' assent. According to BERA (2024, p.15), researchers should fully explore ways in which participants can be supported to participate whose age may limit the "extent to which they can be expected to understand or voluntarily agree to participate". Participants were also informed of their right to "withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at any time" (BERA, 2024, p.18). The pupils were provided with a 'happy

Ethics

Assent –
pupils

Data
storage

no reason, and at any time” (BERA, 2024, p.18). The pupils were provided with a ‘happy and sad face card’ (see appendix 14) which they could use to show their decision to withdraw and were informed that no negative consequences would come from this decision. The Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) notes that pupils have “the right to express their views” in matters such as feedback, which affects their learning (UINCEF, ND). The confidential and anonymous treatment of participants data (BERA, 2024 p.21) was also considered. School X and the names of participants have been kept anonymous throughout, with pseudonyms being used. Staff were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and audio-recordings of the interviews were kept on a password protected device and destroyed after being transcribed. With consideration of ethical concerns, as the interviews took place during lessons, it was aimed that they were to be kept to ten minutes. Furthermore, considering the workload and busy schedules of teachers, the decision was made to keep the questionnaire to ten questions, with an estimate of five to ten minutes to complete.

Data analysis processes

During the research day, the feedback questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was distributed to staff at School A, through an online collaborative link. A semi-structured group interview was conducted with a group of Year 5 learners and individual interview with the class teacher. Qualitative data from the interviews was transcribed (see Appendix 3) and quantitative data from the online questionnaires were imported into tables and charts (see Appendix 5). When analysing the data coding was used to generate common themes from the transcripts, observation notes and questionnaires.

Limitations of the research tools

Limitations were identified after conducting the study. As the number of participants was small, only five teachers from the same school completed the questionnaire, and this may suggest bias in the responses. Some of the responses from the questionnaires were underdeveloped, due to some questions being repetitive. Only one interview was conducted and therefore no comparisons were made with another teacher's perception of feedback. This may affect the validity of the data. To prevent future limitations, a larger sample from a variety of schools could be used and video observation of feedback being used in the classroom may provide richer data. If a video observation were conducted on pupils in the classroom, a consent form would be sent to parents to sign and pupils would be allowed to "opt-in or opt-out" if needed (BERA, 2024, p.15).

Findings & Discussion

Use themes to present your findings– example of introducing your themes

After analysing the data from the interviews transcripts and questionnaire data, four key themes were identified from teachers and Year 3 learners' perceptions of using 'Think-Pair-Share' as an Assessment for Learning tool in the classroom: (i) enhance pupils' emotional well-being; (ii) increase engagement and deeper understanding; (iii) promote inclusivity; and (iv) effective facilitation.

Example of discussing a theme generated from the data analysis processes.

Illustrate your findings with information from your data, e.g. quotes, figures

Using literature to support your discussion – return to your literature review.

1. Enhance learners' emotional well-being – the first theme identified was that Think-Pair-Share contributed positively to promoting pupils' emotional well-being when used during activities in the classroom. For example, during the group interviews, Child b noted, "I like discussing my ideas with a friend as this gives me more confidence to share my answer." Similarly, Child d said, "I'm more confident that my answer is right after discussing it with my friend and then listening to other answers in class." This supports Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which highlights the emotional and cognitive benefits of learning with supportive peer. Furthermore, Gillies (2016) asserts that cooperative learning structures help pupils develop trust and a sense of psychological safety, where this was mirrored in how pupils in this study visibly relaxed and participated more willingly during the 'Pair' stage. Teacher interviews reinforced these findings. Teacher 1 explained that Think-Pair-Share prevented pupils from "feeling isolated" and "encouraged interaction beyond friendship groups" (Appendix 3). This aligns with Johnson and Johnson's (2009) argument that structured collaboration enhances belonging and reduces social exclusion. Questionnaire response also reflected that pupils preferred to discuss in pairs than answer questions directly in the classroom, with 9 out of 10 responses stating that they prefer Think-Pair-Share to using lolly pop sticks or no hands up.

Use your data to illustrate your findings, e.g. quotes from transcripts

Use tentative language, e.g. suggest..



3. Promoting inclusivity – The third theme identified was that Think-Pair-Share promotes inclusivity within teaching and learning. Teacher 1 noted that pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) needs “magpie ideas and gain confidence” (Appendix 3), which support’s Cohen et al (2018) assertion that structured peer-interaction supports inclusive practice. Teacher 2 described Think-Pair-Share as an “informal assessment tool,” which highlight’s Black and Wiliam (1998) key message of eliciting evidence of learning through structured talk. These findings therefore may suggest that Think-Pair-Share can be used as an effective formative assessment strategy, enabling pupils to test out ideas in low-risk settings while allowing teachers to access real-time understanding.

Example of summary of the findings/themes at the end of the findings & discussion section.



In summary, the findings indicate that Think-Pair-Share supports emotional well-being, increase engagement and deeper understanding, promotes inclusivity, and enables teachers to assess the learning and address misconceptions during the lessons. The findings also suggest that careful planning and organisation before using Think-Pair-Share is key to the success of the strategy as a teaching and assessment for learning tool.

Conclusion & Next Steps

A summary of the aims of the study... conclusions drawn from findings of lit review and research data

Comments on validity, reliability & generalisability



Overall, the findings indicate that Think-Pair-Share can be used not only as an effective AfL tool to support teachers' understanding of pupils' progression in learning and identify next steps in their learning, but also to support and promote pupils' confidence and engagement and inclusivity. However, careful consideration into organisation and planning including the scaffolding of prompts and questioning is key for this to be successful.

Validity was strengthened through appropriate research methods and analysis (Leung, 2015) and purposeful sampling across relevant year groups supported contextual validity (Thomas, 2017). Reliability was enhanced through consistent data collection across interviews and questionnaires, supporting dependability (Denscombe, 2014). While generalisability is limited to the specific school context, findings may be transferable to similar settings (Thomas, 2017).

Example of reflecting on the experience of conducting a professional enquiry with reference to the Professional Standards.

By conducting this research enquiry, I have understood how Think-Pair-Share can be used as an AfL tool to support learners' confidence and engagement in learning. The findings indicated that the AfL tool consistently created a secure environment for pupils to articulate ideas with their peers before sharing with larger groups or whole class. The element of structured talk within Think-Pair-Share can promote learners' well-being, echoing Gillies' (2016) argument that cooperative learning fosters trust, comfort, and inclusion. I have also realised that the 'Share' phase can be far more challenging for pupils than I anticipated. This insight has influenced my pedagogical thinking: I now recognise the importance of scaffolding the final stage of Think-Pair-Share through sentence starters, teacher modelling, or smaller groups sharing opportunities before transitioning to whole-class dialogue. I intend to incorporate these into my planning and teaching during my final professional teaching experience. These findings align with the key literature on the teachers' role in creating supportive conditions for meaningful talk (Black and Wiliam, 1998). This research has also strengthened my ethical commitment to inclusive, student-led practice that aligns with the Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership (Welsh Government, 2017), particularly those relating to effective pedagogy, and reflective professionalism.