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How can I give choice and responsibility to pupils in assessment of and for their learning to enhance pupil autonomy?

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I certify that this research, submitted for the degree of Master of Education, Maynooth University, is entirely my own work, has not been taken from the work of others and has not been submitted in any other university. The work of others, to an extent, has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Katie McGloin

Date: 9th September 2022

Abstract

This self-study action research project set out to address the question: *How can I give choice and responsibility to pupils in assessment of and for their learning to enhance pupil autonomy?* Inspired by my core values of trust, responsibility and independence, I sought to enhance the way I conducted classroom assessment in my 6th class to allow pupils to take greater ownership of their learning.

The initiative began by teaching the children the language of assessment and the vocabulary needed to discuss and reflect on their learning. The initiative took place over two cycles, each four weeks in length. The intervention focused on assessment in English and Mathematics lessons only. Teacher-chosen assessment tools were matched to each learning outcome in lessons during Cycle 1. In Cycle 2, the pupils were given the choice. Throughout the process, pupil reflection journals, circle time discussions and surveys were used to gain insight into the opinions and feelings of the children. Along with my own observations and reflections, this formed the basis of my findings.

Three themes were identified: 1) the impact giving negative formative feedback to peers can have, 2) the importance of choice and 3) the role of communication and pupil involvement. I learned that pupils were hesitant to be honest with peer feedback due to their anticipation of how they would be perceived by others. I learned that choice is something which is easy to integrate into my daily practice. I learned that including pupils in the assessment process at all had a bigger positive impact on pupils than any other aspect of the intervention. Most of all, I learned that reflecting on my practice has

helped me to become a better teacher, to enhance my practice and to give a true

application my core values of trust, responsibility and independence.

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<u>Chapter 1 – Introduction</u>

Tell me and I forget.

Teach me and I remember.

Involve me and I learn

- *Benjamin Franklin*

1.1 Introduction

At the outset of this research process, I identified the need to enhance the way in which I conducted assessment in my classroom. In response to my core values of trust, responsibility and independence, I sought to integrate pupil choice into the assessment process. The question identified at the outset changed and evolved over the course of the research. This was due to the evolving nature of action research and the manner in which I learned more about the wording of what it was I sought to enhance in my practice as the research progressed. The question I ultimately sought to answer was: *How can I give choice and responsibility to pupils in assessment of and for their learning to enhance pupil autonomy?*

The first chapter of this thesis will outline the rationale for this self-study action research project. Next, it will discuss the values held by me as the researcher and their role in my research design. Then, it will outline the research context. Finally, it will give an overview of the structure of the thesis overall.

1.2 Rationale

The central aim of this research was to explore how I could give choice and responsibility to the pupils in my 6th class in assessment of and for their learning. I wanted to reform the way I tackled assessment in the classroom as I had become increasingly frustrated with repetitive practices that didn't work for me or the pupils in my class. Having taught 5th and 6th class for the past number of years, I often found myself correcting the same mistakes in pupils' work and giving similar feedback week-on-week in response to pupils' written work, which was not benefiting anyone. This practice was taking from my time as their teacher and it was not supporting the children in taking ownership of their own learning. I trusted them with so much and gave roles of responsibility wherever I could in the classroom – so why not in assessment? Somewhere along the line, I assumed that assessment was mine and mine alone, to be kept neatly in my blue folder outside the reach of pupils. In conducting this research, I sought to find a way that I could enable the pupils in my class to be more responsible for their learning so that they would gradually become more competent at assessing their work against our learning targets or outcomes. I hoped this change would resolve the frustration I felt about my assessment practice. I identified that including pupils in conversations about assessment, teaching them the language of assessment and about the purposes and goals of assessment would be the first and most important step in any intervention. Then, I could give choice to them of which assessment tools they would prefer to use to assess their meeting of a given learning outcome in a lesson. By giving choice and sharing the process of assessment with the pupils, I hoped to enhance my own practice and in doing so enable the pupils to become more independent and responsible learners as they prepared to move into secondary school.

1.3 Values Statement

In the early stages of this research project, I identified trust, responsibility and independence as my three core values. As a child, I attended a small, rural school where I experienced every class level in a multi-grade setting. The teachers I had in primary school continue to be a source of inspiration for me and the love of learning they instilled in me is no doubt a core reason behind my becoming a teacher. Having had a positive experience of primary school, I knew what kind of teacher I wanted to be. I wanted to reflect the type of teachers they were – honest, helpful, trusting, conscientious, considerate. We were trusted to work diligently while our teacher's attention was diverted to another class level. We were given many roles of responsibility (including answering the school phone). As a result, we happily took on such roles with great maturity from a young age. The independence this taught me is something I have always valued. I always envisaged myself affording the same opportunities to the pupils I would teach - to be both trusted and independent.

As I began the Master of Education programme, I quickly learned about the concept of findings oneself as a "living contradiction" (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). "Action researchers often experience themselves as 'living contradictions' in that they hold a set of values yet do not live according to them" (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006: 23). I realised that my values were being denied in my practice at times when I over-used teacher-led assessments, when I did not ensure pupils were active in the assessment process. I saw my value of trust being denied when I did not give space to the voice of the child in decision-making in my classroom. I micro-managed assessment when I could have taken a step back and given more space to pupils to take ownership. Most of

all, I felt very frustrated. I knew assessment wasn't working for me or the children in my class. I trusted the children in other ways but didn't allow them to be active participants in assessing their learning. I corrected the same mistakes week on week. I gave the same formative feedback on a loop like a broken record. I designed and delved out the same teacher-led assessments year-on-year, week-on-week. I decided what assessment looked like and the children passively completed meaningless assessments that meant nothing to them. In the busyness of the classroom environment, this practice continued without much scrutiny. When I stopped at the outset of this course to reflect on my values and how they were denied in my practice, my assessment practices were quickly called to mind. I knew it was the aspect of my practice which called for the most change. If I wanted to address the living contradiction I found myself as, I needed to find a way to enhance my assessment practices. I set out to "find ways of living in the direction of (my) values" (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006: 23).

To me, trust is something which can only work when it is reciprocated. I aspire to be a teacher whose pupils trust her to be fair, honest, supportive, hard-working and open. I asked myself: Why do I not have the same trusting, child-centred approach to assessment as I do to other aspects of my teaching and practice? As I reflected on this, I noted that it should be no different than my approach to teaching and learning. I openly discuss how I teach with my pupils and often have discussions about different ways of learning. This caused me to consider how my approach to assessment should be no different if I am truly to live to my values. By showing pupils I trust them to make choices in assessment of and for their learning, this would show them that I see them as capable of being responsible and independent learners. In doing so, this would enable me to live more closely to my values. Identifying these values and how best I could

change my practice to live more closely to them also supported me in identifying my

research question and in formulating the criteria for assessing the success of my

research project at the end (Sullivan et al., 2016).

1.4 Research Context

This research took place in 6th class in a large, urban, co-educational school. Of the 27

pupils in my 6th class, 26 took part in the research. There are four 6th classes in the

school and my colleagues in 6th class formed my validation group for this research. The

data collection took place across two cycles, each four weeks in length. Data collection

within the classroom commenced on 31st January 2022 and concluded on 7th April

2022. At the time when data collection was undertaken, COVID-19 guidelines and

restrictions were in place in schools. These restrictions did not have any undue impact

on my ability to continue with data collection as intended, as no closures or major class

disruptions were experienced. The only impact these regulations had on data collection

was in relation to pupil attendance over the course of the eight weeks. On any given day

throughout the classroom-based data collection, between 2 and 11 pupils were absent.

This impacted pupils' ability to engage in reflective journals and discussions on those

days.

1.5 Thesis structure

The first chapter of this thesis has outlined the rationale for the research, the values held

by me as the researcher and the question I set out to answer in relation to my practice.

The second chapter will examine and discuss literature relevant to the topics and themes

that emerge throughout the action-research process. The third chapter will outline the

methodology, including the research design and research analysis process. The fourth chapter will detail the themes and findings which emerged from the analysis of the data. Finally, the fifth chapter will offer concluding remarks, reflections and recommendations based on the action research experience and the findings of this project.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the topic and question for consideration within this self-study action research project. It discussed the rationale for the research and the values held by me as the researcher. It outlined the research context. Finally, it gave an overview of the thesis structure. The next chapter will examine literature relevant to the study.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction:

This chapter offers a review of the literature pertaining to the key themes underpinning this action research dissertation. This review begins by examining child-centred principles in education before discussing autonomy, choice and the voice of the child. It then considers independence and responsibility in the classroom. Next, it explores national and international frameworks and legislation on children's rights and teachers' professional responsibilities. It examines policy and curriculum documents in Irish education. Then, it discusses assessment in the classroom. Finally, it explores the concept of a growth mindset. Each of these topics will be explored in detail with reference to its relevance for my research.

2.2 Child-centred principles in education

A classroom environment which prioritises pupil autonomy, choice and voice is one founded on child-centred principles. In any discussion on child-centred education, it is pertinent to examine the work of Friedrich Froebel. In his many works, Friedrich Froebel comprehensively described what it means to be child-centred in education. As Tovey explains, "a Froebelian approach is not a method… Rather it is a whole way of thinking about children and childhood, based on a set of values and principles" (Tovey, 2013: 2). Among those key principles are talk, first-hand experiences, freedom and guidance, creativity and positive relationships (Tovey, 2013). With regard to this research project, the principle of freedom and guidance is most striking. Tovey explains this principle by saying that while freedom, choice and self-directed learning are important, they must be within a "framework of guidance in which the role of the adult

is crucial" (Tovey, 2013: 3). This reflects the work of Dam (2011), Dunne (2013) and

Sikafis et al (2006) on the role of the teacher in developing learner autonomy, as

documented above.

In a similar way, Bruce (2012) notes how building autonomy in children is a "powerful

Froebelian principle" (Bruce, 2012: 157), while cautioning that autonomy must not be

confused with allowing children to do whatever they please. Froebelian principles are

fostered when teachers develop autonomy in the classroom, as the process helps to

build learners who can imagine, create and problem-solve (Bruce, 2012). Reflecting on

Froebel's educational theory, Liebschner advises that the co-operation required in

autonomous learning must be by choice instead of by coercion if it is to adhere to

Froebelian principles. He further explains that children are now seen to be more capable

of making decisions than they were previously, with this encouraging responsibility at a

younger age (Liebschner, 1992). In addition, Lilley reminds us of Froebel's belief that a

teacher should be primarily concerned with building relationships (Lilley, 1967). In line

with the Froebelian principles set out above, a culture of discussion, the offering of

choice and the giving of responsibility are aspects of my teaching I seek to prioritise as

I set about my research process.

The development of autonomy and agency and the creation of opportunities for the

voice of the child to be heard are also in line with Jerome Bruner's understanding of

what it means to be child-centred in education. Bruner challenges educators to rethink

their teaching methodologies and to change any restrictive classroom practices

(Williams, 2003). This is shown in listening to the voice of the child, seeking their

insight on matters which affect them and in giving them choice in their learning. Bruner seeks active involvement in learning and for children to be active agents in the classroom. He aims for teaching to be done well and for what we teach to be worth learning, so that "forces at work in our contemporary society… will get children more involved in the process of learning" (Bruner, 1960: 91). This is mirrored in research by Patall et al. (2010), which showed how valuable choice is to encourage children to be more involved in the learning process.

Echoing the work of Froebel and Bruner, Power et al (2019) set out twelve indicators of child-centredness. In relation to this research project, four of those indictors are particularly thought-provoking: "child can initiate and direct their own learning activities", "child is challenged and supported on their stage (not age) of learning", "adult encourages child to reflect on their learning experiences" and "adult monitors child's progress" and (Power et al, 2019: 578). When reflecting on the work of Dam (2011) and Grolnick and Ryan (1987), it is worth considering how these indicators of child-centredness could be altered to reflect the role and voice of the child in collaboration with that of the adult.

2.3 Autonomy, choice and the voice of the child:

As pupil autonomy plays a central role in guidelines and frameworks for schools, it is worth examining the concept of autonomy itself, choice and the voice of the child in schools. The term "agency" is also often used in educational circles. While autonomy and agency cannot be used interchangeably, for the purposes of this research, I will focus on the term "autonomy" as this is something which can be fostered more

concretely through the giving of choice. However, references to agency may also be

briefly discussed as they are found in documents relevant to this research and to the

Irish primary education setting.

2.3.1 Autonomy:

Holec defines autonomy in learning as "the ability to take charge of one's own

learning" (Holec, 1981: 3). In the Irish context, the White Paper on Education *Charting*

our Education Future (1995) assured that pupils would be "respected as active agents in

their own development within a learning environment" (Government of Ireland, 1995:

17). Many benefits are associated with learner autonomy, with Dam using the "give a

man a fish, teach a man to fish" analogy – if educators give opportunities for pupil

autonomy and for children to learn *how* to learn, we will develop pupils' abilities to

learn outside school while also creating life-long and self-directed learners (Dam,

2011). Grolnick and Ryan's study showed that autonomy and self-directed learning can

result in improved conceptual learning (Grolnick and Ryan, 1987). Sifakis et al's study

across Latvia, Hungary, Greece and Estonia found that in Estonia, where the curriculum

offers freedom of structure, content and learning approaches, teachers can implement

learner autonomy, resulting in increased independence and communication skills for

pupils (Sifakis et al, 2006).

However, as Mercer points out, agency may not always be exercised simply as a result

of pupils' awareness of their being active agents in their learning (Mercer, 2011). In

some instances, pupils can view the adoption of agency as more work for them and may

therefore be reluctant to engage (Dunne, 2013). Knowledge-based curricula can also

pose a challenge. Manyukhina and Wyse caution that, if pupils are faced with a rigid curriculum, there may be little room for change and creativity, which in turn may inhibit pupils from becoming "active, creative learners" (Manyukhina and Wyse, 2019: 15).

In line with a teacher's professional responsibilities, Sifakis et al note how the success or failure of autonomous learning can lie in how the teacher understands their professional teaching and their role in facilitating the development of agency (Sifakis et al, 2006). In a 2013 study on the development of learner autonomy to improve literacy levels, Dunne noted that, when the teacher stepped back, some pupils became frustrated at not being told what to do. This led her to establish that communication, co-operation and collaborative learning should be the starting point for promoting autonomous learning (Dunne, 2013). In summary, Dam explains that, when it comes to learner autonomy, the teacher must encourage pupils to want to take responsibility, while also supporting them in becoming capable of doing so (Dam, 2011). What is intriguing to note is how Dam remarks that teachers often find it hard to "let go i.e. pass over responsibility to the learners in this process whereas it seems easier for the learners to take over" (Dam, 2011: 41). This insight will prove valuable to me as I embark on handing over more responsibility to the pupils in my class.

2.3.2 Choice

For the purposes of this research, I consider choice to mean giving assessment tool options from which the pupils in my class can choose. In examining the effects of giving children choice in an educational setting, Patall et al. (2010) found that choice

had a positive impact on pupils. Choice can support pupils' interests and boost their enjoyment of schoolwork. They concluded that choice may be the single "most concrete way for teachers to communicate to students that they view them as autonomous learners" (Patall et al., 2010: 912). This standpoint has significant implications for my research as it highlights how choice is one of the elements needed to help make autonomous learning successful. Similarly, Flowerday and Schraw studied the effectiveness and importance of choice. In their findings, they reported that teachers found choice to improve engagement and interest in learning. It is worth noting that they also found that teachers reported using choice more as the academic year progressed and as they became more experienced as a teacher (Flowerday & Schraw, 2000). This provides me with a thought-provoking idea, as I will be in the second term with my class when engaging in the research process with them, giving more choice to them in assessment of their learning.

While choice is clearly beneficial to a pupil-centred initiative, there are limitations and areas to be cognisant of. Patall et al. caution about the types of choices offered to pupils, warning that the relevance and potential consequences of choices made need to be explored by both teachers and pupils (2010). Another caveat is provided for by Drew (2019) who seeks to problematise choice in classrooms and link it to the concept of power relations. He cautions that power relations must be considered when giving choice to pupils, as children often assume that, even when a choice is offered, there is a 'right' response and a 'wrong' response. Children may 'choose' what they believe they teacher would prefer for them to choose, with some teachers in the study even describing the ways in which they go about influencing pupil choice (Drew, 2019). This has particular significance for me in hoping to give choice to pupils in assessment

practices, as the pupils I teach are in 6th Class and have almost eight years of experiencing assessment in school. Therefore, I must be cautious that they may perceive there to be a 'correct' way of assessing and may opt to choose what they believe to be my preference. To address this, Drew advises teachers offering choice to ensure that they "leave space for power relations to be challenged" (Drew, 2019: 541).

2.3.3 The voice of the child:

In giving choice and promoting pupil agency and autonomy, the voice of the child plays a central role. Encapsulating the concept of pupil voice, Robinson (2014) explains that schools must listen to pupils on matters of importance to them, rather than on matters the adults view to be important (Robinson, 2014). Gersch (1996) speaks about the recognition the voice of the child has gained, and how it challenges the view some adults may hold that "children should be seen and not heard" (Gersch, 1996: 27). He explains how adults can often speak for children and that listening to them, truly listening to them, is the exception rather than the rule. He explains the difference between listening and doing what the child says – noting that there must be "scope to discuss ideas, and indeed for positions to be altered and compromises to be reached" (Gersch, 1996: 39). Mirroring Gersch, Bruce (2012) remarks that there is "no sense in teaching children what we think they ought to know" (Bruce, 2012: 158). Similarly, Walsh et al (2018) advocate for provisions to be made for student voice to be developed and fostered in schools, with recognition given to countries such as Norway and Sweden for their implementation of student voice-focused curricula (Walsh et al, 2018).

As with many initiatives, the fostering of pupil voice does not come without challenges. In the UK context, Robinson describes the systematic pressures teachers face in ensuring standards are adhered to and that they may therefore, while knowing the value relationships and voice can bring to the classroom, be reluctant to give more weight to pupil voice (Robinson, 2014). Acknowledging that this is a missed opportunity, Robinson appears to echo Drew's (2019) idea of power relations, in advising that decisions must be "guided by the opinions and perspectives of children themselves" (Robinson, 2014: 13) if they are to truly be in the best interests of the child. Posing another challenge, Mayes et al (2019) note the potential for some pupils to speak for others when given the opportunity. This reminds me of my core value of trust as I am aware that not all pupils may feel comfortable speaking up honestly and using their voice, and so there is the possibility for some pupils to 'speak for' others. Regarding this, Mayes et al. advise teachers to "consider the relationships between students in student voice activities" (Mayes et al. 2019: 157) and to be conscious of the possibility that some may speak for others.

Linking to my core value of responsibility, Mayes et al point out that nowadays children are increasingly given opportunities to show maturity and responsibility outside school and yet the education system does not reflect that. Instead, the system usually opts for structures in which decisions are made for children (Mayes et al, 2019). Additionally, their study gives credit to older pupils who were shown to take a more responsible approach to using student voice, showing maturity in dealing with different opinions. This will be worth considering as I collect data and prioritise student voice activities.

2.4 Independence and responsibility in the classroom

Independence and responsibility are two values I identified at the outset of this research and so it is appropriate to examine literature pertaining to these areas. Incidentally, Rose-Duckworth and Ramer note that a teacher who values independence is "more likely to help students establish independent learning habits" (2009, p.11). Williams (2003) also identifies the need for teachers to appreciate and value increasing independence and collective responsibility in children. As I am currently teaching 6th class, I feel that I have a specific professional responsibility to adequately prepare students for learning beyond the primary school classroom and to support them in developing the independence and responsibility they need to be self-aware, life-long learners.

Williams (2003) describes independence as being capable of doing things for yourself and links the development of independence skills to the process of growing up. Comparably, Williams explains responsibility by saying that children must experience independence before they may take responsibility (2003). This is reinforced by Candy (1991) who explains that it is important for children to feel capable as learners so that they may become more self-directed and independent. Rose-Duckworth and Ramer define independent learners as children who are "internally motivated to be reflective, resourceful and effective" (Rose-Duckworth and Ramer, 2009: 2). They identify many benefits of fostering independence in children, most notably that focusing on developing competence and control "creates a classroom community that is internally motivated to learn" (2009: 10). Connecting feedback to pupils' motivation, Fisher and

Frey (2008) highlight the importance of dialogue and feedback from the teacher in enhancing pupils' independence skills, as they can help pupils to bridge any gaps in their learning, therefore enabling them to self-regulate more effectively in future. Gill and Halim (2007) identify the high level of dependency pupils can have on teachers, which they say is often "ingrained in students from earlier schooling experiences" (2007: 12). In light of this, they list thinking skills, promoting ownership, removing dependency and active learning among the benefits of developing independent learning (Gill and Halim, 2007).

Independent learning and roles of responsibility are very central for me in the process of self-assessment which I seek to explore in my classroom. Rose-Duckworth and Ramer assert that children are moving towards independence when they "make decisions based upon their own learning" (Rose-Duckworth and Ramer, 2009: 92). They further explain that it is assessment for learning and self-assessment which will help to develop independent learners, suggesting the adept use of rubrics to enhance independence skills (Rose-Duckworth and Ramer, 2009). Gershon highlights the importance of using reflective practices to encourage children to think about their independence and to identify how they showed that independence in a given lesson, which constitutes an interesting self-assessment tool. Praising the value of dialogue around the concept of independence with children, Gershon goes on to explain that, by asking pupils to "outline the strengths and weaknesses of the decisions they have made and the final product they have created" (Gershon, 2014: 18), the teacher can develop a self-aware, critical, reflective mindset in children which is built on a foundation of independence.

Throughout the experience of developing independence, it is expected that children should, and likely will, make some mistakes. Sweetland and Stolberg explain that, while it can be "difficult to let children have the freedom to mess some things up" (Sweetland and Stolberg, 2015: 32), it is crucial that educators allow that space so that children are prepared for independence, choice and responsibility when they are older. Similarly, Rose-Duckworth and Ramer define independent learners as those who persevere even when they are met with challenges (2009). This is mirrored by Gershon (2014) who states that, while a fear of failure may be daunting, we must support children in seeing "failure as an opportunity to learn" (Gershon, 2014: 5). In addition to this, Williams (2003) interestingly explains how the classroom environment can sometimes place limitations and constraints on opportunities for independence to be developed. This suggests to me a requirement on me as the teacher to strive to develop independence skills even when it may be challenging to do so. In addressing these challenges and enabling independent learning to flourish, Gill and Halim advise teachers to "start by providing a lot of scaffolding" (Gill and Halim, 2007: 15).

2.5 National and international frameworks and legislation on children's rights and teachers' professional responsibilities:

Many both legislative and non-legislative documents guide a teacher's practice in accordance with the best interests of the child. This section of the review will examine documents which guide a teacher's practice, starting with those with a legal underpinning before moving to explore curricular documents and upcoming changes: the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) (1989), the *Code of*

Professional Conduct for Teachers (2016), the *Education Act* (1998), the *Primary*

Curriculum (1999) and the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* (2020).

2.5.1 The rights of the child:

One of the four general principles of the UNCRC is that the views of the child must be

considered and accounted for in all matters affecting the child (UNCRC, 1989). This is

further strengthened by Article 12 of the Convention which states that State Parties

"shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to

express those views freely in all matters affecting the child" (UNCRC, 1989). While

there is no statutory responsibility on teachers to listen to the voice of the child in

decision-making in the classroom, the child has a fundamental right to their voice being

heard and taken into account. If we do not give children the opportunity to make

choices, we not only deny their rights now, but we also fail to prepare them to be "the

insightful, participatory citizens that healthy societies need" (Drew, 2019: 552). With

respect to the age and maturity of the child, consideration should be given to the fact

that participants in this research are 11 and 12 years old and are therefore of a maturity

level that they can understand and respect the need to be responsible in using their voice

to collaborate with me in developing our assessment practices.

In response to Article 12 of the UNCRC, Lundy (2007) puts forward an interesting

perspective on how best Article 12 should be interpreted. Lundy proposes a four-step

model to support its implementation – space, voice, audience and influence. This model

is proposed as a user-friendly way to enable those working with children to develop

policy and check-in on their current practice to ensure that Article 12 is upheld in

practice. Lundy discusses how complying with Article 12 can help to foster a "positive school ethos" (2007: 939) and that there is a strong case to be made for increasing pupil involvement in education-based decision making from educational, citizenship and human-rights perspectives. As a teacher, it can be challenging to ensure balance between pupil involvement and adult input. This is reflected by Lundy who advises that Article 12 should be implemented in conjunction with Article 5. This sets out how adults have a role in giving "appropriate direction and guidance" that is "in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child" when it comes to the implementation of children's rights, such as child voice and their opinion being heard. Lundy argues that the need for guidance and advice from adults wanes as a child gets older and will eventually cease (2007: 939). As I set about implementing greater pupil choice in assessment, this reminded me to be cognisant of the age and maturity of the pupils and the most appropriate level of input from me as their teacher in light of same.

2.5.2 Teachers' professional responsibilities

The Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (2016) sets out the professional responsibilities of teachers in the Irish education system. The Code is underpinned by the values of respect, integrity, care and trust (Teaching Council, 2016). Regarding pupil agency in learning, section 4.4 states that teachers should "create an environment where pupils/students can become active agents in the learning process and develop lifelong learning skills" (2016: 8). With regard to assessment, section 4.1 of the Code states that teachers should "maintain high standards of practice in relation to… assessing." (2016: 8) The Education Act (1998) sets out provision for the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), giving the Council a statutory basis.

The Primary Overview Assessment Guidelines for Schools (NCCA, 2007) provides detailed guidelines on how and why self-assessment should be used, referring to how it "enables the child to take greater responsibility for his/her own learning" (NCCA, 2007: 14). From each of the above listed documents and frameworks, it is clear that there is a responsibility on the teacher to ensure that self-assessment practices be carried out to a high standard and that pupil autonomy plays a key role in the classroom. As such, to make my assessment practices more meaningful, I planned to incorporate pupil choice and voice into my assessment practices for the benefit of teaching and learning in my classroom.

2.5.3 The Primary Curriculum

The vision for The Primary School Curriculum (1999) states that it shall promote the active involvement of children in the learning process and that it aims to prepare children for lifelong learning. Interestingly, one goal of the curriculum is to "enable children to learn how to learn" (1999: 7), with a learning principle stating that the child "is an active agent in his or her learning" (1999: 8). This poses an interesting question for educators, as teaching children *how* to learn does not specifically fall within any curricular area. As the curriculum seeks to ensure that children are active agents in their own learning, the introductory document explains that it is designed to give opportunities for active engagement in learning experiences by encouraging responses from children in different ways. It is worth noting that the voice of the child and any element of choice on behalf of the child is not mentioned here.

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework was published in 2020 for those in the education sector to review and advise on where appropriate or where desired. This new document brings welcome change to the primary sector in terms of the voice of the child, autonomy (both for teachers and pupils) and choice. While the document does not use the term 'autonomy', the practices outlined and the methodologies to be adopted give space for autonomy to be developed. Moreover, the draft curriculum framework gives greater scope than the 1999 curriculum for teachers to give choice to pupils to help support them in becoming independent learners who know *how* to learn. The principle of "engagement" named in the framework which seeks to ensure children "are active and demonstrate agency as the capacity to act independently and to make choices about and in their learning" and that "curriculum experiences provide them with opportunities for decision-making, creativity and collaboration" (NCCA, 2020: 6). Furthermore, one of the key competencies the curriculum framework seeks to ensure the development of is the child "learning to be a learner" (NCCA, 2020: 7). These features of the new framework are reflected in my values and the aim of my research – to help to develop independence and responsibility in the pupils in my class through increased pupil-involvement in assessment.

2.6 Assessment

Assessment is the process of "gathering, interpreting, recording, using and communicating information about all aspects of a learner's achievement to help people make decisions" (O'Leary, 2014). Assessment *of* learning is used at the end of a teaching and learning process, while assessment *for* learning is used while teaching and learning are still ongoing (O'Leary, 2014). "Assessment and Progression" is named as a

key principle of the Draft Primary Curriculum framework (2020). Asserting the place of

assessment in the classroom, the framework states that "meaningful assessment is

collaborative and integral to high-quality teaching and learning" (NCCA, 2020: 6). As

set out in the Education Act (1998), the Primary Curriculum (1999) and the Code of

Professional Conduct for Teachers (2016), assessment of pupils' learning forms an

integral part of a teacher's role. The White Paper on Education, *Charting our Education*

Future (Government of Ireland, 1995) stated that assessment should be "diagnostic,

formative and continuous" (Government of Ireland, 1995: 31) so that it may provide

information to help to "improve the quality of education" (1995: 31), while

interestingly noting that it should not "dominate the work of the school" (1995: 30). It is

therefore interesting that Boud states that the focus of assessment should not be on

performance, but rather on the learning itself (Boud, 2000). This view is supported by

Tomlinson who asserts that "when assessment is seen as learning… it becomes most

informative and generative for students and teachers alike" (Tomlinson, 2008: 6).

In discussing assessment, Black and Wiliam note that the hope is that assessment

practices would make a "strong contribution to the improvement of learning" (Black

and Wiliam, 1998: 7). They also describe how the success of such assessment practices

relies on student self-perception, private feedback and teacher beliefs about effort vs

ability (Black and Wiliam, 1998). Boud (2000) raises a point which is connected to

autonomous learning, stating that the primary aim of assessment is to prepare pupils for

life-long learning and must therefore be seen as an "indispensable accompaniment"

(Boud, 2000: 151) to same.

2.6.1 Assessment in Irish primary schools

The *Education Act* (Government of Ireland, 1998) identifies that the role of the Inspectorate of Education is to "evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the provision of education in the State" (1998: 17). In reviewing and summarising the findings of the Inspectorate through Whole-School Evaluations and Incidental inspections, the Chief Inspector Reports give an insight into the practices of schools across the country when it comes to teaching, learning and assessment. The Chief Inspector's Report (Department of Education and Skills) in 2016 highlighted a need for primary schools to provide children with improved opportunities to reflect on their learning and engage in formative assessment practices. However, a survey of pupils conducted for publication in the 2020 Chief Inspector's Report found that there had been "little progress" in respect of that recommendation (2020: 111). Findings of the inspectorate as published in 2020 include the need for schools to use assessment data more effectively for the benefit of teaching and learning and the need for teachers to "communicate more effectively with children regarding their strengths and where they need to improve" (2020: 111). Most interestingly in light of pupil choice in assessment and learning, the report found that schools must "develop strategies to capture pupils' opinions on how they learn best" (2020: 111). With these recommendations in mind, it is worth examining curricular and assessment changes brought about by the implementation of the new Primary Curriculum Framework (2020).

2.6.2 Assessment as a shared endeavour

The draft Primary Curriculum Framework (2020) sets out many guidelines and standpoints on assessment in the classroom. On reading the new framework, the

statement that stands out most is that assessment is a "shared endeavour" (NCCA, 2020: 24). The implication in naming assessment as a shared endeavour is that teachers and pupils work together to gather and use assessment information for the benefit of teaching and learning in the classroom. As such, the responsibility shifts from the teacher to the pupils too. The framework advises allocating time for pupils to talk about their work and their learning, to "reflect on their next steps" and to "support and extend" the learning of both themselves and their peers. While choice is not named, the curriculum framework does support "teacher and child agency by prioritising an assessment culture in which insights feed into and influence the nature and direction of teaching and learning in real time" (NCCA, 2020: 24). This provision seems to lift the burden of accountability and the rigid need for written records, allowing instead for choice to be exercised and for plans to be true working documents, which poses an interesting framework for me to work within as I seek to give choice to the pupils in my class in assessing their learning. The framework views the child as the "central stakeholder that benefits from assessment information" (2020: 25). As such, the voice of the child and their choices should inform the assessment practices used to benefit their learning. Practices such as these should in turn reinforce the key competency of the new framework outlined earlier – that the child is "learning to be a learner" (NCCA, 2020: 7).

Mirroring the shared endeavour concept outlined in the Draft Primary Curriculum framework, Constant and Connolly (2014) hold the belief that the responsibility for assessment should be "shared with the learner" as it helps to "develop confident, motivated students and promotes goals of life-long learning" (2014: 33). Their case study on the implementation of formative assessment practices in an Irish classroom

gives interesting insights into the realities of assessment practices pre-intervention. Their findings showed that pupils viewed assessment as "something teachers do" which "exclusively involved tests" (2014: 40). The response of one pupil gave pause for thought as it showed an awareness of the formative nature of assessment that I would seek to encourage in my own pupils – "teacher gives us tests so she knows what to teach us again" (2014: 40). While the focus on summative assessment is something I would seek to change in my own practice, this pupil's awareness that assessment can inform future teaching and learning is an insight I am eager to foster in the pupils I teach. As the researchers in this study implemented assessment for learning practices, they concluded with advice for fellow teachers which I will be mindful of in my own research and practice. Most notably, they found that AFL practices helped pupils to become increasingly autonomous as learners, that they developed skills to assess their own learning independently and that they showed an increased eagerness to learn (Constant and Connolly, 2014: 43). This impact is reflective of the goal of my own research to help enable my pupils to become more independent and responsible learners through a choice of assessment practices.

2.6.3 Formative Assessment

Black et al. (2004) define formative assessment as "any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting students' learning" (2004: 10). They note that the feedback gleaned from such assessments must be used to inform future teaching and learning in order for it to be considered "formative" (2004). Similarly, Wiliam (2018) defines any formative assessment as one which enables teachers and pupils to "make decisions about the next steps in

instruction" (Wiliam, 2018: 48). Decisions made on foot of formative assessment data are likely to be better for learning outcomes than decisions that could have been made without formative assessment data (Wiliam, 2018). To develop this definition, Boud (2000) describes formative assessment as the type of assessment necessary if we are to equip pupils with the necessary skills for the future (Boud, 2000). Black and Wiliam's description of the actions needed in formative assessment point to an onus being placed on the learner to take responsibility within formative assessment. This has clear parallels to Dam's 2011 work on learner autonomy. Black and Wilam explain that the first action in formative assessment is the learner identifying a gap in their learning, which is followed by the learner taking action to close the gap (Black and Wiliam, 1998a). While they indicate that the teacher may be involved in the first action, the process itself suggests a form of self-assessment, which is of importance to me as I seek to improve how I use self-assessment to offer more choice and responsibility to my pupils. In formative assessment, Black and Wiliam explain that one choice available to the teacher is to leave the responsibility to the student in identifying and working on gaps in their learning. They comment that this option would allow children to develop their own self-assessment capabilities (Black and William, 1998a).

2.6.4 Self-Assessment

The NCCA describes self-assessment as what happens when children "look at their own work in a reflective way, identify aspects of it that are good and that could be improved, and then set personal learning targets for themselves" (NCCA, 2007: 14). Among the purposes and benefits of self-assessment, the guidelines identify the responsibility it offers pupils, the independence and motivation it encourages, the self-confidence it

develops and the links it offers with parents and families (NCCA, 2007). Crucially, the guidelines acknowledge that self-assessment involves a set of skills which take time to learn. It recognises the continuing process it takes to allow children to become confident and comfortable using those skills. The time taken to develop the skills of self-assessment is echoed by Dam (1995) who considers the process of developing learner autonomy to be "long, difficult and often painful" (Dam, 1995: 6). The time commitment involved in developing self-assessment practices is something I need to consider when planning my data collection methods and tools.

While guidelines can go a long way in instructing educators on how best to approach self-assessment, Black and Wiliam (1998a) noted a gap in the literature on how best to explicitly focus on self-assessment. While the area has greatly developed since that time, it can continue to be the case that teachers fall more easily into the trap of conducting assessments to generate results and information needed for reports, rather than exploring more imaginative, self-assessment based practices (Darr, 2018). Helpfully, Black and Wiliam (1998b) explicitly make the link between formative assessment and self-assessment, meaning that teacher familiarity with formative assessment tools may support teachers in using self-assessment practices and vice versa. A knowledge of one can help to support use of the other. To probe this link further, Boud (2000) asserts that formative assessment by others "can only have an impact on learning when it influences a student's own self-assessment" (Boud, 2000: 157) and that self-monitoring is essential to improve learning outcomes (Boud, 2000). This view is supported by the Welsh Assembly Government who states in 2010 that pupils can only progress "towards achieving a learning intention if they understand that intention and can assess what they need to do" (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010: 27).

Interestingly, Clarke (2014) makes a link between the skills of self-assessment and the concept of a growth mindset, as a growth mindset (which will be discussed in more detail below) may be a familiar and "accessible concept for the way learners need to feel about themselves and their abilities to be successful learners" (Clarke, 2014: 14). To that end, it is clear that self-awareness and self-reflection are vital in the achievement of self-assessment goals. As Black and Wiliam (1998a) suggest the use of reflective journals and learning portfolios, I will examine their potential role in the collection of data and use of self-assessment practices in my own classroom.

One further challenge many teachers can face in implementing self-assessment practices is getting their pupils to see their learning and their work "in terms of a set of goals" (Black et al., 2004: 14). This is reflective of the advice shared by Constant and Connolly (2014) who encourage teachers to share learning outcomes with pupils so that pupils can "better understand expectations and desired outcomes" (Constant and Connolly, 2014: 41). As such, the sharing of learning outcomes at the outset of lessons will be prioritised by me in this research.

2.6.5 The role of pupils in self-assessment

As self-awareness is central to the success of self-assessment, it is evident that the child themselves plays the central role in the execution of self-assessment practices. It is essential that the child is aware of and shares their "beliefs, opinions, guesses and misconceptions" (Clark, 2011: 161), as value is placed on these elements for successful self-assessment within the framework of formative assessment. This is reflected by Black and Wiliam's (1998a) view that a child's own view of their capabilities can

impact their achievement. Moreover, Black and Wiliam (1998b) explain that there are two processes involved in a pupil engaging in formative assessment successfully – to identify the gap in learning and to then take action to close the gap (1998b: 20). They advise that, for the former, the role of the teacher cannot be overlooked as the student may need support in generating information about their learning to help to identify any gaps there may be.

2.6.6 The role of the teacher in self-assessment

In a similar way, the role of the teacher in facilitating and explicitly teaching self-assessment cannot be overlooked. As Black and Wiliam (1998a) explain, there is a need for the responsibility to be divided between teachers and pupils. It is the teacher's role to create the conditions in which pupils can become comfortable and confident in using self-assessment methods and to give opportunities for more creative and child-led assessment tools to be used. Tomlinson (2008) holds a similar view, describing how, when pupils were given a choice in terms of how they could engage in assessment, they were more engaged and therefore they were learning more effectively (Tomlinson, 2008). It is now worth examining that idea of choice as discussed above and relating it to the assessment process.

A Canadian study examining teachers' approaches to classroom assessment holds interesting insights into assessment and accountability. Coombs et al. (2018) argue that the influence teachers' assessment practices have on student learning is more pronounced in countries and schools where there is a climate of accountability. Naming educational contexts such as those in Canada, the United States and the United

Kingdom, Coombs et al. posit that "the rise of the accountability paradigm has placed pressures on classroom teachers" and therefore may discourage "assessment practices that promote student learning… in favour of those that measure student learning" (2018). Similarly, Conway and Murphy (2013) examine the rise of accountability in Irish education. Acknowledging that it is an "essential and inescapable feature of any education system" (2013: 29), they also caution against the consequences it may have on teaching and learning. Agreeing with Levitt et al. (2008), they warn that it is foreseeable that higher accountability places demands on teachers which may result in their prioritising meeting standards and targets over practices that may be more beneficial to pupils themselves (Conway and Murphy, 2013). School policy and parental pressures can add to the feelings of accountability experienced in my own practice and the desire to have physical evidence of assessment to file and record can often override more implicit, formative assessment tools in my practice. As such, the weight of accountability will be something I am cognisant of as I collect data.

2.6.7 Choice and pupil voice in self-assessment

Of all the literature on choice and assessment, one stood out most prominently in terms of its relevance and inspiration for my research process. In seeking pupils' views on assessment in primary school, Robinson asked pupils to imagine they were the teacher, and to share ideas they had on how they would assess the pupils in their class. The children suggested that pupils "should be given more choice over the style and timing of assessment" (Robinson, 2014: 15). The children also communicated a dislike of written testing and preferred more fun, engaging assessment formats such as group work, projects and presentations (Robinson, 2014). The study raises questions about

both assessment for learning and pedagogy, and the need for children's voices to be central to both.

Likewise, Fenner (2006) advocates for the voice of the child and the exercising of agency in the assessment process. Advocating for the use of learning logs, dialogue and reflective diaries, Fenner notes the value of reflection using these types of self-assessment when compared to the tick-the-box nature of checklist-style assessments (Fenner, 2006). When we examine practices of other countries, similar thoughts and ideals can be identified. In their study, Sifakis et al found that the use of learner portfolios by schools in Greece offers "material that is constantly changing and reflects the individual learner's personality and learning pace" (2006: 139-140). This again suggests there are benefits to be gained from listening to the voice of the child and implementing practices which offer choice when it comes to assessment in the classroom so that the child can view their learning as something evolving, not fixed.

2.7 Growth Mindset

"Growth mindset" is a term coined by Carol Dweck which refers to when "students understand that their abilities can be developed" (2015). While some of us have generally fixed mindsets and some have generally growth-oriented mindsets, the ability to adopt a growth mindset to learning is something Dweck endorses. A growth mindset can help children to thrive on challenge and to use their setbacks to inform their future learning. A teacher's role in this process is central to commend what the child has done well and to advise what steps they can take next to improve for next time (Dweck, 2015). This idea is interesting in the context of my research as I intend to give

responsibility to pupils in assessing their learning. Dweck cautions that a growth

mindset approach is not simply that a pupil seeks to find a challenge, but rather that

they thrive on it because of how they come to view it; a setback or challenge does not

mean you cannot do something, but rather it is an opportunity to expand your learning

(2008).

Exploring the impact a growth mindset can have on pupil motivation and learning,

Rhew et al.'s study found that pupils with a growth mindset learned and grew through

their failures (2018: 3). For a growth mindset to succeed, teachers must ensure that

feedback to pupils is constructive and that growth mindset pedagogy be interwoven

with the "daily curriculum of the classroom" (2018:14), with perseverance and effort

being viewed as central to the process. While re-framing challenges to be positive

learning opportunities is a major component of growth mindset practices, Boaler also

advises educators to move away from any practice that labels or sends a negative

message to pupils about them as a learner (2013: 150). Boaler notes that it is important

for teachers to show that they value the "varied learning pathways of all students"

(2013: 150). As I set about re-framing how pupils self-assess and view the "negatives"

or "what to work on", this is something I will be cognisant of in my practice. I will be

mindful of the language I will use in framing challenges or setbacks and of the language

we use when we self-assess or peer-assess in the classroom.

Echoing the findings and standpoints outlined above, a Finnish study on the

implementation of a growth mindset approach in an elementary school provides an

insight into how it works in practice (Rissanen et al., 2019). Stating that interventions

can have a positive impact on pupil achievement and motivation, they assert that "students' growth mindset and appreciation of persistence and effort correlate with not being thrown by failure, but rather in seeing failures as opportunities for learning" (Rissanen et al., 2019: 206). This complements the principle outlined in the Irish Draft Primary Curriculum Framework (2020) which seeks to promote life-long learning; to ensure a love of life-long learning one must see opportunity to learn in even the most challenging of failures. To ensure a successful approach to growth mindset pedagogy, teachers must place an emphasis on "learning-to-learn goals" and explicitly teach "learning strategies" (Rissanen et al., 2019: 206).

2.8 Conclusion

This literatures review has discussed the main topics most relevant to this research. It examined child-centred principles in education. It explored the concepts of autonomy, choice and the voice of the child. Then, it discussed independence and responsibility in the classroom. Next, it explored national and international frameworks and legislation on children's rights and teachers' professional responsibilities, before examining policy and curriculum documents in Irish education. It discusses assessment in education, referring to policy documents and the role of the child in assessment. Finally, it considered the concept of a growth mindset. In reviewing each of these topics, this chapter supported me as a researcher in learning more about the aspects of my practice which I sought to enhance. The next chapter will outline the methodology used in this research project.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1: Introduction

This chapter offers a description of the methods used and action plan implemented in

the undertaking of this research project. First, I will describe action research and its

features, with reference to the cycles of action research as described by McNiff and

Whitehead (2006). Then, I will outline my research design and action plan. Next, I will

describe the research instruments used for the collection of data. I will then discuss the

data analysis process I undertook, with reference to Braun and Clarke's thematic

analysis framework (2022). Then, I will discuss the validity and reliability of the

research. Finally, I will examine the limitations and the operational and ethical

considerations of the research.

3.2: Action Research

Action research involves conducting research within one's own work so as to gain a

better understanding of it and make improvements. It "embraces the idea that each

researcher is informed by their values, norms and assumptions." (Sullivan et al., 2016:

25). Briggs and Coleman describe action research as adding a "self-conscious discipline

to good reflective professional practice." (2007: 164). Action research allowed me to

select an area of my practice I wished to improve. It allowed my research to be

informed by my core values of trust, responsibility and independence. It allowed me to

make decisions on what research instruments to use so that they would best fit my

context and so I would be best equipped to answer the question I posed. It gave me

freedom to reflect-in-action and to learn through reflexivity. The self-study nature of

this project allowed me to focus on reflective practice and to take a "values-based

approach to critical reflection" on my own work. (Sullivan et al., 2016: 28). The

cyclical nature of action research allowed me to learn from one cycle to the next,

making changes to my interventions in order to get an answer to me question. Most

importantly, it allowed me to engage in a "living, authentic form of continuing

professional development." (Sullivan et al., 2016: 25).

3.2.1 Cycles of Action Research

McNiff and Whitehead (2006) describe an action research cycle as having 5 steps –

"Observe – reflect – act – evaluate – modify" (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006: 36). Each

step feeds the next and each cycle informs the "new direction" to be taken in the

subsequent cycle.

McNiff and Whitehead (2006) Action research cycles:
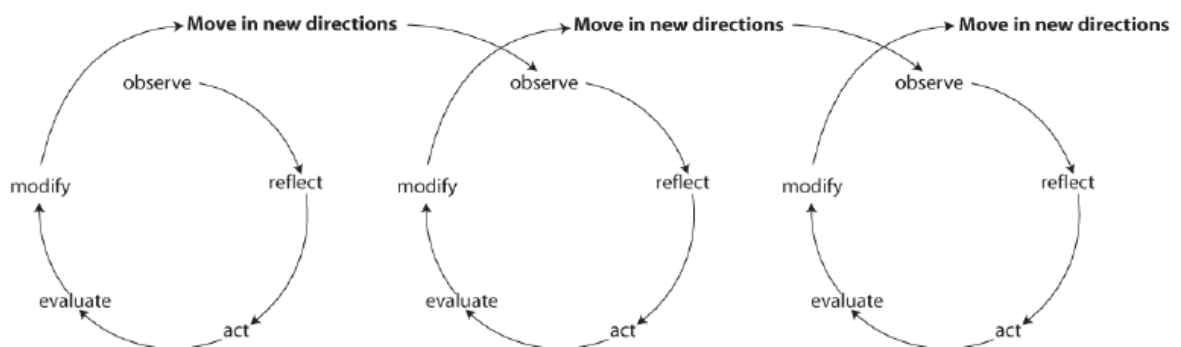
Figure 3.1

Prior to the collection of data, I spent time observing and reflecting. This allowed me to

identify my values and reflect on their role in my work as a teacher. It gave me time and

space to interrogate my core values – trust, independence and responsibility – and to

examine the living contradiction (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). I experienced myself as. I observed my own assessment practices and the ways in which the pupils in my class engaged in assessment both of and for learning. I reflected on how best I could adapt and change my practice to give more choice and responsibility to the pupils in my class. I spoke to colleagues and gained ideas from my critical friend who helped me to take the next step in the design of my action research cycles. I acted in implementing the action plan I had designed. I continued to reflect throughout by observing the pupils and engaging in my reflection journal. Discussions with my critical friend also helped me to reflect and modify as needed as each of the two cycles progressed.

I decided at the outset that two cycles of research would best fit the question I sought to answer. This would allow me to give time to teach the children about assessment and to expose them to many different assessment tools throughout Cycle 1, before integrating more pupil choice into Cycle 2. It would also give me the space to reflect on current practices after Cycle 1 so that I could engage in reflexivity, reflecting on the beliefs and opinions I held prior to commencing data collection. I decided to incorporate a wide variety of teacher-chosen assessment tools into Cycle 1, before collaborating with the children to reflect on what tools work best for them. These changes were then implemented in Cycle 2. I was conscious at the outset to leave open the possibility to extend the research into a third cycle depending on the outcomes of reflections by both me and the children at the end of Cycle 2.

3.2.2 Values in Action Research

One's values are central to the process of action research. Roche describes one's values as the conceptual frameworks of a study (McDonagh et al., 2012). Values need to be seen in action and transformed from abstract ideals to living practices (Sullivan et al., 2016). My core values of trust, responsibility and independence stem from my own primary school experiences in a multi-grade classroom where were trusted to work independently and were regularly given roles of responsibility. As a result, this was a strength of mine later on in life and subsequently became something I sought to promote for the pupils I teach. With a keen interest in assessment, I needed to see how I could apply those values in my assessment practices.

3.2.3 Planning to undertake Action Research

In choosing to conduct the research with the pupils in my class as the participants, I used a convenience sampling approach. As an insider researcher, this was the most appropriate sampling approach for me to use as I could work with the pupils in my class to examine an aspect of my practice I wished to enhance.

I began by developing an action plan. I identified the data collection tools that I hoped would enable me to answer my research question. The pupils in the 6th class I was teaching were the participants. The research was conducted in a large, urban, vertical, co-educational school. I sought the permission of my Principal and Board of Management. I spoke to the children in my class and explained the research to them using plain language. We discussed what informed consent means and what they would be asked to do if they chose to participate in the research. I explained to the children

that they could withdraw from the research at any stage without penalty. Following this discussion, I gave information letters, plain language statements and consent/assent forms to the pupils and their parents. Of the 26 pupils, all parents gave consent for their child to participate. Following this, 26 out of the 27 pupils in my class elected to participate in the research. Throughout the research, no pupil or their parent elected to withdraw from the research.

3.2.4: Reflection and Reflexivity in Action Research

Briggs and Coleman encapsulate the difference between reflection and reflexivity by saying that reflection places an emphasis on the learner, "committed to personal development" (2007: 164) while reflexivity is more outward-looking, putting an emphasis on the "researcher as a collaborator, actively seeking the validation of their practice and knowledge." (2007: 164). This distinction was important for me as I went about the process of being reflective on my practice and engaging with others. I demonstrated reflection through my written reflections in my reflective journal. I showed reflexivity through my discussions with my critical friend and by sharing my findings with my validation group.

I originally planned to look at assessment across all subjects, I collaborated with my supervisor and critical friend and discussed the potential benefits of a narrower focus. As a result, I decided to focus on assessment in English and Mathematics. This allowed me to give a specific focus to the assessment tools used and it also ensured that pupils were less likely to be overwhelmed by too wide a range of assessment tools. This focus on two core subjects enabled me to focus on elements of my practice that are part of my

everyday teaching in the classroom. Furthermore, it was originally my intention to focus solely on pupil responsibility for assessment. I noted in a reflection journal entry that the term responsibility could be too "open" and that "if I were to focus on giving more choice to pupils, that in itself would afford pupils more opportunities to demonstrate responsibility in assessing learning" (McGloin, Reflective Journal, 13th October 2021).

I particularly noticed the need for reflection and reflexivity as I carried out my Action Plan. I set out intending to conduct weekly surveys with the pupils to capture their answers to specific questions using a Likert scale. Demonstrating researcher reflexivity, the emphasis shifted towards using more pupil reflection journal entries and voice recordings of conversations, as this enabled me to gather more authentic ideas and opinions from the pupils with the benefit of more open-ended questions. I also intended to ask pupils to complete daily reflections in their journals using prompt questions. While this was very helpful in Cycle 1 to help both me and the children to identify what assessment tools worked best for us, there was a reduced need for this in Cycle 2 and so they were reduced in number and completed on days when we identified a topic or concern we wished to reflect on.

3.3 Research Design

I set out by designing an Action Plan to guide and support the data collection. This plan identified the subject, learning outcomes, assessment tools and data collection instruments to be used for each day of the research. The action plan was divided into the two cycles, each four weeks in length. In both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, the first two

weeks focused on English lessons while the following two weeks focused on

Mathematics lessons. For Cycle 1, I identified the assessment tools to match each

learning outcome for each lesson. For Cycle 2, this was left blank to be completed by

pupils at the end of Cycle 1. A summary of the action plan is shown below in *Figure*

3.2. A detailed sample is shown in *Figure 3.3*. The full detail of the action plan can be

found in Appendices M and N.

Summary of action plan:

Week	Lesson focus	Research instruments	Assessment practices
1	English: Persuasive language – oral language lessons, presenting an argument for a topic and identifying features of persuasive texts	Teacher observations and journal Pupil reflection journal Meet with critical friend Circle time discussion about assessment Pupil work sample Pupil survey	KWL Think Pair Share Thumbs up/down Teacher anecdotal notes Snowballing discussion Conferencing 2 Stars and a Wish Peer-assessment feedback Self-assessment rubric Checklist C3B4Me Mini-whiteboard work Peer-correction Written assessment
2	English: Persuasive language – oral language lessons, informal and formal debates, writing counter-arguments		
3	Mathematics: Data – Representing, reading and interpreting data sets using bar-line graphs and trend-graphs. Complete problem-solving activities.		
4	Mathematics: Fractions, Decimals and Percentages – Calculate profit, loss, cost price and sale price.		

Week	Lesson focus	Research instruments	Assessment practices
5	English: Reports – Oral language lessons, identify features of report, mini-lessons on researching, note-taking and organising information	Teacher observations and journal Pupil reflection journal Meet with critical friend Circle time discussion about assessment	Think Pair Share Traffic lights Teamwork-sharing ideas Conferencing Oral teacher feedback Teacher correction
6	English: Reports – Oral language lessons, researching topic for report, collaboratively and independently writing reports, sharing reports with others.		

| 7 | Mathematics: The Circle – measure angles in a circle, draw circle using radius/diameter, calculate area of a circle | Pupil work sample Pupil survey | 2 Glows and a grow Checklist Oral peer feedback Written teacher feedback Peer-correction Self-correction Teamwork C3B4Me Mini-whiteboards Whole-class correction |
| 8 | Mathematics: Pattern – identify and continue sequences, complete sums in correct order, sums with multiple operations | | |

Figure 3.2

Detailed sample of action plan:

|	**English lesson focus**	**Research instruments**	**Assessment practices**
Monday 31st January	Note: Explicitly teach vocabulary needed for discussions about assessment Persuasive Language - Identifying features of persuasive text - Identifying examples of persuasive text - Oral language discussion to model use of persuasive language	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal - Pupil survey - Meet with critical friend	- KWL - Think Pair Share - Thumbs up/down - Teacher anecdotal notes
Tuesday 1st February	Persuasive Language - Oral language lesson focusing on informal debates - Written task on differentiating between fact and opinion	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journals	- Teacher anecdotal notes - Snowballing discussion - Walking debate
Wednesday 2nd February	Persuasive Language - Oral language lesson focusing on thinking about both sides of an informal debate - Written task on using a variety of short, medium and long sentences	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journals	- Conferencing - 2 stars and a wish - Peer-assessment feedback

Figure 3.3

First and foremost, I needed to identify the range of assessment tools to use throughout

Cycle 1. To achieve this, I consulted the NCCA website and the Primary Overview:

Assessment Guidelines for Schools (NCCA, 2007). I spoke to my critical friend and

colleagues to identify assessment tools they use in their classroom. I then ensured that

the tools identified reflected a balance between teacher-led, peer and self-assessment.

At the end of Cycle 1, I worked with the pupils to collaboratively reflect on the

assessment tools we found most useful and would like to use again. Following a whole

class discussion, the pupils worked in groups to identify the assessment tools they

would match to each learning outcome for each lesson in Cycle 2, with the possibility to

make changes if we needed to along the way. This pupil-led decision-making enabled

me to observe and listen to the pupils' thought processes and was a substantial

opportunity for me to learn about my assessment practices.

Prior to the commencement of Cycle 1, time was spent discussing assessment practices

and explicitly teaching vocabulary needed, such as self-assessment, peer-assessment

and teacher-led assessment. I created a display in the classroom to support pupils as

they encountered this new terminology. This is shown below in *Figure 3.4.* The terms

were discussed and explained, before being added to a classroom display to help pupils

refer to as needed throughout the research.

Assessment vocabulary display:
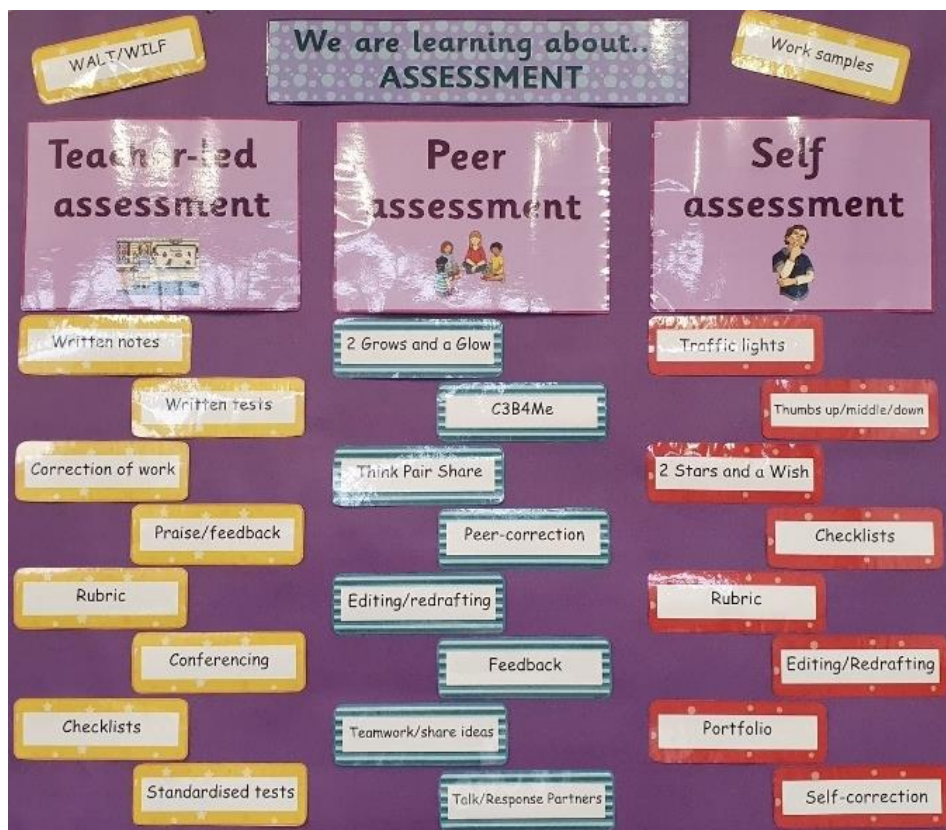
Figure 3.4

In addition to assessment terminology, I identified the need to explicitly teach the language of reflection. I taught words and phrases helpful to start pupils off with their written reflections. I modelled an example of a written reflection with the whole class on Day 1 and Day 2 of Cycle 1 in order to support pupils with the reflection process. On Day 3, I worked with a small group of pupils to model how to write reflectively.

In the early stages on Cycle 1, I observed that pupils often used the same phrases for peer-assessment and often sought examples from me. I noted that "very often pupils use the example I give as the peer-assessment feedback for their partner" (McGloin,

Reflection Journal, 3rd February 2022). As a result, I created a display to give sentence

starters for pupils to use when engaging in peer-assessment. This display is shown

below in *Figure 3.5*.

Peer-assessment sentence starter display:
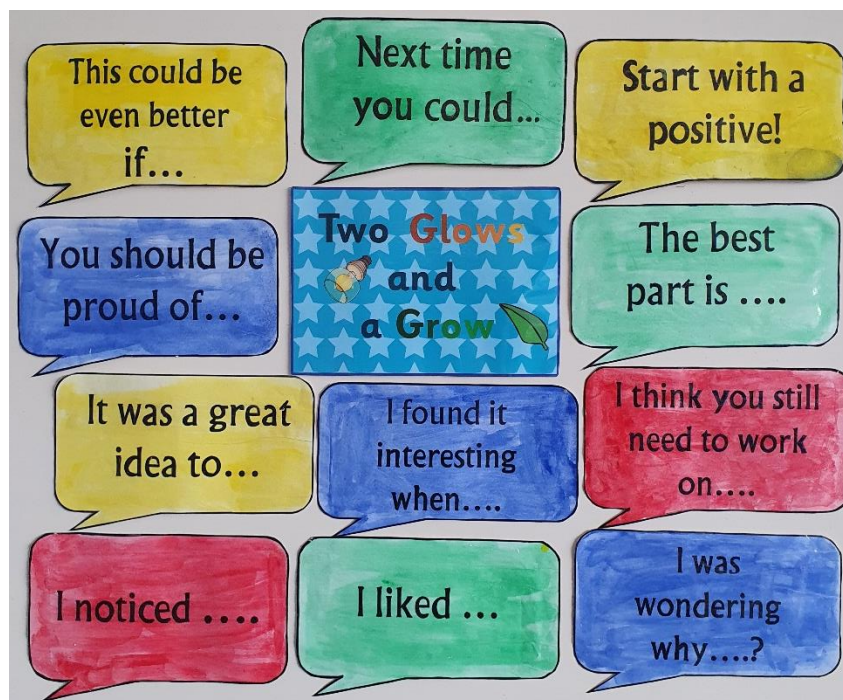
<div align="right">*Figure 3.5*</div>

3.4: Research Instruments

The following research instruments were used in to collect data with a view to

answering my research question: teacher observations and reflective journal, pupil

reflective journals, surveys, voice recordings of circle time discussions about

assessment and pupil work samples.

3.4.1 Observations

Observations as a research instrument were very useful due to the nature of my position as both teacher and researcher. Informal observations are something conducted by me as a teacher on a regular basis, both before this action research project and during it. Having a tight focus for an observation is important when seeking the answer to a research question (Hall and Wall, 2019). For the purposes of data collection, I sought to identify times when I could engage in structured, purposeful observations. The most valuable time I identified was when pupils would work together in small groups and as a class to discuss and plan their chosen assessment strategies, particularly during Weeks 3-8. As pupils took more responsibility and were given more choice and freedom to decide how to conduct assessment, it was helpful for me to observe how and why they came to the decisions they came to.

3.4.2: Journals

Both pupil reflective journals and my own formed a central part of data collection for this project. "Keeping a reflective or reflexive journal is one of the most important practices you'll undertake on your research journey" (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 19). As advised by Sullivan et al. (2016) and in-keeping with Schon's reflection-on-action, I kept a first-draft journal where I jotted down brief notes and ideas during my teaching day. This helped to ensure I did not forget moments of significance or conversations that prompted ideas during busy days. I then used those notes to write reflective entries in a journal, which formed a vital data source. I found that keeping brief notes and following up with written entries helped me to be present and attentive to the moment

and it helped to clear my mind (Sullivan et al., 2016). Glenn notes the importance of

reflections in a journal being meaningful, and that critical engagement is therefore

essential (McDonagh et al., 2012). I found that asking "why" questions of myself, based

on my first-draft reflections, helped me to engage critically in my full written

reflections. Questioning why I do what I do or why I hold the values I hold helped me

to ensure critical thinking. This in turn led to greater findings for me in terms of my

existing professional practice which helped me to address the question I posed.

I also applied Brookfield's lenses to support critical thinking – colleagues' perceptions,

personal experience, students' eyes and theory. I gained insight into my colleagues'

perceptions by asking colleagues to form my validation group. I benefited from the

students' perspectives from both their reflective journals and our circle time

discussions. This enabled me to look at my context from different perspectives, as "we

need to be able to see ourselves from unfamiliar angles." (Brookfield, 2017: 61). By

connecting with my values and questioning why I value trust, responsibility and

independence, I identified that it is because of my own experience in primary school.

That helped me to begin looking at my classroom practice through the eyes of my

pupils. I gained insights from my colleagues as I shared informal conversations with

them, as I debated ideas with my critical friend and as I shared my findings with my

validation group. I examined educational theory and best practice through reading

widely, which enabled me to see my context from a much broader angle.

Pupil reflective journals were a valuable source of data. Having modelled how to be

reflective, I had ensured that I had made the process of writing a written reflection

accessible for pupils. Pupils wrote responses each day to a prompt question provided by me. In my reflection journal prior to the collection of data, I noted that many pupils relied on teacher prompts and examples to support them in self-assessing. For example, when asking pupils to complete 2 Stars and a Wish, a pupil asked for an example of what a wish might be. I later noticed that the pupil had used the same wish as one suggested by another pupil. This caused me to be cautious in my approach to pupil reflective journals and how to ensure they would be used effectively. The use of prompt questions helped me to ensure that the questions I sought to answer had pupil input, and that pupils were better encouraged to develop their ideas and reflections. This also helped me to ensure that pupils' voices came through in the data. The prompt questions used during the research can be found in Appendix P.

3.4.3: Surveys

I used surveys at the end of each phase or cycle in order to catch a "snapshot of attitudes" among the participants (Hall and Wall, 2019: 150). Using a Likert scale approach allowed me to survey the attitudes of the participants in my class by asking them to strongly agree/agree/unsure/disagree/strongly disagree with various statements relating to our assessment practices over the previous 4 weeks. Surveys allowed me to gather a snapshot of how pupils viewed specific practices undertaken which they may not have chosen to write about in written reflections. For this reason, they added another perspective to my data. However, as they were completed on a small scale, the data gathered from the surveys conducted is not generalisable and is instead specific to my class group and the context in which the research was situated (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

3.4.4: Voice recordings of discussions about assessment

Pupil choice and voice are two things I value in my classroom. For that reason, I was eager to include research instruments which would give pupils the opportunity to share their ideas, attitudes, beliefs and opinions about assessment. Voice recording discussions about assessment took place at the beginning of phase one, at the halfway point and at the end of phase two. Children construct their understanding of the world around them through talk (Hall and Wall, 2019). Talk can offer answers to our questions, while also "posing new ones as the analysis develops" (Hall and Wall, 2019:143). Listening to pupil discussions and hearing their conversations about assessment develop over the four weeks helped me to gain a fresh perspective on how the initiatives were working or not working. Open-ended discussions about assessment and how to set up pupil-designed initiatives were a valuable research instrument in this study. The transcripts of voice-recorded discussions allowed me to see patterns and trends in the conversations pupils had about assessment. The transcripts also gave pause for reflection in my own reflective journal (McDonagh et al., 2012). They allowed me to notice elements of my own practice which were discussed by pupils and which aided me greatly in addressing my question.

3.4.5: Pupil work samples

Pupil work samples, due to their nature, are rarely used by outsider researchers (Hall and Wall, 2019). Reflecting on this, I realise the fortunate position I am in as a teacher researcher that I have access to the wealth of data and information present in pupil work samples. Hall and Wall note the usefulness of work samples in research which focuses

on student outcomes, such as this (2019). In endeavouring to give more choice and responsibility to pupils, the work produced by pupils, whether written or otherwise, should reflect any changes made to the nature of the assessments conducted. For example, as pupils take more ownership over assessing their learning, should they opt for more peer assessment, this would result in a change to pupil work samples.

3.5: Data analysis

To begin the process of data analysis, I identified Braun and Clarke's model of thematic analysis (2022) as the most appropriate for me to use. Thematic analysis is a "method for developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across a qualitative dataset, which involves systematic processes of data coding to develop themes" (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 4). Placing an emphasis on the role of reflexivity throughout the action research process, Braun and Clarke refer to their method of thematic analysis as "reflexive TA" (2022). They are keen to assert that there is no 'rule book' to follow in using thematic analysis, explaining that critical reflection is required on the part of the researcher and that "you, the researcher, are a situated, insight-bringing, integral component of the analysis" (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 10). Their approach involves six phases, as shown in *Figure 3.6* below:

Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis (2022):

1	Familiairisng yourself with the dataset
2	Coding
3	Generating initial themes
4	Developing and reviewing themes
5	Defining and naming themes
6	Producing the report

Figure 3.6, adapted from Braun and Clarke (2022)

I began by familairising myself with the dataset. I read and re-read my reflection journal entries and those of the children. To help me to collate the data for reading and re-reading, I typed the pupil responses to each response question. I transcribed the voice recordings of circle time discussions about assessment. I collated the information gathered from the surveys conducted and reflected on my observations. I reviewed pupil work samples and re-read the action plans pupils worked on in groups before Cycle 2. This reading and re-reading helped me to gather my thoughts on the research process and it helped me to clarify my thinking and assumptions.

I began coding by going through each item in the dataset, identifying "segments or data that appear(ed) potentially interesting, relevant or meaningful" for my research question and applied "analytically-meaningful descriptions (code labels) to them" (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 35). I ensured that I paused to reflect throughout this process of coding to ensure the I could be reflexive on my thoughts, values and assumptions. In analysing my data, I sought to identify instances where my practice demonstrated my values in action, which therefore helped me to identify whether or not my values had emerged as "living standards of practice" (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006: 152). This helped me to be critical of my thinking which in turn helped me to generate more specific, honest and meaningful code labels. I then identified three initial themes – the question of language, communication and involvement, and choice in action. Having identified the three initial themes, I revisited the code labels and assigned a colour to the codes relating to each theme. This helped me to ensure that each code label was featured in my findings and that the themes I identified worked well to reflect the authenticity of the data. It was

at this juncture that I presented my initial findings to my peers on the Master of

Education programme. This was an important step for me in moving to and through the

next two phases of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis model, as it helped me to see

the research and findings through the eyes' of others. It helped me to clarify my own

thinking and to gain the perspectives of others, outside my validation group and critical

friend. It enabled me to review the initial themes and to define and name the final

themes. The following table shows a sample of the code labels identified during the

second phase of Braun and Clarke's (2022) thematic analysis.

Sample of code labels:

uncertainty	fear of offending others	eager to see change	greater independence	increased awareness of own learning
value in discussing assessment	need sentence starter	break from written tests	pressure of written assessment	choice do-able
oral assessments valid	varying reliability of peer assessment	knowing a peer well – supports peer assessment	increased pupil awareness of assessment	confidence grown

Figure 3.7

3.6: Operational considerations and limitations

As McNiff and Whitehead caution, constraints and problems are "bound to arise"

(2006: 79) and the negotiation of same is part and parcel of the action research process.

The primary issue encountered in data collection for this project was pupil absences due

to COVID-19. On any given day during the eight weeks of data collection, between 2

and 11 pupils were absent. This caused a lack in continuity in the pupil-designed

initiatives. It also meant a reduction in the number of written reflections completed by all pupils.

Two further considerations were brought to my attention by Hall and Wall (2019). Firstly, when ethical approval has been sought to voice record conversations, it can cause participants to feel self-conscious or a "sense of performance" (Hall and Wall, 2019: 144). Secondly, when engaging in observations and participants know or become aware that they are being observed, what is known as the Hawthorne effect can become an issue (Hall and Wall, 2019) as pupils may show what they perceive to be desired behaviour and attitudes. These issues are further considered when discussing the reliability of the research findings.
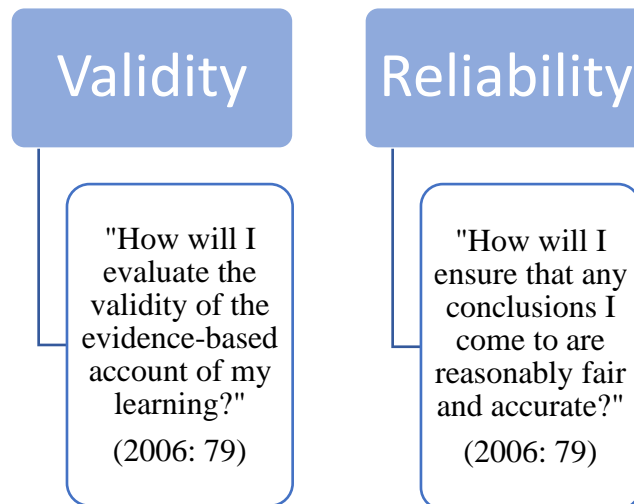
3.7: Ethical considerations

This research involved working with a vulnerable group as pupils in my class are under the age of 18. I ensured that I acted in accordance with the Children First Act (2015) and my school's Child Protection Policy at all times. The anonymity and confidentiality of participants was of the utmost importance to the researcher at all times. Throughout the data referenced within this thesis, all the names of pupils shown are pseudonyms. Prior to speaking to pupils and their parents about participation in the research, I sought and gained the consent of my Principal and Board of Management. In order for pupils to take part, I ensured that the informed consent of their parents/guardians and their own informed assent were sought. I then spoke to the pupils in my class about what participation in the research would involve. I answered any questions they had in a plain, accessible manner. The written consent of all participants was then sought. A

detailed information sheet was provided using plain language. All participants were reminded that they could withdraw at any stage, and that their decision to do so would not in any way impact their relationship with me as the researcher and their teacher.

Due to the nature of the research and the use of pupil voice, I identified that some participants may feel discomfort when reflecting on their learning and the assessment of same. I minimised risk and discomfort by ensuring that all tasks were accessible and well-explained. I identified a designated support person who works as a Learning Support Teacher. This person was available to advise and support me should any issue of a sensitive nature arise. As I conducted this research as an insider researcher, it was pertinent to be aware of potential issues that can cause. A power imbalance was something I was cognisant of, as I needed to ensure that I did not use my influence as their teacher to alter the research. For example, I reminded all pupils that they did not have to take part in the research. I ensured I answered any questions or concerns they had as the data collection process progressed.

3.8: Validity and reliability

McNiff and Whitehead (2006) advise researchers to consider the following before implementing an action plan:

Validity	Reliability
"How will I evaluate the validity of the evidence-based account of my learning?" (2006: 79)	"How will I ensure that any conclusions I come to are reasonably fair and accurate?" (2006: 79)

Validity is essential for effective research. Validity can be ensured by selecting an appropriate timescale, making sure there are sufficient resources, choosing appropriate research instruments and "building on the motivations of the respondents" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011: 199). In analysing the data collected, invalidity can be minimised by "avoiding poor coding of qualitative data, … avoiding making inferences and generalisations… and avoiding selective use of data" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011: 199). Having taken this advice on board, I worked to ensure that I took steps to minimize invalidity at every stage of the research. Engagement with my critical friend and sharing with my validation group also helped to ensure rigour and validity.

The reliability of research is described by Cohen, Manion and Morrison as a "synonym for dependability, consistency and replicability" (2011: 199). Reliable research should show that, if it were to be carried out again with a similar group of participants, similar findings would result. To ensure reliability in this research, I ensured that each form of data collected was collected in a methodical, careful and purposeful manner. I ensure that data analysed was done in an objective way so as to avoid bias and generalising.

Engagement with my critical friend helped to support me in ensuring reliability and dependability at every stage.

A claim to knowledge must be justified and critiqued by others in order for it to be deemed a valid claim (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). This may be done using a critical friend such as a colleague who will offer "sympathetic but critical hearing" (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006: 85). This view is supported by Sullivan et al. who note that a critical friend should "listen to your emergent ideas and query them in a questioning but supportive manner" (2016: 53). I had regular conversations with my critical friend throughout the planning and implementation of my action plan. Their feedback was insightful as it offered another perspective which I could not have gained from my own reflections. As a fellow 6th class teacher, my critical friend understood my context and teaching methodologies. Dialogue with them helped to clarify my thinking, develop my understanding and generate new questions (Sullivan et al., 2016).

Stenhouse encourages teachers to share their experiences and to report their work (2014). My validation group, comprised of my colleagues in 6th class, were essential for me in scrutinising my findings and listening to my claims to knowledge (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). They also helped to ensure the reliability and validity of my findings. Their insights and ideas helped me to see my research and findings from another perspective. Their feedback also helped me to realise the value of sharing my research within our staff for the benefit of professional learning.

3.9: Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodology and the methods undertaken in this research project. Action research was identified as the selected methodology. The research design and action plan were outlined and explained. The research instruments were identified and discussed with reference to their suitability to my research question. Thematic analysis was identified as the method for data analysis and the steps taken were outlined. It outlined the steps taken by the researcher to ensure that ethical considerations were upheld and that validity and reliability were ensured. The following chapter will discuss the data collected, research themes and findings.

<u>Chapter 4 - Findings</u>

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will outline the key findings of my research. The findings are gathered from data collected from the following sources: personal reflective journal, pupil reflective journals, circle time audio recordings, pupil surveys and discussions with my critical friend and validation group. I will identify the three emerging themes resulting from the codes named. I will then discuss each of the three themes individually and examine the findings within each theme. Throughout the data referenced, all the names of pupils shown are pseudonyms.

4.2 Emerging Themes and Findings

I identified many learnings through the process of data analysis. A great deal of new learning emerged through circle time discussions and in pupils' reflection journals. These insights were supported and validated through my own reflection journal, discussions with my critical friend and share sessions with my validation group of colleagues. The three key themes and their findings are as follows:

1. The impact giving negative formative feedback to peers can have

    a. Pupils showed hesitancy due to the perception of them as the "assessor" when giving formative feedback to peers

2. The importance of choice

    a. Pupils showed a preference for peer assessment *for* learning over peer assessment *of* learning

    b. Pupils preferred a balance of peer-assessment and teacher-led assessment

     c. Pupils felt oral assessment tools were just as useful to them as written

        assessment tools

     d.   Giving choice is feasible for me as a teacher in my everyday practice

3. The role of communication and pupil involvement

     a. Communicating with pupils and involving them in the assessment

        process had a bigger impact than other initiatives taken and helped to

        increase pupil engagement and interest

4.3 Theme 1: The impact giving negative formative feedback to peers can have

Within this theme, I identified a finding which I had not anticipated in any form at the

outset of this research: Pupils showed hesitancy due to the perception of them as the

"assessor" when giving formative feedback to peers. When introducing assessment to

the pupils in my class for the purposes of this research, I used the Continuum of

Assessment (PDST, 2007) as seen in *Figure 4.1* below. I ensured that I used accurate

terminology made accessible for the age and stage of pupils in my class. This helped me

to ensure I modelled correct language about assessment for pupils to use when

discussing our assessment tools and practices.

Continuum of Assessment (PDST, 2007)
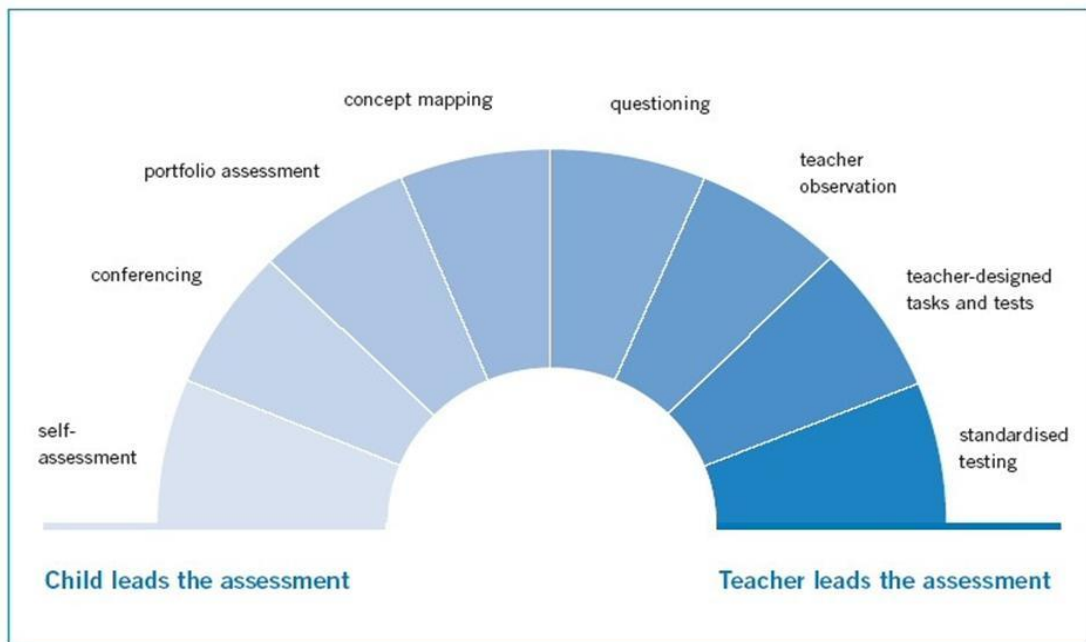
Figure 4.1

I noticed a pattern in pupils' engagement in self and peer-assessment prior to starting the data collection process during my everyday practice. I observed that pupils could find it difficult to name and describe things they had done well or wanted to improve on when using tools like 2 Stars and a Wish or 2 Glows and a Grow. I noticed that pupils would often look for an example of what they could write. In my prior practice, I would have given an example or two to *support* pupils with the assessment. I soon realised that pupils often took the example I had given as their assessment, which called into question the validity of pupil assessment for me. As a result, I made the decision to display phrases and sentence starters – both for "stars" and "wishes" – for pupils to draw from when using these tools during the data collection. This meant that pupils had easy access to well-phrased sentence starters for use in assessment, such as "I liked…", "I enjoyed how…", "Next time, you could…", "It would be even better if…", etc.

Throughout Cycle 1, pupils reflected on and recorded how they enjoyed self and peer assessment tools. This was strengthened when pupils were tasked with identifying an assessment tool for each learning outcome identified in lessons for Cycle 2. Each of the seven groups included peer and self-assessment tools, including C3B4Me, Talk/Response Partners, Think Pair Share, 2 Stars and a Wish, peer-correction and 2 Glows and a Grow.

As the research progressed, I observed a change in pupils' dispositions towards peer assessment. From pupil journals, circle time discussions and my own observations, I identified that pupils enjoyed and benefited from peer-assessment FOR learning tools but often shied away from or felt negatively about peer-assessment OF learning tools. Pupils noted how they enjoyed learning with others and leaning on peers to support learning, particularly during Maths. However, many pupils noted that they did not enjoy assessing or commenting on the work of others at the end of a task, particularly when they felt their peer had gotten an answer wrong or needed to improve on some element of their work for next time. Pupil opinions showed a reluctance to engage in assessment of learning with peers, as seen below. Throughout the data referenced, all the names of pupils shown are pseudonyms.

Well I don't really want to hurt anyone's feelings so I don't really say what I think. I don't really think anyone else writes the truth either - Anna

It's harder to understand if you did anything wrong because they won't say anything they might just say something random like 'you need more full stops' - Anna

It makes me nervous because I'm scared the other people might get offended about my feedback - Isla

I would prefer if the teacher corrected our work because if your peer does it they might make fun of it - Mia

I like doing the 'glow' but I hate doing the 'grow' cos I'm always not sure what to write… I find it hard to find bad stuff to say about them - Luke

As my main aim in this research was to improve my own practice, this observation caused me to examine my language and the manner in which I modelled and used the assessment tools which caused issues for the pupils. What I found most interesting about this was the way in which I had displayed sentence starters for the pupils. I believed I had shown both "good" and "bad" elements in an equal light and had not labelled comments as positive or negative. Somewhere along the line, some pupils identified that some sentence starters were for use when a peer had done well and some were for use when a peer needed to improve. Pupils had inferred that "stars" or "glows" meant a job well done, while "wish" or "grow" meant there was room for improvement.

This association with language had a knock-on effect for some pupils in that it meant they did not enjoy using those tools with peers as they did not want to make a classmate feel as though they had not done well and they did not feel they could be honest in their assessment. This led some pupils to feel that the assessment was less beneficial and would be better accomplished by a teacher who would give "honest and not mean advice and you know she cares" (Fiadh, Pupil Response Journal).

Having analysed data from pupil reflection journals and transcripts of circle time discussions, I wondered if this finding would be so prominent to me as a researcher had the pupils in my class engaged actively in assessment more regularly over the past eight years. This consideration will have a strong impact on my future practice as I will be teaching Junior Infants next year. Having seen the impact discussing assessment and including the pupils has had, it is something I will seek to prioritise across any class level in my future practice.

4.4 Theme 2: The importance of choice

Three findings lie within this theme: pupils showed a preference for peer assessment *for* learning over peer assessment *of* learning, pupils felt oral assessment tools were just as useful to them as written assessment tools and the giving of choice of assessment tool was do-able and feasible for me as a teacher in my everyday practice. I learned that the giving of choice of assessment tools helped to increase pupil engagement. The pupil response journals and our circle time discussions on assessment helped me to see their choices from their perspective.

4.4.1 Pupil preference for peer assessment *for* learning over peer assessment *of* learning

As noted above, I identified that pupils enjoyed and benefited from peer-assessment *for* learning tools but often felt hesitant about using peer-assessment *of* learning tools. To explore this idea further, I examined pupils' response journals. Some pupils expressed that they enjoy giving peer feedback and using peer feedback <u>during</u> their work:

> Lily: "I feel that it is a good idea because the pupil gets to see what a pupil their age thinks about their work"

> James: "It feels great. I think it's a much better idea than the teacher doing it all the time. For C3B4Me I wasn't the one asking people but I helped out Grace and Conor which felt good"

> Charlie: "I found C3B4Me helpful because if I got stuck I could ask someone to explain it"

I noted in my own reflection journal in four entries on days during data collection that pupils enjoyed Mathematics lessons more when C3B4Me was featured. To investigate this finding, I asked them to complete their written Maths work without using C3B4Me one day to see how this would impact their work. I noted that "pupils almost immediately became more anxious about their Maths work and some pupils displayed a lack of confidence and unease about getting started" (McGloin, Reflection Journal, 2nd March 2022). This finding is supported by pupils' response journal entries and their

inclusion of many assessment *for* learning tools during Cycle 2, such as Think Pair

Share, Talk/Response partners and C3B4Me. As a result, I concluded that this class

enjoyed and benefited from peer assessment *for* learning, while showing a hesitancy

towards peer assessment *of* learning tools. The highlighted for me the importance of

giving real opportunities to pupils to exercise autonomy, as advised by Manyukhina and

Wyse (2019). It prompted me to rethink my restrictive assessment practices (Williams,

2003) to incorporate pupil choice.

4.4.2 Pupils preferred a balance of peer-assessment and teacher-led assessment

It is worth noting that pupils showed a preference for a balance of both peer feedback

and teacher feedback. The below excerpts show responses in pupil journals,

highlighting their desire to have a mix of both:

> Anna: "I think it's important because not everyone's going to tell the truth so
>
> that's why you need the teacher as well"

> Noah: "I think a teacher's feedback is as important as anyone's feedback"

> James: "I think that feedback from a teacher is important because it gives the
>
> pupil a general understanding to what they did wrong or need to work on. It's
>
> also nice getting feedback with a nice message written"

> Fiadh: "I think teacher feedback is important. It is honest and not mean advice
>
> and you know she cares"

> Charlie: "I think it is helpful because it gives a student's perspective not just a
>
> teacher's perspective because a student thinks differently to a teacher."

This was further reflected in the choices the pupils made for Cycle 2, which represented a balance of both teacher-led and peer-based assessments. The full detail of the Action Plan for Cycle 2 can be found in Appendix M. I found this interesting as a balance of different styles of assessment would be most in line with my practice prior to conducting this research. It was interesting to see how the pupils, when given the opportunity to explore different tools and make a choice, opted for a balance themselves. The discussion that led to this opting for balance reflects Gersch's advice that there must be scope for discussion and for compromises to be reached when giving choice to children (Gersch, 1996).

4.4.3 Pupils felt oral assessment tools were just as useful to them as written assessment tools

Had I been granted a crystal ball at the outset of this research, this finding was one I could have anticipated. However, when I delved further into the reasons behind it, I gained insights from the pupils that I wouldn't have expected. Many expressed feelings that tests or written assessments were stressful and a cause of worry and anxiety. During a circle time discussion, I had the opportunity to ask the pupils about the assessment tools they had chosen for Cycle 2 and what impact the increase in oral assessments had from their point of view:

> Hannah: It feels more like, it doesn't feel as much like we're being assessed
>
> because we are doing lots of oral assessment.
>
> Isla: I feel like oral assessments are a bit less stressful.

Teacher: Do you feel the same pressure that some of your classmates have

Spoken about before?

Isla: There's not that much pressure.

Grace: I agree I think it's less stressful. And I think if someone speaks to you

rather than like writing it on your work it seems more genuine.

Luke: I have to agree with Grace because its less pressure and you don't have to

get the spelling completely right because you're just speaking.

The opinions of the children in this research mirrors findings by Constant and Connolly

who investigated the use of formative assessment practices in the Irish primary

classroom. They found that testes were "revealed to be a stressful activity for students

with 82% of participants questioned providing negative remarks towards assessment"

(2014: 40). On the surface of it, one might assume that pupils preferring written

assessment over oral assessment would be due to the perception that doing something

orally requires less 'work'. I had noted in a journal entry as we neared the end of Cycle

1 that pupils were likely to shy away from tests and written assessments, feeling that

"pupils have always expressed their dislike of tests and that's hardly surprising as I

know I would have felt the same way when I was in school" (McGloin, Reflection

Journal, 3rd March 2022). However, when I examined the feelings and reasons behind a

move towards oral assessment, I saw the value in taking a break from written

assessments. In the final two weeks of Cycle 2, pupils had the option to have short

summative tests or a short task with a partner. Pupils chose the short task with a partner

and so the written test was removed from the Action Plan. I had to reflect on this as I

needed to consider if this made any difference to me as their teacher. Both would have required preparation on my part. Both allowed me to check pupil learning. Both enabled pupils to see how well they had learned the content. Both allowed for the meeting of learning outcomes to be assessed. As a result, while easy to anticipate, this finding made me realise that choice can be easy to give and make no material difference. While written assessments are valid and useful at times, oral assessments can be just as valid and can help to remove an element of stress or worry felt by some pupils.

4.4.4 Giving choice is feasible for me as a teacher in my everyday practice

These findings highlighted the importance of choice and the benefits of giving a real-world application to pupil voice in the classroom. Without the giving of choice, I would not have learned so much from this class in such a short space of time. I learned about their preferences without getting yes/no answers. I benefited from real insights into their opinions on assessment tools. Ultimately, the assessment tools used could change the tone of a lesson for the pupils – either making something more enjoyable or causing stress, worry and discomfort. While certain assessment types are required at times, the assessment tools used for most lessons and most learning outcomes does not impact the effectiveness from my point of view as their teacher. My critical friend made a comment before I started Cycle 1 which I understand better in light of the above findings: "It really doesn't make any difference to you whether they choose a checklist or a rubric or peer-correction or teacher feedback. You'd be doing a mix of them all in your regular practice anyway so if giving a choice makes a bigger difference to them, then what odds?" (Critical friend, 4th March 2022). Giving choice was something which benefited pupils and did not have any negative impact on me as a teacher. As such, I

learned that giving choice would be something that was very do-able and feasible for

me. While the level of pre-planning associated with this research project meant that

choice was given far in advance and noted in an action plan, these steps would not be

necessary in my everyday practice. I had noted in a reflection that "sharing learning

outcomes in something I know is best practice but I don't really do everyday, even with

the best of intentions" (McGloin, Reflection Journal, 11th January 2022). In light of the

above findings, I can now see even more clearly the need to share the learning

outcomes with the children so they know *what* they are learning and can therefore

identify or choose how best to assess their learning.

Overall, I have found that giving choice in something as simple as which assessment

tool to use to assess learning in a lesson has far-reaching benefits for pupils. It helped

them to know what was expected of them, to monitor their learning, to work with their

peers and to show independence and responsibility. The giving of choice was not a

difficult task for me as a teacher and it was something that could be easily integrated

into my future practice in any setting, with any class level.

4.5 Theme 3: The role of communication and pupil involvement

At the outset, I intended to give pupils a choice of assessment tool to enable them to be

independent and responsible learners. I intended to live more closely to my value of

trust by showing pupils that I trusted them to make appropriate choices to help improve

their learning. In order to do this, I taught the children about assessment, about the

continuum of assessment and the variety of assessment tools at our disposal. At no

point did I consider that including pupils in the conversation about assessment in the

first instance would have the biggest impact of all. I had not considered the extent or

lack thereof to which pupils understood assessment prior to this research. I had assumed

that they had a general understanding of assessment, its purpose and varieties.

However, when we began the process, I quickly learned that the children had a limited

understanding of assessment. At the very beginning, many of them thought

"assessment" was a synonym for "test". This was evident in their first reflection journal

entries, when they were asked to explain what assessment means:

Another word for test or correction - Amelia

It means to test or correct something - Daniel

Assessment is a type of test - Saoirse

I personally think assessment means to be quizzed - Conor

It means seeing how you improve by doing a test - Grace
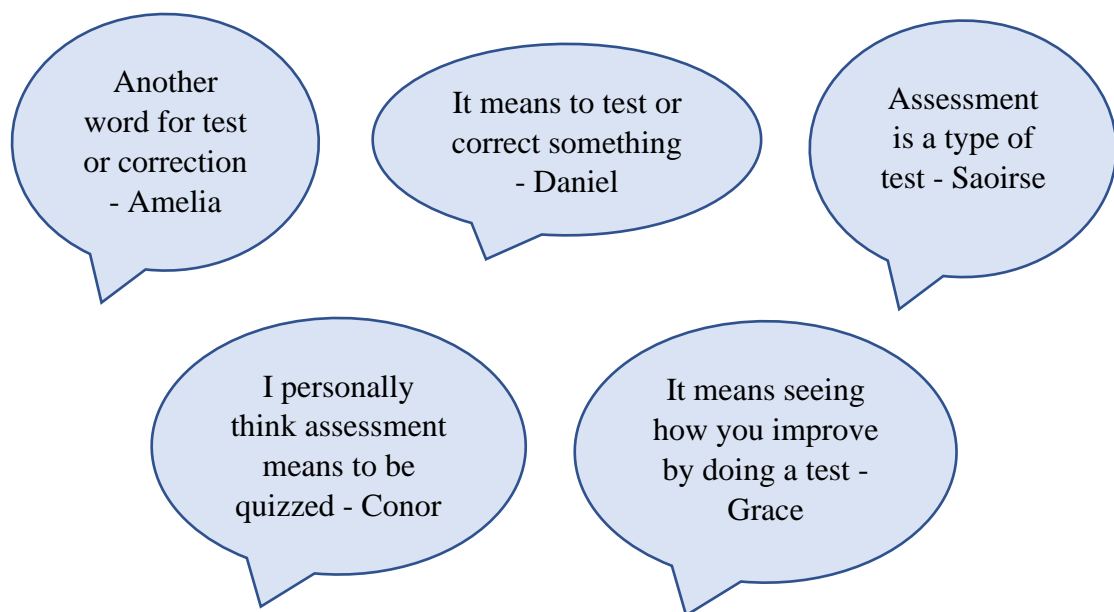
After six days of data collection, one pupil noted in her journal that assessment "can be

made fun and that there are more versions of it than I thought" (Fiadh, Reflection

Journal, 2022). This showed me at an early stage that pupils had not known much about

assessment at the outset but quickly learned as we went along. The increase in their

knowledge of assessment tools and the purposes of assessment was highlighted during

our circle time discussions. At the end of the data collection period, our conversation

discussed what we had learned about assessment generally and what aspects of the

previous eight weeks we had enjoyed the most:

Emily: I found out that there's more ways of assessment.

Grace: I know that I prefer not having tests and that I know what types of

assessment I like and don't like.

Fiadh: I found it nice to have more flexibility with assessment cos it did get a bit

boring after a while and it made assessment a lot more boring when you had to

do the same thing over and over every day. Yeah I enjoyed doing this project.

Noah: We were given a lot more responsibility.

Mia: My favourite assessment tool is traffic lights cos it's quick and easy.

Conor: I enjoyed doing the project and I think I like doing traffic lights because

its easy to see what we find harder or easier in Maths when all you have to do is

lift up a coloured square.

Hannah: I feel that I learned more about the different kinds of assessment and

we had more variety in our assessment.

Luke: I found out that assessment does not mean just tests and it's not all boring

and my favourite one was C3B4Me.

While the qualitative data has been the most beneficial for me for this research, the

quantitative data from the pupil surveys conducted also corroborated the above

findings. Pupils were asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with

statements about their understanding of teacher-led, peer and self-assessment. In Week

1, 10% of pupils said that they could confidently explain what is meant by teacher-led

assessment. By Week 8, that had risen to 45.5%. In Week 1, 20% of pupils said that they could confidently explain what is meant by peer-assessment. By Week 8, that had risen to 64%. In Week 1, 20% of pupils said that they could confidently explain what is meant by self-assessment. By Week 8, that had also risen to 64%. This increase in pupil knowledge of assessment types highlights how pupils learned a great deal about assessment by taking part in this research process. While the choice and responsibility aspects were of greater importance to me at the outset, I found that I was living more closely to my values of trust, independence and responsibility simply by talking to the children about assessment. By including them in the conversation and giving them access to the vocabulary they needed to discuss their learning and the assessment of same, I was enabling them to become more independent and responsible learners. This was of great interest to me during standardised testing this academic year, as I noted that "pupil knowledge of the range of assessments they have used all year has almost taken the power or fear out of standardised testing this year. I think this might be because they know standardised testing is just one of the many different ways we can assess and it's not the be all and end all" (McGloin, Reflection Journal, 2022). This finding also mirrors further findings by Constant and Connolly. They found that pupils "became increasingly autonomous learners, as they were equipped with the necessary strategies and skills to evaluate their learning effectively" (2014: 43-44). This simple change in my practice is something I will be eager to integrate into my future practice as it had an impact on pupils. It helped to remove the feeling I had at the outset that assessment was 'just for me' as their teacher, to be kept neatly in my blue folder. It helped to open up the assessment process and ensure that it became a "shared endeavour" (NCCA, 2020: 24). The increased communication with pupils about assessment of and for their learning led to greater pupil engagement with assessment.

This reflected the findings of Patall et al. who concluded that choice may be the "most concrete way for teachers to communicate to students that they view them as autonomous learners" (2010: 912). Giving choice to pupils helped them to become more engaged and interested in assessing their learning, which in turn showed pupils that I value them as autonomous learners who are capable of being trusted and responsible in their approach to learning.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the three key themes of this research and their findings. It has discussed the impact giving negative formative feedback to peers can have, the importance of choice in the classroom through assessment and the role of communication and pupil involvement in the assessment process. The next chapter will outline concluding remarks and recommendations for future practice and research.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This self-study action research project has investigated how best I can give choice and responsibility to the pupils in my class in assessment of and for their learning. While this is one self-study action research project which focused solely on the classroom experience of one teacher and class, there are many interesting and thought-provoking ideas which have come from the findings of this research. These ideas may be considered by others in relation to their own practice and indeed by me as I progress in my career and as I consider the possibility of conducting further research in the future.

This chapter offers concluding remarks and recommendations based on the findings outlined in the previous chapter. First, I will review the limitations of self-study action research. Then, I will outline how the findings from the data collected helped me to address and answer the research question I posed at the outset of this research project. Next, I will discuss the recommendations with reference to my own professional practice, school policy and future research. Finally, I will offer some concluding remarks and thoughts in the form of a reflection.

5.2 Limitations of Self-Study Action Research

This self-study action research project was completed within the classroom of one teacher with 26 pupils. As a result, the findings and subsequent recommendations and reflections are specific to that context and may not be replicable in other settings with other pupils and with another researcher. Furthermore, the pupils participating in this

research were in 6th class and aged between 11 and 13 at the time of data collection. As a result, it is not possible to generalise these findings or apply them to the experiences of younger class levels or cohorts. However, as the research focused on assessment practices which all mainstream primary school teachers typically engage in on a daily basis in their course of work, it is hoped that the take-away points and conclusions from this thesis may be of benefit to others who wish to consider how they could integrate choice into their assessment practices with their pupils.

It is also worth considering the impact that my position as an insider researcher may have had on the data collection process. As noted in Chapter 2, Drew cautions that pupils often known when there is a perceived "right" or "wrong" answer and may anticipate what they expect their teacher wants to hear (Drew, 2019). In light of this, I ensured I spent time modelling the language of reflection and reminded pupils that the most important thing in their reflections was to be honest and to reflect their genuine opinion. However, it is not possible to ensure that this was followed by all pupils and it is worth acknowledging that my position as their teacher may have influenced some of their responses.

5.3 Addressing the Research Question

The question I posed at the outset of this research was: *How can I give choice and responsibility to pupils in assessment of and for their learning to enhance pupil autonomy?* Some of the themes and findings highlighted other aspects of my practice and gave insights into the views and feelings of pupils which I would not have anticipated prior to conducting this research. The theme of Choice and the finding that

"Choice is do-able and feasible in everyday practice" has supported me in answering

the first part of my identified question. While the level of pre-planning observed for the

purposes of this research would not be realistic or attainable for everyday practice, the

integration of choice is something that I can see being applicable for me in my teaching.

I have come to see the benefits of giving choice and of giving a real-world application

to the voice of the child in my classroom. Pupil knowledge of assessment practices and

tools was a necessary prerequisite for the giving of choice in the use of assessment tools

for me. There are many resources at hand for teachers to use to support them in

teaching pupils about assessment and the language of assessment in an age-appropriate

manner.

The second part of my identified question asked how I could give responsibility to the

pupils in my class in assessment of and for their learning. I have learned that choice is

something tangible that can be given – 2 Stars and a Wish or use of a Rubric, oral or

written feedback, peer-correction or whole-class correction. However, responsibility is

something less concrete which can only be fostered or developed over time. The most

notable data which reflected the development of pupil responsibility was my own

reflective journal, written as a response to my observations in class. By the conclusion

of the research, I noticed a shift in pupil confidence. The children were significantly

more confident discussing their learning and felt comfortable discussing assessment. It

was no longer something that meant "test". It was something that was integrated into

our daily classroom life and that was there to benefit the children and their learning.

I have also learned that the taking of responsibility is not linear and can vary from day to day, pupil to pupil. It is something I was so eager to foster in the pupils in my class as a result of my own primary school experience where we were trusted a great deal and tasked with a high level of responsibility. Reflecting on this experience has made me realise that responsibility is something primary school age children are highly capable of taking when opportunities are given. It is the giving of ample opportunities which enables pupils to see themselves as capable of taking responsibility for something, such as for assessment of their learning. The manner in which I had engaged in assessment practices prior to this research project was restrictive and did not enable pupils to be part of the conversation about assessment, let alone take responsibility for it themselves. Conducting assessment more openly and ensuring that the conversation is had with pupils about what they are learning and how we will assess it has helped me to create a learning environment where responsibility can be fostered and developed.

Overall, I learned that choice is something that is feasible to integrate into my daily practice. The giving of choice helped pupils to become more active in the assessment process. It allowed them to demonstrate autonomy and it helped me to enhance pupil autonomy more generally in the classroom, as it helped me to show pupils that I see them as capable, trustworthy, responsible learners. The children in my class demonstrated a preference for oral assessment, for a balance of teacher, peer and self-assessment, and for peer-assessment during assessment *for* learning only. Pupils communicated that they felt pressure and fear when engaging in peer-assessment *of* learning, due to the anticipated perception of them as the assessor if 'negative' feedback was needed. By the end of the research period, pupils demonstrated an increased awareness and knowledge of classroom assessment practices and had a better

understanding of the range of assessment options available across the continuum of assessment.

5.4 Recommendations

The recommendations stemming from the findings of this research will now be examined with reference to my own professional practice, school policy and future research. These recommendations are specific to the context of this research and I am aware that the findings I identified are not generalisable for other teachers, classrooms or contexts. However, it is hoped that the insights I gained from this research project could be of benefit to others who wish to examine the benefits of giving choice and responsibility to pupils in assessment of and for their learning in their own contexts.

5.4.1 For my own professional practice

The process of undertaking this research has helped me to learn a great deal more about assessment. I have a wider understanding of the range of assessment tools available and how best they can be used to facilitate choice in the classroom. I have a new appreciation of the value of sharing learning outcomes with the class at the outset of a lesson. The time given to these small daily activities has far-reaching benefits for pupils' understanding of what and how they are learning. As a result, these practices are something I will integrate into my daily practice as a teacher in future. As I am now teaching Junior Infants, I will implement choice in my assessment practices in a gradual manner. I will start by teaching the pupils different age-appropriate ways to check their learning, before building to allow pupils to choose between two options for assessment. For example, pupils will choose between self-assessment or peer-assessment when

assessing their letter formation. I will discuss assessment with the children and ensure that communication is kept open and that assessment is not just for me but for the children to have a role in also.

The research process has also taught me the value of examining one's own practice and reflecting upon it. The skills I have learned through this formal research project and thesis helped me to truly stop and reflect on my practice and to identify what was working well and what needed improvement. It has helped me to interrogate my values and to question why I value trust, independence and responsibility over other aspects of my daily practice. Keeping in touch with my values as a teacher has helped me to live more closely to them in my practice (Sullivan et al., 2016). It has helped me to see how action needs to be taken for my values to be realised in my classroom.

Finally, undertaking this research project has enabled me to develop more generally as a professional. Connecting with other teachers and education professionals on this course has allowed me to learn from others in a meaningful way. Hearing about the work of other professionals in similar work environments to my own has helped me to consider other elements of my practice which I would relish the opportunity to examine in my own context. The passion and dedication of other education professionals on this Master of Education programme has benefited me as we have established ourselves as a strong network of professionals for each other. This collaborative community is something I look forward to maintaining as we complete our research projects and move forward in our professional lives.

5.4.2 For school policy

This research project has been a welcome opportunity for me to collaborate with my colleagues in school. As my validation group comprised of my colleagues in 6th class, they were uniquely positioned to comment on my findings and actions taken as they work in similar contexts to my own. Their positive feedback and their openness to implementing similar actions in their own classrooms helped me to see the value of professional collaboration. Regarding school policy, it so happens that our school is currently conducting a whole-school review on Assessment as we move to a new model of support provision. I will use my findings and ideas generated from this research project to inform conversations with colleagues and to inform changes made at school-level. I have offered to work with another colleague to lead school-wide changes regarding assessment that will prioritise the incorporation of pupil voice and choice in assessment. While the findings are not fully generalisable, much of the learning gained would be worth applying to classes at the senior end of the school. Across all classes in the school, it is possible to consider the role pupil choice can have in assessment. In an age-appropriate manner, pupils can be enabled to take responsibility for their learning and to show ways in which they can assess their own learning. Building these skills from a younger age would potentially result in pupils who are more responsible for assessment of and for their learning by the time they reach 6th class. The potential for this research to have a school-wide impact is something which is intriguing and exciting for me as a researcher.

5.4.3 For future research

The findings of this research generated many ideas and pauses for thought for me as a researcher. As someone who is open to the possibility of conducting further research in future, the aspects of this research which generate the most interesting questions are a) the potential impact school-wide implementation of pupil-choice in assessment would have, and b) the impact of giving negative formative feedback to peers and the perceived negative connotations formative feedback has for learners. As empirical studies on classroom assessment in primary schools are limited within the Irish context, it is something which I would relish the opportunity to investigate further in future.

5.5 Final Reflection

The path this research project has taken has surprised me in many ways. Having taught 5th and 6th class for the past number of years, I had felt frustrated at the assessment process. I felt disheartened at regularly correcting the same mistakes and writing similar feedback for pupils' work. The time taken to do this and the effect it had on my confidence caused me to consider what I could do better in how I assess learning. Teaching senior classes, I knew that the pupils were of an age where they could take on responsibility and could show great maturity in many ways. Why had I not allowed them to demonstrate this responsibility in assessment? Why did I keep assessment as something that was purely mine, tucked away in my blue folder? Having now completed the self-study action research, I have come to learn much more than I anticipated. The pupils in my class have taught me a great deal about my work as a teacher and about the impact one change in practice can have. They have taught me that reflecting on my values in practice and making one small change can impact their

learning for the better and will hopefully enable them to be responsible, independent learners as they move on into secondary school. As I change class levels to teach Junior Infants in September 2022, I am keenly aware of the importance of my values. Will my values change with a younger class? Will other values come more to the fore as I teach younger children? Maybe. However, I will be attentive to the need to trust my pupils, to give them choices when I can and to give them the space they need to become independent, responsible learners with a voice to be listened to.

5.6 Conclusion

As I reach the end of my self-study action research journey, I am very grateful to have learned such a great deal about my practice and to have discovered an element of teaching and education about which I am so passionate. I have learned how to give choice to pupils in assessment of and for their learning. I have learned to be conscious of the language we use in formative feedback. I have learned that including pupils in something such as assessment can enable them to show responsibility and to become more independent over time. Most importantly, I have learned the value of a professional learning community, such as the one I have gained in my peers on this course. The learning we have taken from each other is something I will forever treasure and I will now be much more aware of the positive impact collaboration with other professionals can have. To conclude, I would like to quote a reflection by one of the participants in this research – "Sometimes it's hard to do something you don't like or aren't used to but it could still be useful. We might prefer to do something else, but sometimes you have to try something new if you actually want to learn" (Grace, Reflection Journal, 2022).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Plain Language Statement (Pupils)

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Appendix P: List of prompt questions for pupil reflection journals

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Appendix A: Plain Language Form (Pupils)
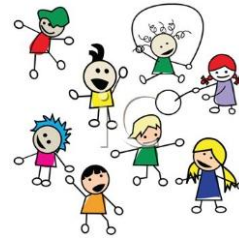
Dear Pupil,

As you know, I am a student in Maynooth University this year. As part of my course, I am trying to find out how I can give more choice and responsibility to children in assessing their learning in primary school. I will focus on assessment in English and Mathematics. To learn more about how to give you more choice and responsibility in assessment, I need to collect data. I would like your help with this.

What data do I want to collect?

- Surveys
- Samples of your work
- Pupil reflective journals
- Voice recordings of discussions about assessment and learning
- Teacher reflective journal

I would like to ask you to help me to devise ways to assess your learning that give you more choice about how assessment is done in our classroom. I also want to give you more responsibility for assessing your learning. I would like to ask you to keep a reflective journal to write down how you find assessing your learning as we go along. I would like to voice record some of our discussions about assessment so I can learn from you. I would like to ask you to complete simple surveys and to allow me to use some of your work samples to help me learn more about

assessment in the classroom. I would also like to observe you in class and to complete my own reflective journal.

I am doing this research so that I can become a better teacher and so that I can improve how I do assessment in the classroom. All your names will be anonymous and no details that could identify you will be used in my research. All the data will be kept safely and securely and the information you share will be confidential and anonymous. At the end of the research, I will share my findings with you. I will also share the findings with the other 6th class teachers. I may also present my findings at educational conferences and in written publications. My supervisor and lecturers in Maynooth University will also hear about our research and I will share the findings with them too.

I have asked your Parent/Guardian to talk to you about this. If you have any questions, I am happy to answer them. If you are happy to take part in the research, please sign the Assent Form. If you change your mind after we start, that's ok too. You can change your mind and withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for considering taking part in the research with me,

Ms. McGloin

<u>Appendix B: Assent Form (Pupils)</u>

**Maynooth University Froebel Department of
Primary and Early Childhood Education**

**Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath-
Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.**

My parent/guardian has read the information sheet with me. My teacher
has answered any questions I had. I know I can withdraw at any time. I
agree to take part in this research.

Name of child:

_____

Signature of child:

_____

Date:

_____

Appendix C: Information Sheet (Parents)

Information Sheet: Parents/Guardians

Maynooth University Froebel
Department of
Primary and Early
Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun-
agus Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Who is this information sheet for?

This information sheet is for parents and guardians.

What is this Action Research Project about?

Students on the Master of Education (Research in Practice) course in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood, Maynooth University are required to conduct an action research project, examining an area of their own practice as a teacher. This project will involve an analysis of the teacher's own practice. Data will be generated using observations, teacher reflective notes, surveys, pupil work samples, voice recordings of discussions on assessment and pupil reflective journals. I am then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

What is the research question?

- How can I give more choice and responsibility to pupils in assessment of and for their learning?

What sorts of methods will be used?

- Observations
- Teacher and pupil reflective journals
- Surveys

- Voice Recordings (anonymised) of discussions about assessment with pupils
- Pupil work samples

Who else will be involved?

The study will be carried out by me, Katie McGloin, as part of the Master of Education (Research in Practice) course in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. The thesis will be submitted for assessment to the module leader Dr Bernadette Wrynn and will be examined by the Department staff. My research supervisor is Dr. Fiona Nic Fhionnlaoich. The external examiners will also access the final thesis. A critical friend will be involved throughout the process to guide and advise. The research findings will also be shared with my validation group, made up of my colleagues in 6th class.

What are you being asked to do?

You are being asked for your consent to permit me to undertake this study with your child. In all cases the data that is collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and the analysis will be reported anonymously. The data captured will only be used for the purpose of the research as part of the Master of Education in the Froebel Department, Maynooth University and will be destroyed in accordance with University guidelines. Findings from this research may also be shared at conferences or in educational publications.

Contact details: Student: Katie McGloin   **E:** katie.mcgloin.2022@mumail.ie

Appendix D: Plain Language Statement (Parents)

Plain language form: Parents/Guardians

**Maynooth University Froebel Department of
Primary and Early Childhood
Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus
Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.**

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

I am a student on the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University. As part of my degree, I am doing a research project. My research focuses on giving choice and responsibility to pupils in assessment and whether this leads to improvements in the achievement of learning outcomes. The research will focus on assessment in English and Mathematics. The aim of the research is to improve my professional practice and enhance my teaching. In order to do this, I intend to carry out research in the classroom by working with the children to devise ways to assess their learning that give them choice and responsibility for their learning.

The data will be collected using teacher observations, pupil work samples and a teacher reflective journal. Voice recordings of discussions on assessment, pupil surveys and children's reflective journals will also be used to document their opinions on learning and assessment.

Your child's name and the name of the school will not be included in the thesis that I will write at the end of the research. You or your child can withdraw without penalty from the research process at any stage. All information will be confidential and will be destroyed in a stated timeframe in accordance with Maynooth University guidelines. All data will be stored <u>safely, securely, confidentially and anonymously</u>. Any hard copies or physical data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Any digital data will be stored in a password protected folder on a password protected device. This research project has been granted ethical approval by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

I would like to invite you and your child to give permission for him/her to take part in this project. If you have any queries on any part of this research project, feel free to contact me by email at katie.mcgloin.2022@mumail.ie

Yours faithfully,

Katie McGloin

Appendix E: Consent Form (Parents)

Consent Form: Parents/Guardians

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath-Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad

I have read the information provided in the attached letter and information sheet. All of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to the participation of my child in this study. I am aware that I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

Name of Child: _____

Parent / Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Child's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Information Sheet (Board of Management)

Information Sheet: Board of Management

**Maynooth University Froebel
Department of
Primary and Early
Childhood Education**

**Roinn Froebel Don Bhun-
agus Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.**

Who is this information sheet for?

This information sheet is for the Board of Management of ABC National School.

What is this Action Research Project about?

Students on the Master of Education (Research in Practice) course in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood, Maynooth University are required to conduct an action research project, examining an area of their own practice as a teacher. This project will involve an analysis of the teacher's own practice. Data will be generated using observations, teacher reflective notes, surveys, pupil work samples, voice recordings of discussions about assessment and pupil reflective journals. I am then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

What is the research question?

- How can I give more choice and responsibility to pupils in assessment of and for their learning?

What sorts of methods will be used?

- Observations
- Teacher and pupil reflective journals
- Surveys

- Voice Recordings (anonymised) of discussions about assessment with pupils, critical friend and validation group
- Pupil work samples

Who else will be involved?

The study will be carried out by me, Katie McGloin, as part of the Master of Education (Research in Practice) course in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. The thesis will be submitted for assessment to the module leader Dr Bernadette Wrynn and will be examined by the Department staff. My research supervisor is Dr. Fiona Nic Fhionnlaoich. The external examiners will also access the final thesis. A critical friend will be involved throughout the process to guide and advise. The research findings will also be shared with my validation group, made up of my colleagues in 6th class.

What are you being asked to do?

You are being asked for your consent to permit me to undertake this study with my class. In all cases the data that is collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and the analysis will be reported anonymously. The data captured will only be used for the purpose of the research as part of the Master of Education in the Froebel Department, Maynooth University and will be destroyed in accordance with University guidelines. Findings from this research may also be shared at conferences or in educational publications.

Contact details: Student: Katie McGloin   **E:** katie.mcgloin.2022@mumail.ie

Appendix G: Plain Language Statement (Board of Management)

Plain language form: Board of Management

**Maynooth University Froebel Department of
Primary and Early Childhood
Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus
Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.**

Dear Chairperson,

I am a student on the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University. As part of my degree, I am doing a research project. My research focuses on giving choice and responsibility to pupils in assessment and whether this leads to improvements in the achievement of learning outcomes. The research will focus on assessment in English and Mathematics. The aim of the research is to improve my professional practice and enhance my teaching. In order to do this, I intend to carry out research in the classroom by working with the children to devise ways to assess their learning that give them choice and responsibility for their learning.

The data will be collected using teacher observations, pupil work samples and a teacher reflective journal. Voice recordings of discussions on assessment, pupil surveys and children's reflective journals will also be used to document their opinions on learning and assessment.

Children's names and the name of the school will not be included in the thesis that I will write at the end of the research. Children or their Parents/Guardians can withdraw without penalty from the research process at any stage. All information will be confidential and will be destroyed in a stated timeframe in accordance with Maynooth University guidelines. All data will be stored <u>safely, securely, confidentially and anonymously</u>. Any hard copies or physical data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Any digital data will be stored in a password protected folder on a password protected device. This research project has been granted ethical approval by Froebel Department of Primary & Early Childhood Education.

I am seeking your consent to conduct this research with my class. If you have any queries on any part of this research project, feel free to contact me by email at katie.mcgloin.2022@mumail.ie

Yours faithfully,

Katie McGloin

Appendix H: Consent Form (Board of Management)

Consent Form: Board of Management

**Maynooth University Froebel Department of
Primary and Early Childhood Education**

**Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath-
Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad**

I have read the information provided in the attached letter and information sheet. All of my questions have been answered. I give permission for this research to be conducted by Katie McGloin in ABC National School. I am aware that I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

Chairperson Name: _____

Chairperson Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix I: Information Sheet (Validation Group / Critical Friend)

Information Sheet: Validation Group Members

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Who is this information sheet for?

This information sheet is for members of Katie McGloin's validation group.

What is this Action Research Project about?

Students on the Master of Education (Research in Practice) course in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood, Maynooth University are required to conduct an action research project, examining an area of their own practice as a teacher. This project will involve an analysis of the teacher's own practice. Data will be generated using observations, teacher reflective notes, surveys, pupil work samples, voice recordings of discussions about assessment and pupil reflective journals. I am then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

What is the research question?

- How can I give more choice and responsibility to pupils in assessment of and for their learning?

What sorts of methods will be used?

- Observations
- Teacher and pupil reflective journals
- Surveys

- Voice Recordings (anonymised) of discussions about assessment with pupils, critical friend and validation group
- Pupil work samples

Who else will be involved?

The study will be carried out by me, Katie McGloin, as part of the Master of Education (Research in Practice) course in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. The thesis will be submitted for assessment to the module leader Dr Bernadette Wrynn and will be examined by the Department staff. My research supervisor is Dr. Fiona Nic Fhionnlaoich. The external examiners will also access the final thesis. A critical friend will be involved throughout the process to guide and advise. The research findings will also be shared with you, my validation group, made up of my colleagues in 6th class.

What are you being asked to do?

You are being asked for your consent to participate in my validation group. In all cases the data that is collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and the analysis will be reported anonymously. The data captured will only be used for the purpose of the research as part of the Master of Education in the Froebel Department, Maynooth University and will be destroyed in accordance with University guidelines. Findings from this research may also be shared at conferences or in educational publications.

Contact details: Student: Katie McGloin   **E:** katie.mcgloin.2022@mumail.ie

Appendix J: Plain Language Statement (Validation Group / Critical Friend)

Plain language form: Validation Group Members

Maynooth University Froebel Department of
Primary and Early
Childhood Education
Roinn Froebel Don Bhun-
agus Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Dear X,

I am a student on the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University. As part of my degree, I am doing a research project. My research focuses on giving choice and responsibility to pupils in assessment and whether this leads to improvements in the achievement of learning outcomes. The aim of the research is to improve my professional practice and enhance my teaching. In order to do this, I intend to carry out research in the classroom by working with the children to devise ways to assess their learning that give them choice and responsibility for their learning.

The data will be collected using teacher observations, pupil work samples and a teacher reflective journal. Voice recordings of discussions on assessment, pupil surveys and children's reflective journals will also be used to document their opinions on learning and assessment.

Children's names and the name of the school will not be included in the thesis that I will write at the end of the research. Children or their Parents/Guardians can withdraw without penalty from the research process at any stage.

All information will be confidential and will be destroyed in a stated timeframe in accordance with Maynooth University guidelines. All data will be stored safely, securely, confidentially and anonymously. Any hard copies or physical data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Any digital data will be stored in a password protected folder on a password protected device. This research project has been granted ethical approval by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

I am seeking your participation as a member of my validation group. I intend to share my findings with you at the conclusion of the research. I will seek your professional opinion on my findings as I seek to validate same. I intend to voice record some of our discussions about the research for use as data, the transcripts of which will be anonymised. If you have any queries on

any part of this research project, feel free to contact me by email at
katie.mcgloin.2022@mumail.ie

Yours faithfully,

Katie McGloin

Appendix K: Consent Form (Validation Group / Critical Friend)

Consent Form: Validation Group Members

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath-Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad

I have read the information provided in the attached letter and information sheet. All of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily consent to taking part in the validation group. I consent to conversations about the research being recorded for use as data, the transcripts of which will be anonymised. I am aware that I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

Validation Group Member / Critical Friend Name:

_____

Validation Group Member / Critical Friend Signature:

_____

Date: _____

Appendix L: Action Plan Cycle 1

Cycle 1 – Week 1 and Week 2 – Focus on Assessment in English

	English lesson focus	Research instruments	Assessment practices
Monday 31st January	Note: Explicitly teach vocabulary needed for discussions about assessment Persuasive Language - Identifying features of persuasive text - Identifying examples of persuasive text - Oral language discussion to model use of persuasive language	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal - Pupil survey - Meet with critical friend	- KWL - Think Pair Share - Thumbs up/down - Teacher anecdotal notes
Tuesday 1st February	Persuasive Language - Oral language lesson focusing on informal debates - Written task on differentiating between fact and opinion	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journals	- Teacher anecdotal notes - Snowballing discussion - Walking debate
Wednesday 2nd February	Persuasive Language - Oral language lesson focusing on thinking about both sides of an informal debate - Written task on using a variety of short, medium and long sentences	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journals	- Conferencing - 2 stars and a wish - Peer-assessment feedback
Thursday 3rd February	Persuasive language - Oral language lesson. Presenting an argument for topic, speaking for two minutes about a topic e.g. e-books are much better than real, paper books	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal	- Teacher anecdotal notes - Peer assessment – 2 stars and a wish
Friday 4th February	Persuasive language - Oral language lesson. Conducting a short, informal debate on a topic as part of a team e.g. time given to physical activity in schools should be increased - Written task: Write about the features of persuasive language (what a persuasive text needs to have)	- Teacher observations and journal - Circle time – discussion about assessment this week - Meet with critical friend	- Written assessment on features of persuasive text - Self-assessment rubric
Monday 7th February	Persuasive language - Oral language game: Counterargument tennis - Written task: Brainstorming points for and against a topic for debate	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal - Pupil survey	- Traffic lights - Peer-assessment feedback
Tuesday 8th February	Persuasive language - Oral language game: Debate stations	- Teacher observations and journal	- Snowballing discussion - Teacher anecdotal notes

	- Written task: Developing ideas and explaining reasons for points either for/against topic for debate	- Pupil reflection journal	
Wednesday 9th February	Persuasive language - Written task: Structuring a written speech for use in formal debate	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal	- Conferencing
Thursday 10th February	Persuasive language - Written task: Proofreading, editing and re-drafting speech for formal debate	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal - Pupil work sample	- Conferencing - 2 stars and a wish
Friday 11th February	Persuasive language - Oral language: Conduct formal debate - Written task: Writing a counter-argument and refuting arguments of others	- Teacher observations and journal - Circle time – discussion about assessment - Pupil survey - Meet with critical friend	- Teacher anecdotal notes and checklist - Self-assessment rubric

Cycle 1 – Week 3 and Week 4 – Focus on Assessment in Mathematics

	Mathematics lesson focus	Research instruments	Assessment practices
Monday 14th February	Note: Revise vocabulary needed for discussions about assessment Data - As a class, agree on topic on which to collect data e.g. time spent reading over 5 days - Complete KWL on data recording and representation methods - Represent data sets on bar charts and multiple bar charts	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal - Pupil survey - Meet with critical friend	- KWL - Think Pair Share - Thumbs up/down - Teacher anecdotal notes
Tuesday 15th February	Data - Revise rounding to nearest 10, 100, 1000 - Represent data sets on bar-line and trend graphs - Interpret data by accurately reading bar-line and trend graphs	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journals	- Teacher anecdotal notes - Traffic lights - C3B4Me
Wednesday 16th February	Data - Interpret data by accurately reading trend graphs - Collate given data and summarise before representing on a trend graph	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journals	- Sharing mini-whiteboard work - Traffic lights - C3B4Me

Thursday 17th February	Data - Complete group task on rounding to nearest 10, 100, 1000 - Interpret data by accurately reading trend graph - Complete problem-solving activities based on trend graph - Pupils work with small group to identify problem-solving strategies	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal	- Sharing mini-whiteboard work - Traffic lights - C3B4Me - Peer-correction
Friday 18th February	Data - Share and collect data recorded on agreed topic e.g. time spent reading over 5 days - Represent data on bar graph, bar line graph and trend graph - Write and solve problem-solving activities based on charts/graphs drawn - Written termly test on topics from January-February Midterm	- Teacher observations and journal - Circle time – discussion about assessment this week - Meet with critical friend - Pupil work sample	- Written assessment - Peer-assessment rubric/checklist - Pupil work samples - feedback
Monday 28th February	Fractions/Decimals/Percentages - Whole-class work to revise prior learning on this topic - Calculate profit or loss	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal	- Traffic lights - Teacher anecdotal notes
Tuesday 1st March	Fractions/Decimals/Percentages - Calculate profit or loss as a percentage of original price	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal	- Teacher anecdotal notes - Sharing mini-whiteboard work
Wednesday 2nd March	Fractions/Decimals/Percentages - Calculate cost price, sale price and percentage increase	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal	- Sharing mini-whiteboard work - Traffic lights - C3B4Me
Thursday 3rd March	Fractions/Decimals/Percentages - Whole-class and individual problem-solving activities to apply learning. Pupils work with small group to identify problem-solving strategies.	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal - Pupil work sample	- Sharing mini-whiteboard work - Traffic lights - C3B4Me
Friday 4th March	Fractions/Decimals/Percentages - Whole-class and individual problem-solving activities to apply learning. - Pupils work with small group to identify problem-solving strategies. - Short written test on Fractions, Decimals and Percentages	- Teacher observations and journal - Circle time – discussion about assessment and next steps for W5-8 - Pupil survey - Meet with critical friend	- Teacher anecdotal notes - Written assessment - Thumbs up/down

Appendix M: Action Plan Cycle 2

Cycle 2 – Week 5 and Week 6 – Focus on Assessment in English

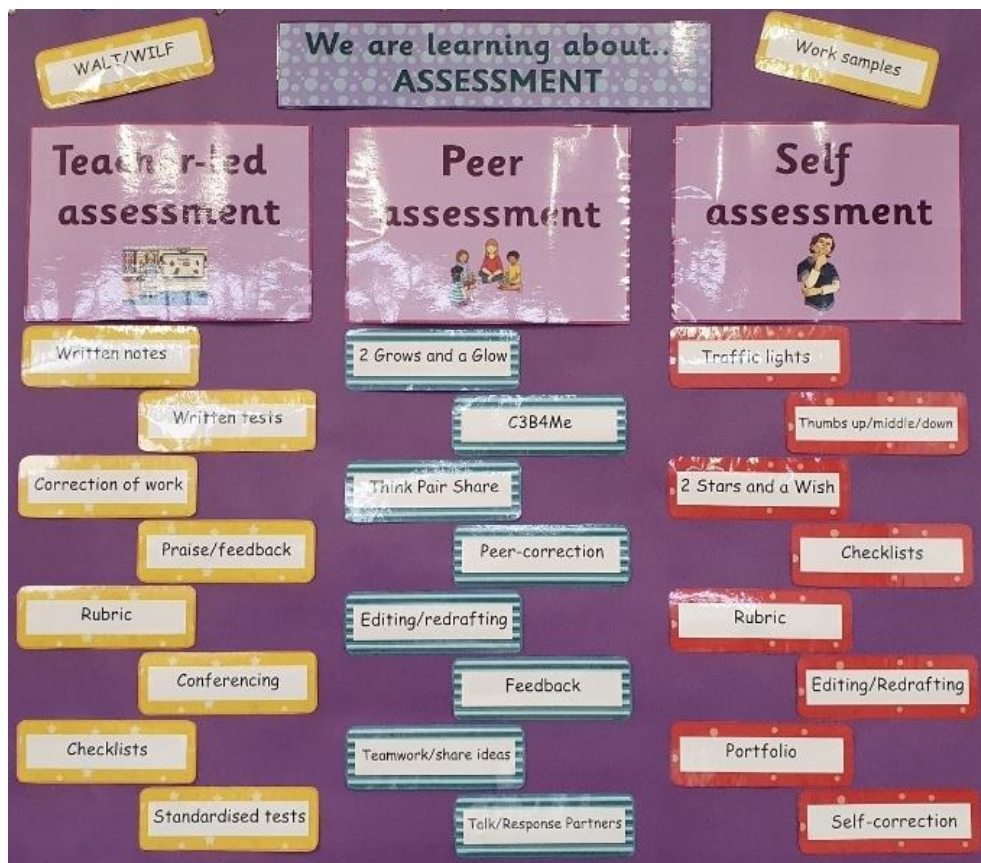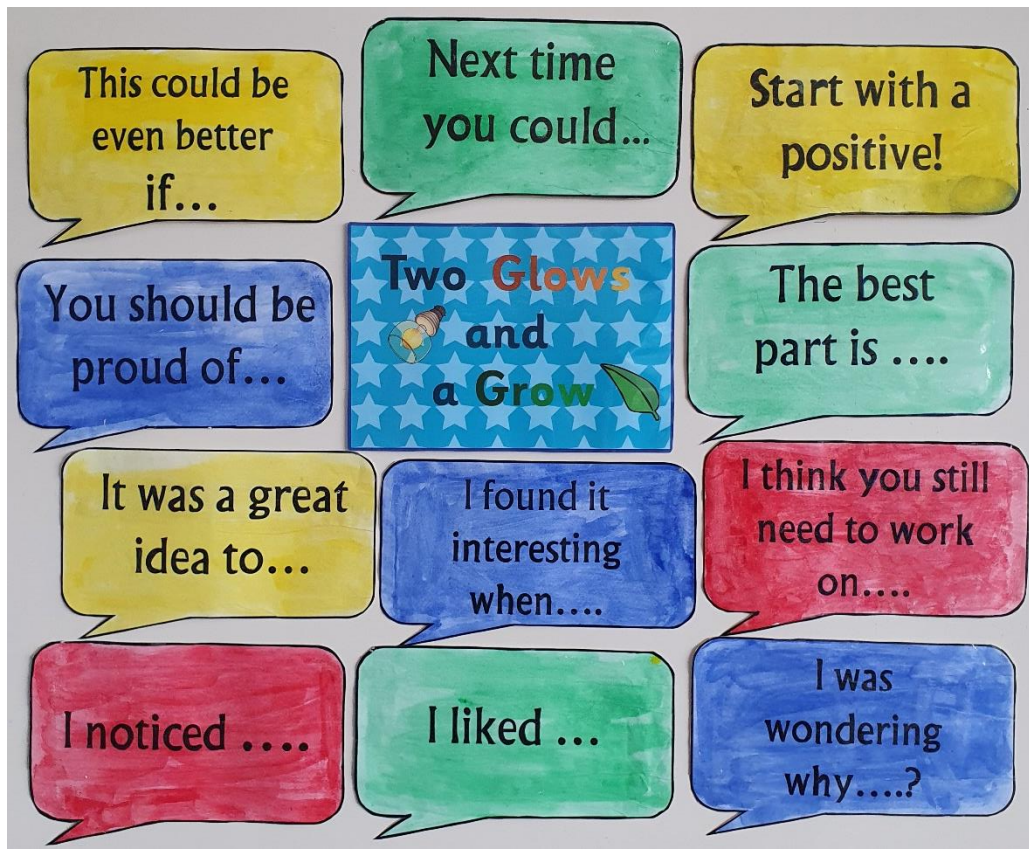|	English lesson focus	Research instruments	Assessment practices
Monday 7th March	Reports - Oral language – Brainstorm the main purpose of a report and listen to reports about space - Identify the main features and purpose of a report - Give examples of when a report is needed/used	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal - Meet with critical friend	- TPS - Traffic lights - Teamwork / sharing ideas
Tuesday 8th March	Reports - Oral language – Watch a silent video of a person giving a report and infer what the report may be about. Identify the skills needed for giving a report orally. - Read 3 different reports. Identify the main features of those reports. As a group, devise a poster to help us from now on to use the important features in our own reports.	- Teacher observations and journal - ~~Pupil reflection journals~~	- TPS - Conferencing
Wednesday 9th March	Reports - Oral language – Play "Just a minute" game to talk about a specific topic giving as much detail as possible in a short timeframe - Teacher shared writing example: As a class, write a short report on an unusual sport.	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journals	- Oral teacher feedback - Teacher correction / checking against the checklist
Thursday 10th March	Reports - Oral language – Play "Newshound" to gain information from a news article/report - Mini-lesson on researching and note taking (with teacher – not assessed) - Shared writing: In pairs, plan a report on Johannes Vermeer (artist)	- Teacher observations and journal - ~~Pupil reflection journal~~	- Thumbs up/down - Self-correction as a pair using poster from Tuesday / checklist
Friday 11th March	Reports - Oral language – Oral report stations – Speak about a particular topic for a certain length of time, with the skills needed for giving a report orally. - Mini-lesson on organising information (with teacher – not assessed) - Shared writing: In pairs, write a report on Johannes Vermeer (artist) and share	- Teacher observations and journal - ~~Circle time – discussion about assessment this week~~ - Meet with critical friend - Pupil work sample	- Oral peer feedback - Peer 2 Glows and a Grow
Monday 14th March	Reports - Oral language – Play "Name Three." To develop ability to think quickly and develop fluency of thought, speech and delivery (given a topic to name three things about) - Plan a report about the first International Space Station Mission	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal	- Self 2 glows and a grow - Checklist

Tuesday 15th March	Reports - Oral language- Oral Report scenarios – work in pairs to plan and deliver a report orally on a given scenario - Individually write a report about the first International Space Station	- Teacher observations and journal - ~~Pupil reflection journal~~	- Oral peer feedback - Written teacher feedback
Wednesday 16th March	Reports - Oral language – Play "Articulate" or "Don't Mention it" to develop ability to give specific information to explain a word or topic to others - Research information about a famous person of choice on whom to write a report	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal	- Traffic lights - Checklist
Monday 21st March	Reports - Plan a report using all the necessary features of a report about a famous person of choice - Write a report about a famous person of choice	- Teacher observations and journal - ~~Pupil reflection journal~~ - Pupil work sample	- Conferencing / teacher feedback - Self-correction using checklist and oral peer feedback
Tuesday 22nd March	Reports - Edit and revise written report about a famous person of choice - Orally share your written report with others, using the specific skills needed when delivering a report orally	- Teacher observations and journal - Circle time – discussion about assessment - Pupil survey - Meet with critical friend	- Checklist - Peer 2 glows and a grow Written

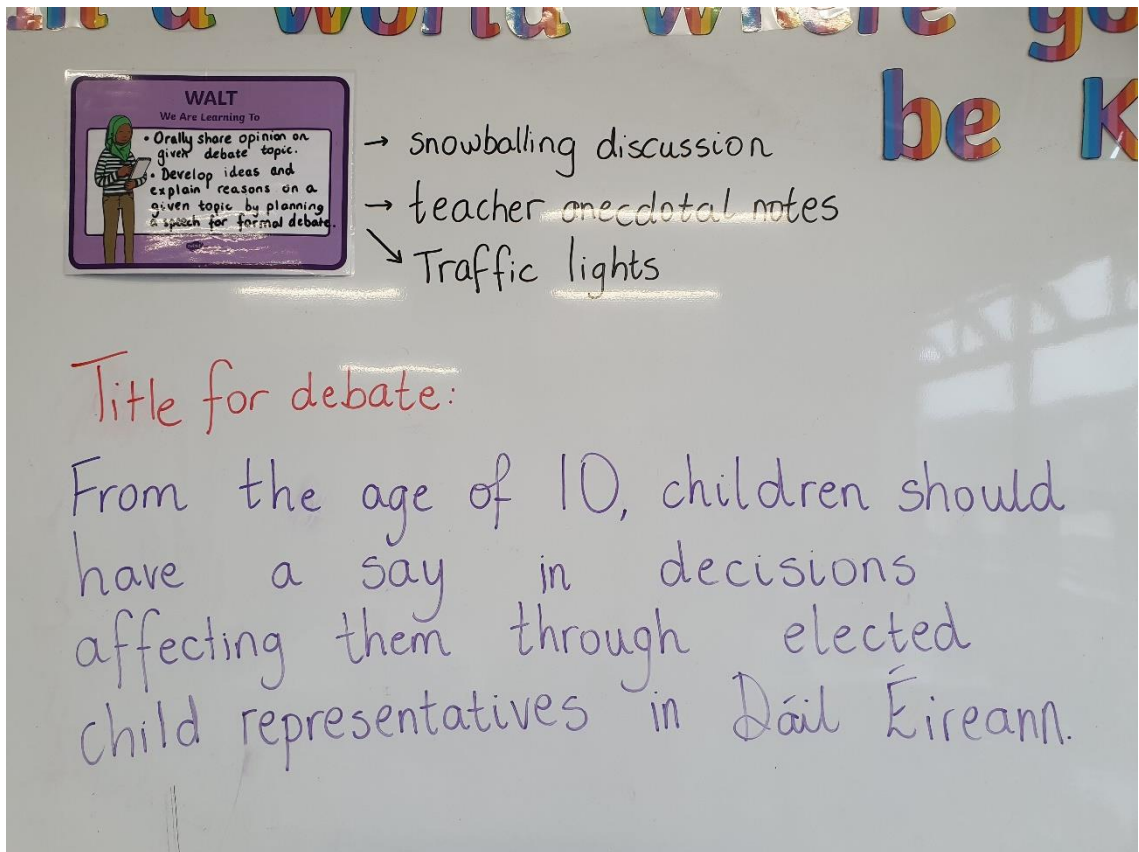**Cycle 2 – Week 7 and Week 8 – Focus on Assessment in Mathematics**

	Mathematics lesson focus	Research instruments	Assessment practices
Wednesday 23rd March	The Circle - Accurately name parts of a circle - Accurately measure the size of an angle in sectors of a circle	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal - Meet with critical friend	- Traffic lights - Peer correction
Thursday 24th March	The Circle - Accurately draw circles, using a compass, when given the radius - Accurately draw circles, using a compass, when given the diameter	- Teacher observations and journal - ~~Pupil reflection journals~~ - Pupil work sample	- Self correction - Peer correction
Friday 25th March	The Circle - Calculate the circumference of a circle - Calculate the perimeter of circle and semi-circle shapes	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journals	- Teamwork - C3B4Me
Wednesday 30th March	The Circle - Calculate the area of a circle	- Teacher observations and journal - ~~Pupil reflection journal~~	- C3B4Me

Thursday 31st March	The Circle This lesson depends on whether pupils opt for written tests or not: - Draw circles of your own measurements - Design sums and problems for peers based on the radius, diameter, area and circumference of the circles you have drawn - Complete tasks designed by a peer - Short written test on The Circle	- Teacher observations and journal - ~~Circle time – discussion about assessment this week~~ - Meet with critical friend - Pupil work sample	- Self correction - Teacher check-in - Peer correction
Friday 1st April	Rules and Properties - Pattern - Identify the relationship between numbers in sequences - Continue sequences based on the relationships identified	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal	- Traffic lights - C3B4Me / Teamwork
Monday 4th April	Rules and Properties – Pattern - Identify the order in which operations should be carried out in a sum that has more than one operation - Write a mnemonic to help us remember the correct order for operations - Complete sums using the correct order for operations	- Teacher observations and journal - ~~Pupil reflection journal~~	- Traffic Lights - Teamwork/class feedback - Whole class correction / C3B4Me
Tuesday 5th April	Rules and Properties – Pattern - Identify the order in which operations should be carried out in a sum that has more than one operation - Complete sums using the correct order for operations	- Teacher observations and journal - Pupil reflection journal	- Traffic Lights - C3B4Me / whole class teacher correction
Wednesday 6th April	Rules and Properties – Pattern - Complete problem-solving activities based on patterns and the order of operations	- Teacher observations and journal - ~~Pupil reflection journal~~	- C3B4Me / whole class teacher correction
Thursday 7th April	Rules and Properties – Pattern This lesson depends on whether pupils opt for written tests or not: - In pairs, design patterns and "order of operation" sums and problems for other pairs to complete - Short written test on Rules and Properties - Pattern	- Teacher observations and journal - Circle time – discussion about assessment and next steps for W5-8 - Pupil survey - Meet with critical friend - Pupil work sample	- Peer correction and teacher oral feedback

Appendix N: Classroom Displays

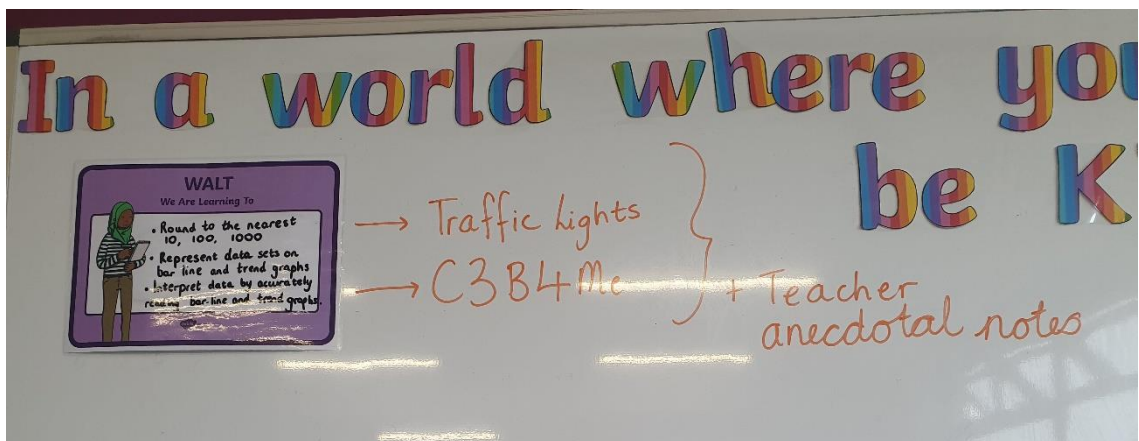**Appendix O: Examples of learning outcomes matched to assessment tools**

Appendix P: List of prompt questions for pupil reflection journals

Cycle 1:

Day 1: How would you explain what assessment means?

Day 2: What did you learn from the way teacher assessed/checked out learning today? (as in achievement of learning outcome)

Day 3: How do you feel when you are asked to give feedback to another pupil in the class about their work? Do you think its helpful? Why/Why not?

Day 4: Do you think feedback from your teacher is important? Why/why not?

Day 6: What have you learned about assessment so far?

Day 7: Do you think responsibility is important for pupils in 6th Class? Why/why not?

Day 8: When you got feedback from teacher today, how did you feel? Do you think it helped you to learn?

Day 9: What would you change about the way we do assessment in the class?

Day 11: Describe how you feel you are doing in your learning in Maths so far this year. Give examples.

Day 12: How did you find using the C3B4Me assessment tool today?

Day 13: How would you explain what responsibility means for someone your age?

Day 14: When you get to choose how you assess your Maths work, what tools would you use?

Day 16: What assessment tool would you most like to include when its your choice? Why?

Day 17: What did you find out about your learning in Maths from your BAM test result? Do you think tests like this are useful? Why/why not?

Day 18: When we used C3B4Me again today, did you enjoy using it? Is it something you want to keep or remove when its your choice? Why?

Day 19: Do you think mini-whiteboard work as a class/group is important for Maths? Why/why not?

Cycle 2:

Day 21: Why do you think, as a class, people prefer oral assessment tools over written assessment tools?

Day 23: Why do you think oral teacher feedback is important?

Day 26: As a class, you chose to include written teacher feedback. Why do you think that is?

Day 32: Do you think assessment has to be written down to be useful? Why/why not?

Day 36: Do you think traffic lights are helpful for quickly assessing Maths learning? Why/why not?

Day 38: Do you think it has been helpful to have a display up in the classroom to remind us of the words we use about assessment or give feedback to each other? Why/why not?

Appendix Q: Pupil Surveys 1-4

Topic: Assessment in the classroom

For each of the following statements 1-5, please **tick the box** that best matches your opinion/belief:

1. My teacher assesses my learning:

Never	Every month	Every week	A few times a week	Every day

2. I assess my own learning:

Never	Every month	Every week	A few times a week	Every day

3. I understand and can confidently explain - with examples - what is meant by the term _teacher-led assessment:_

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree

4. I understand and can confidently explain - with examples - what is meant by the term _peer-assessment:_

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree

5. I understand and can confidently explain - with examples - what is meant by the term _self-assessment:_

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Please give **examples** for each of the following, if you can:

Teacher-led assessment:

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Peer-assessment:

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Self-assessment:

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