

# **What happens when pupils carry out peer assessment using a specific success criteria checklist?**

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**Group 1C**

## ***Rationale***

Education Scotland highlights in Building the Curriculum 5 (2011) that the active involvement of pupils in assessment is crucial to guarantee they are responsible for their own and others learning. Therefore, the main goal of this research project is to focus on improving pupils learning through peer assessment. Mike Gershon (2013) explains that peer assessment opens up the assessment process for pupils. It gives pupils the opportunity to use success criteria to make judgments. This will help learners to understand what their own work is being judged against, what a good piece of work is, and how they can make their own work better. In my opinion, this is what I want peer assessment to be and as a probationer teacher I undertook this inquiry to understand if peer assessment checklists can provide this opportunity.

## ***Aims***

The aim of this inquiry was to provide eighteen pupils in an S.1 class with a peer assessment checklist after group performances in the Drama classroom to investigate if it improved pupil learning. This would determine if it would improve the quality of feedback and as a result improve their knowledge and understanding.

## ***Methodology***

To gain quantitative data an anonymous questionnaire was used at the beginning and the end of the research period, this was designed to measure pupils' views. An anonymous questionnaire was chosen to understand how the pupils felt about peer assessment in the classroom before the investigation was carried out. It would also insure that their results were honest and this would increase the reliability of data. Bryman (2012) states that a questionnaire is not time-consuming and you get a good response rate. However, Robson (2011) suggests that you may not be able to follow up areas of interest, to prevent this I created an 'explain your answer' section so the pupils could provide views and opinions on peer assessment which provided a small amount of qualitative data.

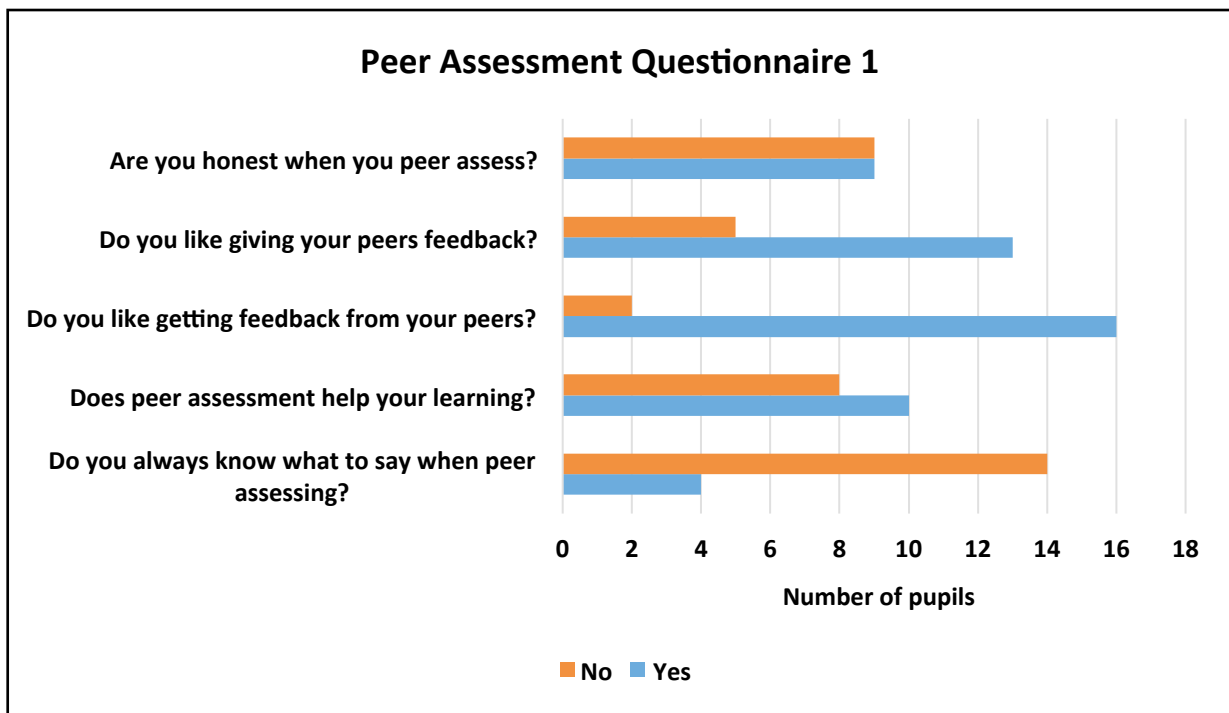
A peer assessment checklist was created as a class by including the success criteria they had to meet at the end of unit performance. Building the Curriculum 5 (2011) explains that formative assessment will not only support the learning but by using the correct assessment strategies will stimulate learner engagement which will in turn ensure that the pupils can secure their expansion of knowledge. Capel, Leask and Turner (2001) state that learners are engaged in the learning process when they are involved in creating a marking scheme based on success criteria as it allows them to become responsible for their own learning. The checklists were explained in detail to the pupils at the start of each lesson. After each performance the pupils had time to complete their checklists by speaking to their peers

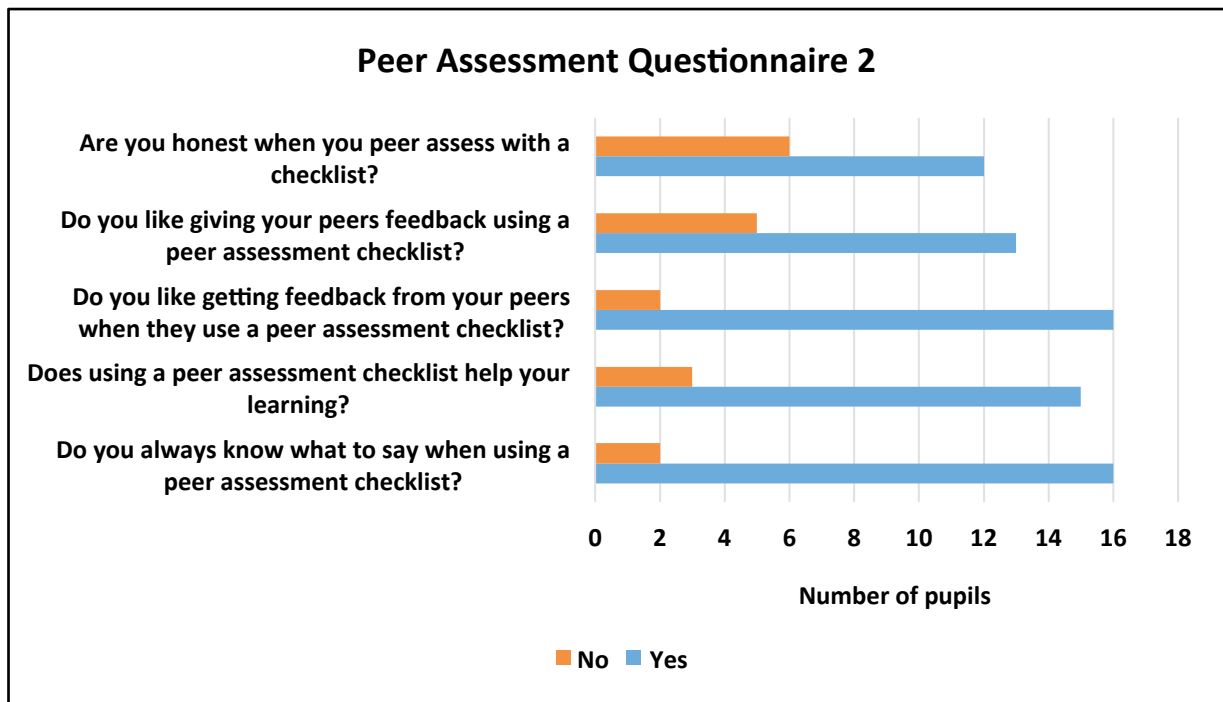
around them and then their name was picked from a random name generator and they used their comments on their checklist to give the group feedback. Pupils provided their answers in a 'Yes' and 'No' column and a 'Comments/next steps' box was available so the pupils could explain their answers in more detail and include next steps for improvement.

Pupils were observed on the completion of their checklists and during the think, pair and share discussions with their peers. I actively listened to their answers to see if they were using the success criteria provided on the checklist to construct their feedback. We then discussed the feedback given as a class after each group gave their feedback and this gave the pupils the opportunity to voice their opinions and views.

### ***Findings***

The below questions were conducted with eighteen pupils in the S.1 class.





Questionnaire 1 (Q1) and Questionnaire 2 (Q2) were very insightful. Q1 highlighted that out of 18 pupils, 9 stated that they were honest when they peer assess and 9 stated they were not honest. In Q2 12 pupils out of the 18 were honest when they used the checklist. One of the main issues in the use of peer assessment in classroom settings is that it can be biased due to friendships and social connections that go together with peer activities (Magin, 2001). Brindley and Scoffield (1998) state that there is a collective worry amongst learners about their participation in peer assessment as it would be ‘difficult to avoid personal bias’ and therefore their results are not always honest. One pupil added in the comments “No I am not always honest because I don’t want to annoy or upset anyone”. After using the checklist one pupil explained “I tried to be more honest as everyone was using the same checklist and couldn’t just make up an answer”

Before the pupils used the peer assessment checklist 13 out of 18 liked giving feedback, this stayed the same in Q2. 16 out of the 18 pupils also liked getting feedback from their peers and this stayed the same when their peers used the checklist. 10 out of the 18 pupils said that peer assessment helped to improve their learning in Q1 and in Q2 15 out of the 18 said using a peer assessment checklist helped to improve learning with one adding “I trust what they are saying because they are using the checklist”.

There was a noticeable difference in the last question, in Q1 as 14 pupils said they do not know what to say when they peer assess compared to 4 pupils who said they do. Pupils added in the qualitative section “I would need to ask the teacher for help as I don’t always know what to say”. In Q2 16 pupils out of 18 do know what to say when they using a peer assessment checklist. This shows that the peer assessment checklist had a positive impact on the pupils learning as the pupils had answers to give to their peers and in turn they received better quality answers which will help them to set their next steps for improvement.

The peer assessment checklists were completed by each pupil over the two performances and pupils used these as a structure to provide feedback. Pupils seemed to be really accepting of

the feedback they were given because they trusted that the peer assessment checklists were correct as they had created them. Pupils expressed to me that they enjoyed using the peer assessment checklists and I could see that the pupils were much more confident when they were giving their feedback as they had the time to discuss and plan their answers before feeding them back.

### ***Conclusions***

This research task was only carried out with one S.1 class within the school so it would be incorrect to come to any distinct conclusions. The research was only carried out for 4 weeks and my findings show that the majority of pupils liked getting feedback from their peers with or without the checklist. However, it did show that they felt that peer assessment checklists helped their learning by providing them with a structure to follow and this in turn allowed them to be more honest. I will continue to gauge their learning over a longer time period by putting end of unit peer assessment checklists in place throughout the next remaining unit.

Teachers must be reflective of their practice, Zeichner and Liston state that through reflection teachers will become skilled in their practice (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). A study by Grimmert and Erickson (1988) discovered that research projects involving teachers as researchers were effective in improving the professional development of the teachers involved and it also improved their classroom learning environment. This classroom research allows teachers to develop and have greater knowledge of peer assessment and how to successfully conduct this within the classroom whilst trying to prevent all of the limitations which may occur.

### ***Implications for Future Practice***

It is apparent that peer assessment checklists do help to structure pupils answers during peer assessment. However, it can not always be viewed as reliable or valid. For future practice, peer assessment could be conducted anonymously as well as face to face to see if the results become more reliable. Teachers should always be working on creating a safe and supportive classroom environment so the pupils feel they can be honest with their peers. On reflection, it is clear that an open and honest ethos within the classroom could possibly produce accurate peer assessment feedback Pupils need to be praised for their honesty as if pupils feels they can be honest with their peers it will allow them to improve their learning.

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*Appendix*



# S1 Peer Assessment Checklist

## Titanic Radio Interviews

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_

You are going to watch back each groups titanic radio performance and write down and complete the checklist below.

<b><u>12 Elements of Voice</u></b>				
Accent	Articulation	Clarity	Emphasis	
Fluency	Intonation	Pace	Pause	Pitch
	Register	Tone	Volume	

<u>S1 Voice Unit</u>	Group 1 (yes/no)	Group 2 (yes/no)	Group 3 (yes/no)	<u>Comments/Next Steps</u>
<p><b>Did each person in the group use some of the elements of voice?</b> Write down the elements of voice you heard in the comments box.</p>				
<p><b>Did everyone in the group stay in character?</b> Write down your reasons in the comments box.</p>				
<p><b>Was the performance interesting?</b> Explain your answer in the comments/next steps box.</p>				
<p><b>Did you enjoy the performance?</b> Explain your answer in the comments/next steps box.</p>				