‘What happens when reflective learning logs are introduced into the classroom?’

Kelly Crielly

Group 2H

Rationale
It is necessary to consider the notable issue within the classroom that some pupils can lack confidence and motivation in their work (William, 2011). Reflective learning logs serve a range of purposes, namely that they can help to develop pupils into being critical thinkers, allow pupils to have ownership in their learning and ultimately, provide them with a voice in the classroom as a means of self-expression, thus allowing them to show their thinking rather than defending their knowledge (Moon, 2003). The practice of writing across the curriculum has been widely debated for some time (McIntosh and Draper, 2011), thus, this enquiry looks to investigate the impact of learning log reflections on pupil learning within the classroom.

Aims
The aim of this enquiry was to measure the impact of learning log reflections within a Primary 7 class and whether this process would improve the quality of the pupils’ work. Furthermore, it was also hoped that pupils would have increased confidence and motivation through this process of active reflection.

Methodology
This intervention was conducted over a four week period in a Primary 7 class comprising of 28 pupils. The whole class participated in this enquiry and worked individually to record their own opinions and reflections.

The purpose of writing learning log reflections is to engage pupils in the process of reflection on what they are learning, and consequently, learn through this process of reflection (McIntosh and Draper, 2011). On a Friday, pupils were engaged in a discussion based on a ‘3, 2, 1’ activity which involves the pupils discussing three things they have learned, two questions they would like to ask and one opinion they have. This was discussed as a class and pupils were invited to discuss their attitudes and opinions towards their learning. After having participated in the class discussion, pupils were then instructed to record their own individual reflection in their jotters with the added questions of ‘What was your greatest struggle this week?’ and ‘What did you learn from this struggle?’ These reflective accounts were designed to be a commentary of learning to fulfil the belief that reflections allow pupils with opportunities to communicate their ideas and primarily, to “clarify, refine and consolidate their thinking” with the hope that this would improve their confidence and attitude towards their learning (McIntosh and Draper, 2011). Consequently, these learning log reflections
were used to inform planning for forthcoming teaching and learning and previous weeks were referred to as the enquiry progressed.

**Findings**

This enquiry employed the use of class discussions and notes from each reflective learning log as a means of collecting qualitative data. By ensuring pupils discussed their ideas as a class as part of the “3, 2, 1” activity, it was evident that pupils were more open to discussing struggles and mistakes throughout the week, particularly in Mathematics. At the beginning of the enquiry, through analysing the responses it was clear that the majority of pupils held negative attitudes towards mathematics and were not particularly motivated or confident in this curricular area:

Sample 1: “Can we do more Art instead of maths?”
Sample 2: “Can we do maths games because the textbook is too hard?” (as part of ‘2 questions I have’)

However, as the enquiry progressed, it became clear that a few pupils displayed more positive attitudes towards this curricular area:

Sample 3: “I am getting better at problem solving in mathematics by reading the question carefully to know what sum I need to do” (as part of ‘1 opinion I have’)

This was evident in other curricular areas through observation and questioning of pupils showing a willingness to take risks and discuss any wrong answers. Thus, it was clear the pupils were reflecting on their learning journey as part of the overall learning process.

Additionally, collecting data from the learning log reflections provided insight to pupil opinion on themselves and their learning. From reflections written at the beginning of the enquiry, it was evident that the majority of pupils struggled to arrive at ‘2 questions I have’ and ‘What did you learn from your struggle?’ However, from the reflections written towards the end of the enquiry, it was clear that pupils demonstrated an increased willingness to discuss questions they had about their learning and consequently, how particular struggles may enhance their learning in the future.

Overall the data collected from this enquiry has allowed successful evaluation of reflective learning logs as a means of enhancing confidence and motivation. This activity has proved beneficial on a small scale but ultimately, the evidence gathered does not provide a solid basis for the use of learning logs to enhance the quality of work produced.

**Conclusions**

Introducing reflective learning logs into the classroom provided pupils with enhanced opportunities to discuss their learning and raise any concerns they have. This was evident through dialogue about their learning and progress and also, written learning logs which rely on reflecting on their learning individually. Consequently, this has proven to be a useful tool to inform planning for the forthcoming week of learning and teaching to address any worries and minimise barriers to learning. Thus, providing pupils with a voice in the classroom,
where they can influence the path of their learning via feedback and reflections, making the teacher aware of the difficulties they have, the challenges faced or indeed the actions or teaching strategies that the teacher employed which helped them in their learning. However, although some pupils displayed more positive attitudes to challenges in their learning, the evidence gathered does not suggest that the quality of pupil’s work was enhanced. Therefore, this activity proved more useful to improve the attitudes and mindsets of pupils, however, evidence does not prove that the quality of work was improved.

**Implications for Future Practice**

This enquiry has shown positive results in increasing motivation and confidence in pupils, however, future research is required to validate findings in terms of improving the quality of pupil’s work. As this was a small-scale enquiry carried out over four weeks, it is necessary to consider the validity of assessing pupil’s attitudes and confidence towards their learning. Therefore, it would be beneficial to carry out over a longer period of time in order to enhance the reliability of the results. Additionally, more research and assessment of pupils’ learning would be required to gauge the improvement to quality of work produced. Furthermore, although pupils responses to their learning were more positive as the enquiry progressed, these attitudes were not always reciprocated throughout the course of the school week. Arguably, it would be perhaps worthwhile to thread these discussions, perhaps as part of a plenary, throughout the week in order to increase the number of pupils displaying an improvement to motivation and confidence.

**Bibliography**

