

# How effective questioning contributes to learning



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\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

\n \t

1. [Main](#) \n \t
2. [Conclusion](#) \n \t
3. [Reference List](#) \n \t
4. [Journal](#) \n \t
5. [Website](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

For the purpose of this essay I will look at effective questioning and how the use of effective questioning contributes to the learning process of pupils in a school or classroom setting. The essay will look at the varying Theorists that talk about questioning and how they believe that questioning was a positive part of the schooling day and delve into different methods of questioning and how best the answers support the learning of “ how to question”. I will look in particular how effective questioning is useful in two subjects thought on the curriculum which are English Literature and Information and Communication Technology or ICT as it is known. To concentrate on these two subjects and to show how important I have found effective questioning I will look at how effective listening and speaking also contributes to effective questioning. The essay will look at different National Strategies and Frameworks and literature available that exist to support the guidelines and theories that exist to support effective questioning and evidence I have gathered during my experiences working with children in the class room to portray the practical evidence of this.

## **Main**

The Primary National Strategy (2006) emphasises the need for the development and promotion of creativity across the curriculum. Speaking and Listening are to be developed in innovative and exiting ways through discussion and questioning. Children need to listen to their teacher and their peers and have the confidence to express their own thoughts, “ Sharing responses to Literature is one of the most meaningful ways in which good listening and good talking can be achieved.”(Nicholson, C as site in Goodwin, 2005). This assignment will take a look into how effective questioning can contribute to pupils learning and will be backed up by examples that I have seen in my practice.

Theorists have different beliefs as to how children learn. In my opinion, a mixture of their strategies is needed in schools and across the curriculum to achieve the best results possible. We learn that Bruner is more associated with questioning, problem and discussion in contrast to Vygotsky believed that adult talk plays a central role in developing a child’s understanding. “ He saw all speech as primary social in function, the intellect being developed within social interaction” (Goodwin, 2001). He believed in combining language with thought but more emphasis being placed on effective adult language and that through pupil talk, children would develop their reading and writing skills. Ofsted (2005), reported that when children talked through ideas firstly, they were there after better writers. Bruner introduced “ cognitive scaffolding”, which aimed at extending pupil understanding through support of a social system. He highlighted the importance of language and communication with others- peers and others (Loveless, 2003).

He didn't believe in giving pupils material in this final form. On placement I would introduce a problem to the children and support them with appropriate questioning. This in turn led to discussion and the utilisation of higher order thinking skills " in scaffolding conversations learners can try out ideas make mistakes and adapt their thinking by listening to others as they work towards understanding" (Goodwin, 2001).

I consider a lot of classes as being too rigid and they are trying to adhere to a strict plan to reach goals and cover material. For example in literacy The National Curriculum and the Literacy Strategy (although this is not statutory) have a wide range of topics to be covered leaving I found teachers under pressure for time. I feel that time needs to be allocated for spontaneity where the teacher focuses and directs children through effective modelling questioning and discussion with educational goals in mind. The Ofstead English Report (2005) found that even though there is more discussion in primary schools at the moment unfortunately it is dominated by the teacher giving the pupils only limited opportunities to express their thoughts and listen to their peers. The report also found reading and writing getting more attention in schools. Excellent and Enjoyment (2003) described teaching in England as being too prescriptive which was impacting negatively on creativity.

Another example of how effective questioning contributes to students learning in through the use of information and communication technology or ICT. The National Grid for learning was set up by the DfEE in 1997 to equip schools with computers and this in turn enabled both students and teachers to access materials that became available. This also enabled children to talk

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to others in the world and to interact globally. Schools therefore now have more resources, computers and packages to enhance ICT usage, some even have laptops. Before my six week placement, I had little knowledge of how to use the IWB as a teaching tool but, my class teacher taught me how to use it with confidence. I found it a useful resource for holding the children's interest and attention. It enabled supporting use of exciting pictures to brighten up tasks. For example, in Literacy, we were doing a story from the Jungle Book called Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, I was able to search for and insert pictures of the characters from Google images to suit the theme. The children really enjoyed this as it brought the characters to life.

Stories are important for a number of reasons. They link places to interesting themes, they aid spelling and they can increase knowledge about certain topics or facts. " Stories are the fundamental way of organising human experience and understanding the world (Fisher, R., Williams, M. 2006). They can be linked to many different tasks, apart from reading to enhance literacy skills. The book I am basing my lessons on with regard to this assignment, is called Rose Blanche. The illustrations within it present a World War Two setting which gives a truly special historical insight into the suffering and pain endured by the characters as seen through the eyes of a child. Analysis of this picture book will evoke an emotional response to the Second World War through the implementation of effective questioning and discussion in the classroom. Such strategies are central in the new the Primary National Strategy (2006). As a teacher, it will be my role to ensure that the children apply creative/higher order thinking to their reading through learning how to

read between the lines, using inference, deduction and prediction and learning how to recreate and respond to the text.

Effective questioning with regard to setting, character, plot, themes dialogue and point of view will extend children's thinking about a story (Fisher, R., Williams, M. 2006). A mixture of both open ended and closed questions are necessary components of reflective reading where children will skim, scan and read in more detail to find answers. An essential aspect of questioning is allowing children enough time to think before pursuing a response. Towards the end of my placement, the children had an idea of the type of response I required by the length of thinking time I would give them. They knew that more thinking time required more than one word answers. It is crucial also that teachers pitch questions at appropriate levels to challenge the more able without losing the interest of the less able through lack of understanding. EAL students and those with special educational needs may benefit from visual cues where possible. This is where Literacy through ICT becomes highly beneficial and effective. Interactive white boards are powerful tools for displaying images and texts which can be clearly seen by the whole class.

Speaking and listening in the National Curriculum has a strong social focus. Children will learn to take turns, deal with opposing views politely, talk effectively, take different roles and help the group to move forward (DfEE, 1999). These aspects need to be enforced within each subject in order to achieve success where all voices are heard and spoken. Children need to become interactive listeners where they listen to other members of the group but also have the confidence to articulate ideas without fear of

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embarrassment or ridicule. This is also the view point of Jones, R., Wyse, D., 2004 who believe that in building pupils' literacy skills, teachers should reward curiosity and exploration, build internal motivation, encourage risk taking, have high expectations of all pupils, give opportunities for choice and discovery and develop students' self-management skills.

Children need to know when it is ok for them to speak and when they should listen. For this reason, I always made the rules clear at the beginning of each class. The children then knew how they should request to voice their opinion i. e. put their hand up. " An articulate classroom is a community of learners and teachers who share an understanding about the roles of talk in their learning"(Goodwin, 2001). Speaking and listening can be enhanced through ICT with the use of tape recorders, digital cameras, recording to computers and much more. Some teachers prefer however, not to use classroom discussion because of fear of losing control through increased noise levels. Another issue with discussion is finding the time to allow learners to ask and seek their own answers. I personally found this difficult to resolve.

I strongly believe that group work in Literacy is extremely beneficial to pupils. It certainly suits the shyer pupil who might not have the confidence to express an opinion within whole class interaction. It enables the perfect opportunity for teachers to develop scaffolding on a smaller scale which relates to Bruner's theory. On my placement, guided reading was carried out every day after lunch which meant each group had one session each week. The National Literacy Strategy promotes this process where by one group works with the teacher and the other groups work independently (DfEE, 1998). The pupils were split into groups of similar ability which meant the <https://assignbuster.com/how-effective-questioning-contributes-to-learning/>

less able children had more support at their level and the more able had more scope. Ofsted (2005) found guided group work to be a positive development in the classroom in terms of speaking and listening.

## **Conclusion**

“ The new science of learning and thinning tells us that everybody has the capacity to become a better learner, and that there are conditions under which learning power develops” (Pollard 2002). If children are having difficulty in understanding what you are teaching them, then you must reflect and ask yourself why? You as a teacher must reflect on lessons and ask yourself “ have I asked effective questions in my lesson?”

“ Questions can be used for a wide range of purposes and they can be seen as a vital tool for teaching and learning. It is a powerful way of “ scaffolding children’s understanding and raising their performance. The way in which teachers can use questions to improve the quality of children’s thinking and the extent of their participation (Pollard 2006). As stated above and through out this essay I have looked at how questioning, effective questioning in particular contributes to a Childs learning through effective listening, speaking in particular through ICT and English. I have learnt in practice that these methods keep a child engaged, motivated and eager to learn. This not only applies to English and ICT but in all subjects on the National Curriculum.

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