

The role and value of
group work in the
primary classroom.



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??? The role and value of group work in the primary classroom??? The role of group work in the primary classroom is very important. It offers opportunities for children to work with other members of the class and share their individual ideas. I think it is important for children to be able to do this as they can listen to other points of view that they perhaps hadn't thought of. This helps children to be aware of other personal thoughts which results in positive outcomes both socially and cognitively within the shared experience.

Educational theorist, Deutsch suggested group work to create, ??? positive interdependence??? (Deutsch 1949). His statement relates to the actions of one child within a group benefiting the rest of the group where correct answers and positive suggestions are made. The use of group work in the classroom can help the class teacher to organise the class into mixed or same ability groups. Within either of these two categories children are able to work together and help each other learn.

Goodlad and Hirst (1989) researched into ??? Peer Tutoring??? which is where a capable child helps those who have difficulties with a certain subject or term etc. Peer tutoring within group work offers a more relaxed and less pressuring atmosphere. Children are able to talk amongst themselves and not feel embarrassed about asking for help. ??? A problem shared is a problem solved.??? (Pg. 17 Galton, M and Williamson, J; 1992) This statement is a positive attribute of group work within the classroom. It helps children to work together as a team to be able to produce answers to problems. Each child is able to have their say which is not always possible within whole class teaching.

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Some children will prefer not to speak in front of the whole class however speaking within groups is a little less daunting. If children are actively involved then they are more likely to retain the information for a longer period of time as they are able to recall the experience they shared with the rest of the group in a positive and productive manner. Group work is a way in which the class teacher can arrange the pupils.

The role of group work will depend on the task the groups will be completing. The grouping system will depend on whether different outcomes or the same outcomes of each child are desired. If a teacher has organised the class into levelled ability groups then it is easier for the teacher to be able to spend more time with the children with a lower ability as the higher ability children are least likely to struggle. Once students have mastered the specific content it is much simpler to have these children engage in enrichment activities rather than making the lower ability children feel like they are holding the class up. Preselected groups can form an easy solution for teachers wanting to group children for a quick activity.

They can simply state which groups will be active for the current activity. Theorist Vygotsky stated that, "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)." (1978) His theory suggested that children will naturally learn from each other from listening to and discussing each other's ideas. Once discussions have taken place a child can then adapt their own ideas and build upon them. Through this scaffolding learning, children are not only able to build upon their academic knowledge but are

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also building up their social skills. It is important for a child to have the ability to discuss their own theories.

In this sort of discussion group work, children are able to take ideas from the social interaction and use them for their own educational interaction. Sharing ideas with one another is one of the main roles of group work and it is valuable as it motivates the children and enhances their conceptual understanding of topics. It is easy for a class teacher to be able to give feedback when children are working within groups. The teacher can observe how a child is working both academically and socially and can use the use of group work as a form of assessment. This is an effective way of being able to assess a child as they will not recognize that they are being assessed. As well as an effective use of assessment it also offers an opportunity for the class teacher to be able to incorporate positive comments. Psychologist Skinner stated, ??? The way positive reinforcement is carried out is more important than the amount.??? If positive reinforcement takes place while a child is interacting and engaging with other group members then the child will respond more positively as they will feel as though they are making a valid contribution to discussions, group and individual written work.

The role of group work within the primary classroom is in my opinion is to improve children??™s learning and help them work within a variety of situations with a variety of different people. Effective grouping will produce successful results. Ofsted (1994b) found that, ??? teachers who achieved high standards used ability grouping effectively.??? (Pg. 78 Dean, J; 2000) Ability grouping can be used effectively when undergoing certain kinds of work. Bennett and Dunne (1992: 118) stated that, ??? mixed ability group <https://assignbuster.com/the-role-and-value-of-group-work-in-the-primary-classroom/>

were more satisfactory for collaborative work.??? (Pg. 78 Dean, J; 2000)

When working with collaborative work, the children share the same task and create a joint outcome.

Whilst in an ability group for this type of work, the group is more likely to produce the highest standard of work capable of each child in the group. If the group was of mixed ability there would be a dominant lead by the higher ability children producing work that is perhaps of a higher standard than some children would be able to produce. This wouldn't represent the current working level of the majority of children within the group. A positive outcome of group work is that children are able to take more control of their own work.

With this in effect the class teacher has reduced pressure and instead being the instigator of discussion and thought, they are simply there to listen, model and offer limited guidance. This promotes the ideas and work of the children individually and as a group instead of just transferring the ideas of the teacher. With the children working together they are more likely to build self confidence in their own work as they will be given a clearer understanding and can adapt to the ways of other children's thinking if any personal academic difficulties occur. Bennett and Dunne (1992) found that, ??? it is the need for decision making that focuses the children's responses.??? (Pg.

97 Dean, J; 2000)Group work within the primary classroom promotes a great deal of decision making which is important for children to be able to master. Decision making is a valuable way of working and there is great need for in

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within certain job roles. With the children using this skill now, they will be able to develop this through their years of education. This effectively is preparing children for future jobs with aspects that require this way of working and thinking.

Experience working within a variety of groups including, mixed ability, similar ability, mixed and single sex groups gives students chance to work with a variety of different children within the class. This promotes wider social interaction and gives children the opportunity to experience talking and working with a wider range of people which can only be a positive attribute. Teachers can choose to group children within friend groups if behaviour has been particularly exceptional. Children respond well to this as they like being able to work alongside their friends and see this as a privilege and will often continue to work in a suitable manner more often. I think it is important to note that group work has a time and a place and is not always effective within certain lesson types and for certain work types.

However when used at the correct times within a well planned lesson, children respond and obtain and retain a great deal of information from working with each other. I think group work plays a vital role in helping children within primary school classrooms to get the most out of the National Curriculum and Framework. BibliographyReferences: Improving Childrens Learning : Effective Teaching in the Primary School Dean, J London ; New York Routledge, 2000. Group Work in Primary School : Maurice Galton and John Williamson 1992 Routledge Ltd. <http://www.nwrel.org/archive/sirs/1/cu2.html>

The National Curriculum Key Stages One and Two