Explain the importance and benefits of assessment for learning

Many people have had bad experiences at exam time, so it is easy to understand that the thought of assessment may put people off wanting to learn at all. The pressures to cram information into your brain, the stress that comes when you do not feel sure that you know enough; all these things add up to exams being a pretty difficult time of life.

However, assessment for learning has a very special effect, and that is one of the reasons it is now so widely used in primary schools and secondary learning. Assessment for learning techniques appear to assist with summative assessment results; they actually help pupils do better with graded exams.

In fact, most problems that are identified as being connected to assessment for learning have more often been attributed to unfavourable conditions, such as a lack of time or space; external constraints, such as health and safety rules or limits to what teachers can do with pupils in the given time; or simply a misapplication - or weak use - of the assessment for learning principles.

Benefits of assessment for learning for pupils.

- Promotes self-responsibility in learners
- Increases confidence
- Increases motivation
- Improves relationships with learning
- Better pupil attainment
Benefits of assessment for learning for pupils

Pupil attainment

Pupils achieve more through assessment for learning. Although the evidence for this is not entirely sound - improved attainment may be due to more factors than a change in the techniques around assessment - it appears that pupils not only attain and achieve more during the school year through assessment for learning, but older pupils in secondary schools appear to do better in summative assessments too.

Improved relationship with learning

Not only do children do better in their attainment of learning and knowledge through assessment for learning; they also become more active as learners, seeking out further knowledge, and finding out more information. Classroom interaction becomes more engaged, as children learn that they are in a safe environment where no one is going to laugh at them if they get the answer wrong; no answer needs to be 'wrong' - incorrect assumptions or opinions based on incorrect information can be included in the explanation of what is correct.

Confidence increases

Children in a safe environment, where they feel of worth, and where what they think is clearly valued, tend to increase in confidence. Increased confidence results in pupils who are prepared to find out more information, discuss ideas and concepts in class, and are more likely to be self-motivated when it comes to their learning. This is amplified with the use of self- and peer-assessment, which requires the full engagement of pupils in the classroom. Learning ceases to be a passive activity, and becomes something that pupils actively do.

Self-responsibility in learning

Because pupils are more active in their own education, they are empowered because they have a bigger awareness of what is expected of them and what they are supposed to achieve. With this knowledge, they stop comparing themselves to other students of different abilities, and obtain a better understanding of the way in which they learn, and how they are progressing. This is done through understanding the learning goals and success criteria. All of this improves their responsibility towards their own education, and they get to monitor and check their own progress through self-assessment.
**Motivational improvements**

Because there is a reduction in pupils being compared to each other and in competition in the classroom, children become more motivated to understand their own progress and to compete against themselves. Comparison has been shown to be a strong factor in undermining pupils who have a low attainment level, so assessment for learning tends to improve their confidence and self-esteem, which in turn improves their motivation for learning all round.