Questioning skills do not seem to come easily – but teachers who have worked on their technique will have the pupils talking about and doing their maths in the classroom. If we can achieve this we will be sending the pupils into their tests with the essential tool bag;

- They have pictures in their minds. They have made sense of concepts. They have practised thinking about things, heard their own descriptions, modified them and heard the descriptions of others.
- They have experience at working through questions themselves, they know they can access the subject, they are confident (especially if they once, in a heated conversation, convinced the teacher that they were right!)
- They know how to pick a question apart and reason their way through the problems . . . OK, what is this question about? What are the important points? What do I know already? What can I mark in? . . .

Sitting marooned at the desk in the exam hall, pupils will turn to the mathematics within them, and they will turn to the tools listed above. John Mason writes that internalisation comes from a process of ‘scaffolding and fading’ [5]. This process is analogous to the questioning techniques I have described.

‘Scaffolding’ was a term used by Bruner to describe the teacher providing a framework of support as pupils learnt new subjects. As the pupils master components of the subject a process of fading occurs. The teacher removes the supports to master components of the subject a process of ‘scaffolding and fading’ [5]. This process is analogous to the questioning techniques I have described.

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