

Submission: Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System (2023)

Author of Submission

Dr Rod Leonarder

Personal Background

From 1979 - 2016, I was employed [REDACTED] as a secondary teacher, Principal and a District Superintendent. Post retirement, I currently supervise tertiary education students and provide mentoring support, as they undertake a school practicum in both public and independent schools [REDACTED].

Interest in Review

I have written this brief submission so that quality classroom practice, with specific reference to engagement and curiosity, is part of the broad canvas of submissions captured by the Review. My intention is to address a key area that can lift current teacher professional practice and facilitate improved educational outcomes for all students.

Key Statements that Inform this Submission

- Curiosity is often overlooked in the planning and delivery of classroom lessons and pedagogy.
- Curiosity is able to 'turbocharge' learning and foster higher order thinking.
- Curious minds foster new learnings, independent ways of approaching an issue and /or solving a problem and are integral to the acquisition of new words to facilitate personal understanding.
- Curious minds facilitate rich life-long learning.

Submission to Review

Engagement, Curiosity and the Role of Talk/Listening in Classroom Best Practice

1. Talking and listening are key components of quality classroom discourse.
2. Talking and listening are key to the skills needed in the modern workplace as many professions increasingly rely on teams, collaborative practices and the sharing of ideas.
3. Quality classroom talk and discussion are integral to student learning and the development of higher order thinking skills.
4. Fostering opportunities for talk are important in supporting students who may prefer to remain 'silent' and not participate in discussions (Sedova & Sedlacek, 2023).
5. Listening skill development is often taken for granted and is underdeveloped in many classrooms.
6. Students need to recognise the importance of their peers' ideas and actively listen and respond to their points of view and understanding if they are to maximise personal learning.
7. Teachers need to include core time in formal class discussions for assessing listening skills and how students can learn from their peers as they share and discuss.
8. Effective literacy practice in classrooms must always allow for the introduction of new words, new concepts and vocabulary building.
9. Effective pedagogy should allow for and encourage students to undertake research and enquiry independent of the classroom teacher.

10. Without engagement and stimulation of curiosity, students' ability to learn and fully develop their understandings will be hindered.
11. Students are better at learning new information when their curiosity is fostered.
12. Curiosity needs to be addressed in lesson plans and teachers need to reflect on how their lessons have engaged students and stimulated their curiosity.
13. Curiosity can be overlooked if classroom learning focuses too often on the development of set content and does not affectively address ways students can extend their learning by enquiring beyond the set content.
14. Providing feedback and response to students' independent ideas and avenues of enquiry are important aspects of teacher formative assessment practice. Teachers need to constantly nurture and encourage all forms of curiosity.
15. Question driven pedagogy is an important aspect of quality classroom discourse. Many students need assistance and support to ask questions, probe and hypothesise to develop their understandings. This is especially significant when considering the needs of students who come from a language background other than English.
16. As Stenger (2014) has succinctly stated in relation to the teacher's role in facilitating quality classroom discourse – '...so rather than jumping straight into the answers, let's try to start students off with the sort of questions that encourage them to do their own seeking.'

References

1. Sedova, K., & Sedlacek, M. (2023) How vocal and silent forms of participation in combination relate to student achievement. *Instructional Science* 5, 341-361.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11251-022-09609-1>
2. Stenger, M. (2014) Why curiosity enhances learning. *Edutopia*.
<https://www.edutopia.org>

31.7.2023