How can we use an inquiry based approach to strengthen learner agency?

What does this look like in the classroom?

What “lies beneath” inquiry as a vehicle for learner agency?

A view of the learner as competent, creative individual.

A view of the teacher as strategic facilitator – strengthening students’ capacities to learn.

A view of the curriculum as guide/emap. Something to be “uncovered” rather than covered.

A view of learning as an act of construction. Something done BY the learner not TO the learner

...a teacher’s pedagogical repertoire was not dependent on age, gender or years of experience. The research showed that teachers’ beliefs and assumptions about their role shape their practice and strongly influence the range of pedagogical strategies they employ. (Julia Atkin, 2019)

Agency is nurtured in a wide variety of ways. While the inquiry approach itself naturally enhances agency, there are techniques and ways of working across a day that can both amplify and compliment the power of inquiry. (p.15)
How do you gather evidence of learner’s thinking/theories/questions?

How do these inform your planning?

Building an ‘agency identity’ What can WE do as teachers to help nurture this?

- I see myself as a learner (learning isn’t ‘done to me’)
- I know about myself as a learner (but that will keep growing and changing)
- I am always building my learning muscles (I can keep getting better)
- I am curious about how I learn (I notice myself)
- I can talk about learning and about my learning

An intention (question) that identifies the key “content” of the lesson

An intention (question) that identifies a skill or disposition that will be used/required... transferable across the curriculum and beyond school

• Thinking about how you are learning and coming to understand yourself as a learner are powerful motivators. Self knowledge helps you guide and control your learning and builds a sense of agency.

“They are given the given the skills and tools to use, and presented with a range of potentially powerful eductive experiences, then given freedom, they will almost invariably choose one and get on with it. Once learners get in touch with their own sense of personal power, get out of their way and watch in awe”

Edwards 2004: encouraging achievement: 3

Agency is nurtured in a wide variety of ways. While the inquiry approach itself naturally enhances agency, there are techniques and ways of working across a day that can both amplify and complement the power of inquiry
The inquiry approach at lesson level: Releasing responsibility to strengthen agency

• A mini “flipped” lesson

Gradual AND immediate release of responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I do it</th>
<th>You do it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We do it</td>
<td>We do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You do it</td>
<td>I do it</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Release!

• Release more responsibility to students - at lesson level, at classroom level, at unit level – at school level. Consider: Are we doing for them what they could be doing for themselves?

• How might you redesign a learning experience next week to release more responsibility to your learners?

Question dump

The Rules....

• Appoint someone to be the scribe
• Everyone contributes
• Gather and record as many questions as possible in the 5 minute time limit
• All questions are recorded
• All questions are accepted
• No judgements (of self or others)
• No embellishment. Conversation – just questions...
• People are most likely to take a deep approach to their learning when they are trying to answer questions or solve problems that they have come to regard as important, intriguing, or just beautiful. One of the great secrets to fostering deep learning is the ability to help students raise new kinds of questions that they will find fascinating. Sometimes that means beginning with the questions that are already on their minds and helping them see how those inquiries lead to new puzzles.  
  
  Am Boz, quoted by WIR Richardson 2012

Questioning the questions

• Shared content
• Most google-able ...least google-able
• Open-Closed
• Easier to answer-harder to answer
• Know something about...no nothing about
• Most important ... least important

Student agency means that learners are in control and feel in control of their own problem solving process.

• Our task as educators is to help them to build an awareness of their own identity as independent thinkers. Not to tell them how to think but help reveal their thinking, by reflecting back to them what we are observing, to notice and name their acts of problem solving. If the way we talk to our students is undermining their identity as agents of their own learning then we have fundamentally undermined the learning.

  • (Philip Williams Senior High School’s non-sense ‘Voice works’)
  
  © NOVEMBER 2012

The pedagogy of inquiry — a pathway to agency

Can you make a connection to what we have explored today?

Move around the room reading the statements about agency

What connections can you make with what we have explored today?

What challenges your thinking?

What new questions are emerging for you?