How might student-led pedagogy in modern learning environments (MLEs) improve literacy learning?

Hampden Street School (TLIF 1-142)

For the Ministry of Education
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Project title:
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Summary

The purpose was to explore the impact of student-led innovative teaching practices in a Modern Learning Environment (MLE) on literacy outcomes. The team hoped to find out how successful collaboration and student ownership of learning could impact on key competencies, literacy engagement and achievement. The inquiry aimed to foster successful collaboration between teachers, students, resources and the environment.

Inquiry Team

- Project leader: Scott Mackenzie - Year 5/6 Teacher at Hampden Street School.
- The other members of the project team were: Josh Shelley - Year 3/4 Teacher at Hampden Street School, Julie McIntosh - Year 3/4 Teacher at Wakefield School and Bek Gabites - Year 3/4 Teacher at Wakefield School.
- Chris Brough, University of Waikato.

Background

The rationale was that individualised learning would enable student agency and lead to more equitable outcomes. The inquiry was intended to support teachers and students move towards student-led inclusive classrooms in a learning community.

The inquiry

Teachers worked together with individual questions that focussed on different aspects of collaboration within shared teaching spaces, and on ways of fostering independence and collaborative skills in students. As the focus was literacy, teachers explored practices such as allowing students to select their own instructional reading materials, peer and group teaching and flexible instructional literacy teaching. Literacy progressions were shared with learners so that they could understand their progress. Students used Google Drive accounts or e-portfolios to communicate their learning.

Participants

The participants were: 3 classes of Years 3/4 and one class of Year 5/6 spread over the two schools. Target students were ‘below’ or ‘at’ the National Standard in reading or writing and who showed a lack of engagement with literacy.
Measures of progress

The team used a range of measures including video interviews with students on “what does a successful learner look like?” National standards, student and parent surveys, and observations of student learning.

Key findings

- Almost all students showed greater learning agency.
- Reading data showed considerable acceleration over a 10 month period for 75 percent of targeted students.
- Sharing the curriculum as learning progressions gave students a greater understanding of their next steps and fostered learner agency. This was more successful at a Year 5 and 6 level than at a Year 3 and 4 level, showing that age may be a factor in this, or that these progressions need to be unpacked in greater detail at the lower levels.
- Across both schools, students made considerable progress in all areas of the Key Competencies, as observed through parent and student comments, teacher appraisals and professional teacher judgements. Teaching within an MLE requires explicit teaching of the Key Competencies to enable student led learning.
- MLE spaces allowed teacher roaming and collegial input and support.
- Teachers now take a collective responsibility for all students not just their own class.
- The teacher collaboration within an MLE enabled the team to have the energy and confidence to be innovative.
- Teachers learned to drip feed ‘freedom’ and ‘choice’ rather than introduce it all at once.
- Changed the focus from teaching to what actually has been learned.
- Constant professional development occurred through seeing other teachers in action.
Key implications (in terms of the goals of TLIF)

- MLEs can be a positive environment for learning relevant skills including building positive communities of learning.
- A successful MLE has less to do with the physical environment and more to do with the pedagogical shift of the teachers.
- Innovation and failure by practitioners needs to be understood, and even encouraged, by all stakeholders within the sector.
- Professional development in facilitating learning rather than 'teaching' is essential, both pre-service and throughout the teacher's career.
- The Key Competencies are fundamental in achievement, and teachers need to look at the way they teach and develop them, especially during the early years of school.
- In order to see sustainable benefit from students' learning the skills embedded in the Key Competencies, they should be prioritised from the new entrant years, and developed throughout students' schooling.

Plans for sharing the findings

- Findings have been shared with own schools and cluster and have influenced planning for 2018.
Reference List


Frost, D. (2012). From professional development to system change: *Teacher leadership and innovation* OECD Publishing


For further information

If you would like to learn more about this project please contact the project leader Jonathan Ramsay at jonathan@edendale.school.nz
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