Student Voice in Schools

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Learning Outcomes:

- Understanding of key concepts:
  - Student Voice
  - Student Agency
- What is authentic student voice? And, how do we currently engage with student voice?
- Why is Student Agency important? And, how does it connect to student voice?
- Measures of Student Voice:
  - What do we already have?
  - And, How do make sense of this information?
Take some time, and consider:

*What is Student Voice?*
*And, how does it look in your school?*

Note your response to these questions and share with your table

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**Jigsaw Activity: Accessing the research**

1. What is student voice?
2. Measuring student voice?
3. What is student agency?
4. How can we support student agency?
5. Preconditions, systems and structures to support student agency
Student Voice

*Student voice* refers to the values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds of individual *students* and groups of *students* in a school, and to instructional approaches and techniques that are based on student choices, interests, passions, and ambitions.

In practice...

Traditionally:

- Student Representative Councils / Groups
- Formation of School Committees
- Student Leadership (Captains / Vice Captains)
- Student led forums
- Student led assemblies / events
- Contributions from students for school publications
- Seeking student opinions / viewpoints
  (teaching, learning, safety, school climate)
In practice…

Also includes:

- Student selection of education materials
- Having input into instructional design
- Contributing to decisions based on teaching and learning
- Student choice over presentation of understanding (multiple modes)
- Student choice over content and processes

Student Agency

_Student agency_ refers to learning through activities that are meaningful and relevant to learners, driven by their interests, and often self-initiated with appropriate guidance from teachers. To put it simply, _student agency_ gives _students voice_ and often, _choice, in how they learn._
In practice...

- Capacity for students to make choices in developing their understanding of concepts
- Choice (mode, content)
- Personalised learning
- Student voice in the classroom
- Feedback that students can deliver, understand, and apply to build their learning

= increased control, motivation, engagement and self-efficacy to achieve learning goals

In practice...

It is not:

- Choice over **everything**
- Lack of lesson structure or curriculum focus
- Lack of accountability

Guidance and expertise of teacher is key in designing meaningful opportunities for student voice and agency
Reflection: How do we currently harness student voice to build student agency?

Student voice and achievement

Research, findings and implications for school leaders

Tom Cain
Overview of the study

General research question:
What is the relationship between the attitudes to school and reading achievement of Secondary Students

Sample
- NAPLAN Reading Results
- Responses to the DET Attitudes to School Survey
- Both datasets for a single year (2017), provides a sample of 57,000+ Year 7 and 9 Students

Literature overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading matters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It adds to students ‘human capital’</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Carneiro &amp; Heckman, 2003)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Without strong reading abilities students are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More likely to drop-out of school</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Less likely to make a positive contribution to society</td>
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<td>(Alexander &amp; Entwisle, 1988; Stevens et al., 1991; Silverstein, Iverson, &amp; Lozano, 2002; Lamb &amp; Huo, 2017)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary school reading builds on primary reading and becomes more complex</td>
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<td>(Cunha et al., 2006; OECD, 2017)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Literature overview

Numerous factors support reading achievement

- Effective teaching
- Social engagement
- Teacher-student relations
- Learner confidence and disposition
- Student safety and experience of bullying

No single factor drives student achievement, instead it is more useful to think of student learning occurring in the ‘web of causality’ described by Toshalis and Nakkula (2012) with the factors that support achievement interacting in complex, dynamic and multi-directional ways.

Literature overview

Student attitudes are important

What students think matters

Students are the “central participants in classroom interactions” and therefore provide important views about what they perceive to be required to support learning in an effective classroom environment (Egeberg & McConney, 2017, p. 196).

Surveys are fairly good at finding out what students think

- Student surveys are useful and reliable measures (Freiber, 1998; Libbey, 2009; Şeker, 2011)
- They can provide an accurate measure of teacher effectiveness (Davies, Hirschberg, Lye, & Johnston, 2011; Feldman, 2007; Ginns, Prosser, & Barrie, 2007; MET Project, 2012; Irving, 2004)
Key findings

Finding 1: A simplified survey structure may be more reliable
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DET Factor Structure</th>
<th>Proposed structure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Effective Teaching Time</td>
<td>1. Effective Teaching Practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Differentiated Learning Challenge</td>
<td>2. Learner characteristics and disposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Effective Classroom Behaviour</td>
<td>4. Advocate at School</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. High Expectations For Success</td>
<td>5. Experience of Bullying</td>
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<td>7. Teacher Concern</td>
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<td>8. Sense Of Confidence</td>
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<td>9. Resilience</td>
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<td>10. Motivation And Interest</td>
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<td>11. Self-Regulation And Goal Setting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Attitudes To Attendance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. School Connectedness (Sense Of Connectedness)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Student Voice And Agency</td>
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<td>15. School Stage Transitions (Year 7 Only)</td>
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<td>16. Advocate At School</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17 Managing Bullying</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Respect For Diversity</td>
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<td>19 Experience Of Bullying</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Finding 2: Attitudes matter
Finding 3: Schools can be grouped on both variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Effect size</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NAPLAN reading scale score</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of bullying</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner characteristics and disposition</td>
<td></td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School connectedness</td>
<td></td>
<td>.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>High expectations for success</td>
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<td>.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocate at school</td>
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<td>.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective teaching practices</td>
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<td>.02</td>
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Mean factor score by cluster

NAPLAN scale score

NAPLAN growth
Clusters may support school improvement
Disadvantage is not necessarily defining

![Bar chart showing comparison between 'Your school' and 'Cluster' data across different categories such as Effective teaching practice, Learner characteristics/connectedness and disposition, School advocate at school, Experience of bullying, and High expectations for success.]
Implications for school leaders

Data-driven decision making

Evaluate and diagnose
- Assess performance and progress in student achievement, wellbeing, engagement and productivity
  - Evaluate the impact of prior effort
  - Diagnose areas requiring attention
  - Record and report current status, resources and baseline
  - Share successes and lessons with other schools

Prioritise and set goals
- Prioritise key focus areas for improvement
  - Be clear about what success or impact looks like
  - Set goals and targets
  - Establish indicators to measure improvement

Develop and plan
- Plan and develop improvement initiatives with evidence base
  - Develop whole-school teaching and learning program
  - Determine specific actions and method
  - Determine roles, responsibilities and timelines
  - Agree and communicate

Implement and monitor
- Implement, gather data and monitor
  - Professional learning
  - Collaboration and consistency
  - Resourcing
  - Community leverage
  - Curriculum and assessment
  - Programs
  - Student outcomes
Bypass vs engage

Data-driven question asking

**Bypassing students’ theory of action**

- Student survey data (averages, trends, etc.)
- Teachers’ school leaders’ develop theory of action
- Implementation of theory of action (classroom practice or school policy change)
- Ineffective classroom practice or policy change

**Engaging with students’ theory of action**

- Student survey data (averages, trends, etc.)
- Teachers’ school leaders’ theory of action
- Implementation of agreed theory of action (classroom practice or school policy change)
- Effective classroom practice or policy change

**Dialogue**