

PETER SELLINGS, BRUCE WALDRIP, VAUGHAN PRAIN
AND VALERIE LOVEJOY

10. USING STUDENT VOICE IN SOCIAL STUDIES/ HUMANITIES TO PERSONALISE LEARNING

ALTERING STUDENTS' ROLES IN LEARNING

Tabitha (student): “We got feedback from people who actually knew what it was like to do this assignment”.

Mark (student): [Students] “were more sympathetic towards my work as they had done the work”.

Jane (Teacher): “It is a valuable skill for students to have, to be able to judge the value of an item, and to think about what they did, where they can improve, where they went wrong and decisions that they can make next time to make work better”.

Promoting student voice in school learning is now broadly advocated to enhance the quality and personalised nature of this learning (Beattie, 2012; Elias, 2010; Mitra & Gross, 2009). In this chapter we report on a program where Year 8 low SES students participated in peer formative assessment in a humanities inquiry-based project, where they chose both the type and context of learning activities, and were taught by three teachers in an open-plan setting. The students assessed their peers' presentations and also self-assessed their work, with some co-regulated support through the use of teacher-provided rubrics. The teachers believed it was a valuable learning opportunity, in that students had a heightened sense of owning their learning and, as we will argue, had a personalised learning experience that developed their capacities as independent self-aware learners.

What counts as quality learning in social studies continues to be contested, with advocacy of an explicit focus on many themes, including ecology, global and local citizenship, racism, sexism, prejudice, critical thinking, inquiry processes and informed action (Ross, 2014). However, educators in this subject broadly agree that quality learning in social studies should entail the development of positive student values and action clarification, with a strong focus on social justice and democratic ideals. In this chapter we focus more on processes that enable effective engagement and learning in this subject rather than curricular content around particular themes. We consider that the processes for learning about democratic ideals should themselves democratise students' learning experiences.

THE CASE FOR STUDENT VOICE

Many students feel alienated from the processes and purposes of assessment (Kuhn, 2015). Based on student feedback, teachers at Wattle College wanted to change students' perception of the assessment process and to make learning more personalised. As Kuhn (2015) suggests, students learn better when they work together to solve a problem that matters to them. Through engagement and practice, students learn to appreciate other students' viewpoints, especially when the learning results in a better solution in a social context (Barron, 2003; Grueniesen, Wyman, & Tomasello, 2014; Wertsch, 1979).

Many researchers advocate increasing student voice to improve learning and engagement (Beattie, 2012; Elias, 2010; Elliott-Johns, Booth, Rowsell, Puig, & Paterson, 2012; Jenkins, 2006; Mitra, 2003; Mitra & Gross, 2009). From this perspective, students should have the option of being heard, collaborate with teachers in choosing learning activities suited to their particular abilities, and provide feedback that teachers can use to guide future instruction/tasks (Elliott-Johns et al., 2012). In this way, students are viewed as 'experts' on what works for them, and teachers can adapt future lessons to address learners' needs and interests (Mitra, 2003). Developing student voice enables students to become active participants in their own learning (Elliott-Johns et al., 2012). Teachers who provide opportunities for students to discuss key concepts and collaborate on learning activities will find that "talk is an invaluable tool for learning and for communicating that learning" (Elliott-Johns et al., 2012, p. 30). Student voice acknowledges students' rights as learners, as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), whose principles include respect for the child's opinion. This respect for the learner's viewpoint recognises both the students' input into learning and that learners need to take greater responsibility for this learning (Mintzes, Wandersee, & Novak, 1999; Sluijsmans & Prins, 2006; Wiliam, 2013).

STUDENT VOICE IN ASSESSMENT

Assessment is broadly understood as the "systematic process for gathering information about student achievement" (Wilson & Bertenthal, 2005, p. 3), but often fails to impact on student learning (Wiliam, 2006a). Researchers note the need for quality feedback to address this disconnect (Bennett, 2011; Biggs, 1998; Black & William, 1998, 2009), where students learn to identify and act on their strengths and weaknesses (Black & William, 1998; Mavrommatis, 1997). Falchikov (2004) stresses the value of students participating in assessment processes, thus voicing their opinions, reflecting critically on their own work, and gaining feedback from multiple perspectives.

Despite an extensive literature on assessment of learning generally, Black and Wiliam (1998) noted that the theoretical basis for assessment, particularly formative assessment, is at best under-developed, with many assumptions about teacher and

learner capacities around assessment practices remaining tacit or ill-defined. These accounts assume as unproblematic the specific aspects that should be learnt in class, or what types of feedback enable learning or the direct benefits of feedback. It is also important to examine how students respond to these feedback opportunities, and why this feedback works. In other words, which underpinning explanatory pedagogical theory will explain the success (or failure) of this learning, assuming that all learners benefit equally from exposure to standardised processes? For Black and Wiliam (1998, 2009), these accounts of formative assessment imply considerable agency on the part of students to manage their own learning, and that an enhanced voice in the process will enable students to align effort with their teachers' goals. In this chapter we note the need for considerable co-regulation and support by teachers to develop these learner capacities, especially in low SES students.

Black and Wiliam (2009, p. 9) considered assessment to be formative when evidence of student achievement is:

elicited, interpreted and used by teachers, learners or their peers, to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, or better founded, than the decisions they would have taken in the absence of the evidence that was elicited.

This account clearly recognises many elements in the process, and is cautious about what should count as progress towards learning goals, and for whom. Black and Wiliam (2009) claimed various types of activities enable successful formative assessment. These include: teachers sharing success criteria with students; classroom questioning; teachers' written feedback on student work; peer and self assessment by students; and formative use of summative assessment to guide subsequent student test performance. They claimed that the teacher needed to establish what learners knew, what goals needed to be addressed, and what strategies would support achieving these goals. Again, this account of appropriate practices assumes as unproblematic what learners should learn in discipline areas, the individualistic nature of student learning processes, and how student agency and motivation will lead to learning gains. Bennett (2011) argued that new developments focus on conceptualising approaches grounded in specific content if the effects of formative assessment are to be maximised. This chapter illustrates how this can be achieved in the social sciences.

PERSONALISING LEARNING

As noted in Chapter 1, personalising learning entails student choice, individual student responsibility, and customised approaches to knowledge-making, where learning is linked to local and wider community contexts (Beach & Dovemark, 2009; Bevan-Brown, McGee, Ward, & Macintyre, 2011; Brimijoin, 2005; Stockhill, 2011). Childress and Benson (2014) assert the importance of schools making decisions that enable students to take more responsibility for their own learning by tailoring

courses to meet individual skills and interests. This type of student responsibility is highlighted by Clarke (2014) as a shift of control in student learning from teachers who have traditionally held much control to the students themselves. Moving responsibility and control fit well with Stockhill's (2011) ideas of key components of a more personalised learning environment (see [Table 10.1](#)).

Table 10.1. Key components of a more personalised learning environment

<i>Component</i>	<i>Strategies</i>
Effective teaching & learning	Lessons in learning Mentoring strategies Wider teaching repertoire Interactive, inclusive teaching programmes ICT across the curriculum
Curriculum entitlement and choice	Pupil choice for study Extension and catch up material Flexibility leading to relevant qualifications Creating time for tailoring curriculum
Beyond the classroom	Parental Involvement Learning in community contexts Business partnerships Networks and collaborations
Personalised assessment	Setting personal targets Using assessment as a diagnostic tool Effective feedback to the learners Peer & self-assessment Improved transition and transfer
School as a learning organisation	Leadership focus on learning & teaching Workforce organised appropriately Buildings facilitate personalised learning Clear behaviour and attendance policies

[Table 10.1](#) highlights the importance of a teacher-established culture where students set goals, have a voice in curriculum decisions, and actively participate in their education. This framework also highlights school policies and links with parents and the wider community to make learning more personalised. Consistent with components of a personalised learning curriculum suggested by Sebba, Brown, Steward, Galton, and James (2007), the key features shown in [Table 10.1](#), include self and peer assessment (assessment for learning), curricular flexibility, and strong links to the local and wider community (Sebba et al., 2007). All learners need to find their learning meaningful (Diack, 2004; Prain et al., 2013), but this can also

pose challenges (Brimijoin, 2005; Wiliam, 2006a). High stakes testing often causes a conflict between what teachers believe is best practice and how they address accountability concerns, with teaching to tests often supplanting personalised learning approaches (Brimijoin, 2005). The introduction of personalising learning can improve student performance on high stakes testing, but only if teachers are sufficiently skilled to implement this form of learning in a manner that focuses on the teacher finding out where students are currently at and modifying the teaching and learning to move each student forward (Brimijoin, 2005).

Personalising Learning through Assessment

Personalising learning is enhanced when formative assessment and instructional processes aligns in a manner that allows the instruction to be changed based on ongoing assessment of the students. Formative assessment is seen by many as valuable because of its capacity to refocus and guide learners (Baroudi, 2007; Black & Wiliam, 2009; Onion & Javaheri, 2011; Swaffield, 2011; Trauth-Nare & Buck, 2010; Wiliam, 2006b). On this basis, student peer- and self-assessments are viewed as powerful learning tools to personalise learning. Baroudi (2007) suggests that peer assessment develops students' understanding of what constitutes quality work, allowing them to explore not only their own notion of quality, but also other students' ideas. Bourke and Mentis (2013) highlight that self-assessment allows students to explore their own self-identity by reflecting on their performance. This self-assessment process can be influenced by feedback from teachers and peers as well as by personal goal-setting (Bourke & Mentis, 2013; Stockhill, 2011). Student input on formative assessment can be integrated into instruction when students are required to refine representations of a particular concept after small group and classroom discussions to demonstrate emerging understanding (Waldrip & Prain, 2006; Tytler, Peterson, & Prain, 2006). Peer assessment can facilitate refinement of students' views and conceptual understanding through a cycle of discussion, representational activity, focused discussion and feedback, and then re-representing understandings (Waldrip & Prain, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

In researching the effects of peer assessment, we examined the following questions:

1. How can assessment processes be adapted to give students more voice in their learning?
2. What are students' perceptions of the value of assessment processes that include peer and self-assessment?
3. What are teachers' perceptions of the value of enhanced student voice in learning and assessment?

Setting and Preparatory Professional Learning

Over both semesters of 2012, two humanities classes (each with 45–50 students) at Wattle College were team-taught by two teachers in an open-plan setting. One of the teachers taught both classes; hence, there were three teachers involved in this study. In the previous year, 2011, the researchers had worked with one of the three teachers in the areas of differentiating the curriculum through choice and assessing by rubric. The researchers were consulted by the three teachers involved in this study particularly around the area of assessment and how best to get students involved in the assessment of their peers. During classes, the researchers observed the classes, often having discussions with students about their learning. The three teachers involved in this study rewrote aspects of the curriculum in response to the 2011 Wattle College Year 8 student results for the Personalised Learning Environment Questionnaire (PLEQ) conducted as part of the IRL project (for further detail of the PLEQ see Prain et al., 2014, Chapter 2).

Table 10.2. Wattle college year 8 PLEQ engagement and learning data (N = 133)

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>
Self Directed Learning (Self-management)	3.69	.56
Self Directed Learning (desire for learning)	3.37	.67
Self Directed Learning (self-control)	3.84	.53
Teacher support	3.54	.74
Personal relevance	3.36	.62
Shared control	2.73	.87
Student negotiation	3.17	.87
Emotional Engagement	3.21	.94
Cognitive Engagement	3.57	.67
Behavioural Engagement	3.36	.74
Congruence for Planned Learning	3.57	.69
Authenticity	3.19	.77
Student Consultation	2.91	.78
Transparency	3.38	.74
Academic Efficacy	3.56	.74
Peer Relationships	3.71	.71
Self report on Disruptive Behaviour	2.55	.90
Individualisation	3.10	.75
Opportunity for Personal and Social Development	3.40	.82

The Year 8 students' responses to the PLEQ survey (Table 10.2) influenced the teachers' thinking. In this survey the students responded to a 5 point Likert scale, where 5 equated to strong agreement to statements on each theme.

The survey data indicated that students held strong positive perceptions about self-directed learning, peer relationships and teacher support, but reported lower positive perceptions about shared control, student consultation, individualisation and authenticity. This data set was shared with the year-level teacher team who identified the areas that they believed could be improved. The teachers selected personalising learning, enhancing student input, and giving students more control over their learning by allowing students to make choices as part of the learning process. This was discussed in terms of making learning more authentic, with students given more choice in selecting areas of interest. Each team member was asked to devise an intervention based on these issues.

THE INTERVENTION

United Nations Project

This subject contained three lessons each week with each lesson lasting approximately 75 minutes. The focus of this research, the United Nations project, ran for about four weeks in each semester of 2012, with the last week being assessment week. The United Nations was chosen as the topic because the teachers felt it could be linked easily to the students' "real world" knowledge, making it a more authentic learning experience. The United Nations project had a Humanities theme that required students to analyse selected United Nations projects. The teachers sought to focus on student thinking and reasoning skills and develop subject matter consistent with the state-wide curriculum for the humanities discipline area. They developed a curriculum that gave students choice and the ability to study different areas of interest rather than a common topic. Students could choose which region of the world they wanted to study. [The United Nations task showing the choices available to students is shown in Appendices 1 and 2]. The teachers set rules to ensure that students picked at least one aspect of their topic that demanded higher order thinking skills of analysing, creating or evaluating. The themes were linked by the first topic in which the teachers explicitly taught thinking skills, with activities on de Bono's hats, thinkers' keys and habits of mind being completed by students (de Bono, 1989).

Addressing Student Voice through Peer and Self-Assessment

Student voice was addressed by introducing peer and self-assessment processes that required students to present to a small group and then assess themselves and other students within the peer group. The teachers agreed that "pre-work" on peer to peer feedback was needed before formal peer assessment could be conducted in the class.

This development of feedback was incorporated into earlier work completed by students by adapting activities that were already a part of the course. Both the peer assessment rubrics and the self-assessment rubrics were presented to the students prior to commencing this project so that students understood how they would be assessed. Teachers perceived that using a rubric during the formative assessment process could provide appropriate co-regulation and feedback to students in inquiry classes. As part of this process, students were asked to complete a separate self-assessment rubric where they reflected not only on the finished product but also on the process used to develop the final presentation.

At the conclusion of the United Nations theme, students were asked to present their best three pieces of work to a small group of students. Each student, as part of a small audience, was asked to peer-assess the work through a purpose-designed rubric. [see Appendix 3]. Each presenting student was also asked to complete a teacher-designed self-assessment rubric [see Appendix 4]. After the peer assessment and self-assessment sessions, students were required to submit a final copy of their work. The teachers had not routinely used formative assessment as part of their teaching, but had attended professional development sessions that explained formative assessment practices.

The researchers worked closely with the teachers, providing support and ideas for the implementation of peer assessment and self-assessment in the classroom. The teachers retained control of the content, cooperatively planning the United Nations project as a small group and developing the teaching strategies that they used during the project. To prompt positive feedback to peers during presentations, students were given sentence starters by the teachers, including “I liked the way that.” and “The best part of your presentation was.” These sentence starters were designed to facilitate students becoming comfortable with how to frame positive feedback. Initially the teachers modelled this feedback to students so that students were clear about the types and purposes of these interactions.

Once students had learned to offer meaningful and constructive feedback, the teachers further developed peer feedback through a computerised activity centred on student goals. Students placed their goals and recorded their progress towards reaching their goals online. Other students then wrote constructive feedback to assist the student to achieve their goals. Students were given less structure in how to give this feedback to see if the quality of their peer feedback was developing further. The teachers closely monitored this feedback, intervening with several students on feedback deemed inappropriate, asking these students reflective questions (e.g., How do you think your feedback will help that student to progress towards completing their goal?) to allow students to deepen reflection.

These feedback sessions culminated in a formal peer assessment activity where the students worked in groups of 4–5 with each group member presenting their three pieces of work on the United Nations to the small group, and then others in the group would complete a formal peer assessment using a rubric. During each presentation, the peer assessors were asked to formulate a question to ask the

presenter at the conclusion of the presentation. The rubric was then completed by the student assessors. Students were required to rate each other in three areas (see Appendix 3 for peer assessment rubric), write the questions asked of the presenter, and make extra comments about the presentation. The teachers decided that groups would be randomly constructed and arranged students accordingly. Presenters were asked to keep their presentations to no more than five minutes. Students were asked to complete a self-assessment rubric that examined more than just the finished product.

DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND RESULTS

The researchers visited and observed over 40 classes during the semester. Developing students' skills in peer assessment was a key focus. These visits particularly focused on student reactions to feedback given by other students. Student interviews were held with a representative group of students to examine student perceptions about both peer and self-assessment processes. The researchers discussed self-perceived student learning with many students during each class to get a sense of the activities that the students found interesting and to get a sense of how students viewed this class. A targeted group of individual student interviews to represent the range of views within the class was held with a small focus group of students ($n = 7$). Artefacts from all students such as student work examples and peer assessment sheets were analysed by the researchers to identify how well students had grasped feedback processes and the quality of comments on peer assessment sheets.

The researchers interviewed the teachers involved in the development of the peer and self-assessment rubrics to determine whether the teachers believed that the peer and self-assessment processes enhanced student learning. The teachers were also interviewed about student learning in class with a particular emphasis on the impact of formative assessment on students' learning. Specifically the teachers were asked whether or not they thought that this change in assessment had impacted on learning and engagement. Both interview and observation data were regularly examined for emerging themes and the relative importance of these themes to student learning.

FINDINGS

Teacher and Student Perceptions of Personalised Learning

The students had a personalised learning experience because the activities allowed them to have more say in the way learning took place and in the associated assessment. The teachers had developed a "wide range of learning tasks that gave students the opportunity to make choices based on their interests, the appropriate level of difficulty and a learning style that they felt comfortable with" (Wendy). The teachers stated that some of the students made choices based on their own perceptions of which task seemed easiest, while other students chose tasks that were

suiting to them. Some students welcomed the chance to choose, while others still needed teacher assistance. Wendy, one of the teachers noted:

some of the students really challenged themselves with the choices that they made and this seemed to be when they chose on their particular area of interest rather than examining each task and looking at what had to be done to complete it.

She further claimed that “students who chose this way, seemed to have less difficulty completing the tasks; the students who made choices in other ways needed more assistance and sometimes realised that they had not made the best choices”, and “some students didn’t recognise the level of difficulty of certain learning tasks until after they had chosen them”.

Two students required teacher assistance to make their choices. In taking into account students’ preferences, teachers recognised the need to expose these students to other forms of learning so that they developed as learners. The task itself seemed to have enough options for all ability levels, with the teachers discussing chosen tasks with individuals and using probing questions to gauge student capability. This process was new to the students as the “subject is very different to other subjects because they were given a choice of tasks” (Cassie). In addition, students felt that this process required them “to think outside the box” (Cassie) and to “pay attention and concentrate hard” (Brett).

Overall the teachers seemed to believe that many of the students had challenged themselves. Tanya noted:

the system of choice worked well although some students didn’t challenge themselves enough; I have used a points system of choice in another subject and may have to think about how I could incorporate such a system in this United Nations project so that all students are challenged.

Both the teachers and students believed that students had reacted positively to this opportunity. The teachers thought that allowing student choice with clear assessment criteria motivated the students and allowed them to perform at a higher level. Tanya noted that “having the rubrics and the tasks up in the classroom allowed students the opportunity to know what they have to do to get a high grade and what they are assessed in. If students don’t know how they are being assessed, they can’t perform accordingly”.

Identification of Key Concepts

The identification of key concepts at the planning stage of any unit of work is important to ensure that all activities allow students to explore concepts (Waldrup, Prain, & Carolan, 2010) and facilitate students to become interested in relevant media events. These researchers suggested that teachers should allow students

to represent and re-represent their learning to extend and demonstrate their new learning and their understanding of key concepts. Through the feedback given from the peer assessment process, students were able to demonstrate their learning and gain insight into where they could go with future learning.

The teachers reported that there were several key concepts that they were focussing on when developing this unit of work. Jane commented “when we wrote this unit of work, one of our main goals was to further develop higher order thinking skills among the students”. When the United Nations task was examined by the researchers, it was clear that higher order thinking was embedded in the tasks listed as level 1 (see task in Appendix 2). An example of this is the task that requires students to “evaluate the environmental footprint ...” This links well to AusVELS in the thinking processes domain which suggests students must have the opportunity to use thinking skills in a more flexible and discretionary domain”. For Tanya, “our other main goals were to make our students more globally aware and to give the students the opportunity to manage their own learning”.

Development of Thinking Skills

Students reported that the focus on the United Nations gave them a task that engaged them in real world issues including watching current news events. They felt empathy towards other people who were in greater need: “I feel that I know more about the sad things going on in the world” (Lucy). They stated that they had a greater awareness of real global needs and what they could provide for these people. The exploration of this topic caused them to constantly relate their explanations to the responsibilities of global citizenship and to become more critical of what they read. “This class has made me watch the news and has helped me to think more about what is going on in the outside world” (Cassie). They saw it as supporting learning in other curriculum areas and it assisted in them to develop higher levels of critical thinking skills. According to Lucy, “we do work in this class that is more sophisticated in terms of thinking. This class helps me in English when we are asked to analyse newspaper articles”.

Because the class was more concerned with developing thinking skills and the topic was a vehicle to facilitate this, students felt that quality of thinking was more important than the ability to find facts. Tasks were well constructed and no matter what options the students chose to investigate, the key concepts became evident as the students were exposed to higher order thinking skills and the responsibilities of humans as global citizens. The teachers felt that it allowed students to develop a broader range of thinking skills. Jane claimed:

This class gives students the chance to develop thinking skills. It doesn't have a lot of content like most subjects – you don't get the students to learn facts, you allow the students to explore different ways to think which can be quite challenging for both students and teachers.

The teachers felt that the tasks allowed students to develop a more critical account of the topic and an increased awareness of their responsibilities as global citizens explaining that during the previous focus area of water. As noted by Tanya:

We found that students were unaware of global issues such as the lack of suitable drinking water in underdeveloped countries, giving responses such as but they can just turn on a tap to get fresh drinking water. This lack of awareness was something that the other teacher and I discussed when determining the focus of future learning.

The three teachers cited the importance of students knowing more about the world around them, but recognised that these particular tasks would only “make them more aware of their responsibilities” rather than “giving them a detailed knowledge of what the United Nations is doing in all countries around the world” (Tanya).

Teacher Perceptions of Peer- and Self-Assessment Process

During peer assessment activity, students were asked to listen to a presentation and complete a rubric to assess their peers. All students thought of questions to ask each student presenter, although the teachers deemed some questions superficial. Upon examination, four out of every five assessment sheets had meaningful comments in the comments section (see rubric in Appendix 3) by student assessor that supported choices made in the rubric. A small group of students ($n = 4$), for a range of reasons such as leaving their work at home and being unable to find their work on their computer, did not present to their group. One of these students claimed “I need to get more organised for next time”, indicating that the peer assessment process had also been one she had learnt from.

Students reacted positively to the first feedback task that required them to give feedback on another student’s whole class presentation. Initially feedback was a little superficial: “I liked the pictures that you chose for your presentation” (Amanda). However, as students became more familiar with the process and the teachers modelled appropriate feedback, comments became more focused and meaningful: “I thought the reasons that you gave to explain why you chose your information made a lot of sense” (Bill). Giving other students “public” feedback was viewed as successful. The teachers perceived that learning was taking place as part of the whole feedback process. When limited or superficial feedback was given, the teacher was able to further question the student to improve the quality of response. The teachers commented positively about the improvement in students’ ability to improve their feedback to peers.

Teachers perceived the second feedback task as less successful. In this activity, students were asked to offer suggestions about how less desirable habits of other students could be overcome and give feedback that discussed a student’s progress towards a goal. While the teachers monitored the discussions electronically and gave students feedback about their constructive comments, the electronic forum

seemed less successful in getting students to develop skills in giving feedback. This result might have been because students perceived that it was an electronic forum, with one student suggesting that feedback given to others was “the way we always talk online” (Brett), while another student stated “it’s only my mate who sees it” (Cassie). This suggested that students saw this electronic feedback as more hidden and inconsequential, and reverted to past online cursory communicative practices.

The teachers thought the peer assessment resulted in students taking more responsibility and reflecting on their own learning as well as being fair. This process allowed the teacher to focus on other aspects as well as addressing the peer assessment results. One teacher, Tanya, perceived that students undertook the peer assessment seriously and provided fair evaluations.

Teachers felt that the students were engaged in a deliberative process, beneficial to enhancing learning. They were surprised at how seriously students undertook peer evaluation, as noted by Jane:

I was surprised [how well they had got into this peer assessment activity] because usually when you do Peer Assessment, either they give the other students a straight 100 per cent because it is their friend or they go “I hate him” and give them zero. They were really conscientious about it and they really assessed each other properly. This could have been because they weren’t with their friends and because of the structure that we used in making them all present and assess in their small group.

Teachers felt that students were very positive about the impact of peer assessment on students’ learning and that the students valued the opportunity to become involved in learning how to conduct peer evaluation. Wendy noted that “they were very positive, all of them really liked it. because finally someone of their own age was looking at the work and would finally get it and understand it in a way that we couldn’t”. Wendy thought that “students were totally into the peer assessment and this was a lesson where there was “no. trying to get out of the assessment”. Jane suggested that the students “were fascinated by the ideas that they got to share with one another. Tanya thought that the process helped students to empathise with each other in that “students appreciate what you [the student] have to do to complete the work” and developed a more supportive environment. Tanya also suggested that it was important that the students worked cooperatively in their groups stating that “we wish to create transferrable skills that kids take to other classes and to life in general” and “we must ensure that we teach students how to work cooperatively in groups as they don’t actually have the skills when they come into our class”. The teachers perceived that these students were less focused on non-class related activities and more engaged in the class material than they were earlier in the year. More than four out of each group of five peer assessment sheets had meaningful comments included on them that were constructive and relevant, indicating that students took the opportunity to learn from each other seriously.

The teachers felt that the peer and self-assessment process was beneficial to learning and that: “peer assessment is something that we should be doing more of” (Wendy). Tanya observed that:

if the students can assess each other and themselves accurately, it takes the load off us as teachers” in that “it is a valuable skill for students to have, to be able to judge the value of an item, and to think about what they did, where they can improve, where they went wrong and decisions that they can make next time to make work better.

These observations about the peer assessment process resulted in the teachers using peer- and self-assessment in other classes

Student Perceptions of Peer- and Self-Assessment Process

The peer assessment process allowed students to work in teacher-determined groups and facilitated social interaction. It was well-received by students, with student groups listening intently to each other, and carefully completing their peer assessment sheets that asked students to assess a presentation using a rubric, with space allowed for comments. The students reported beneficial perceptions of feedback as they stressed the value of peer views on their work. They felt that it was a fair process, allowed them to see what others had done and they appreciated their peer feedback as valuable and it assisted them in producing a better quality product. As a student observed “this peer assessment was good because we got feedback from people who actually knew what it was like to do this assignment. You teachers only know how you think it should be done” (Tabitha). Another student expressed that peer feedback assisted in developing a better final artefact, suggesting that “getting other people’s feedback, not just the teachers’ is good. It helps you to know how you could make your work better next time” (Mark). This student’s perception was reasonably common. Students agreed that it gave them direction and “ideas for next time”. It allowed students to “check their understanding” (in a friendly, supportive environment in which they could clarify) “ideas with other members in the group” (Audrey). The self-assessment process allowed students to reflect on the effort that they put into their own work as well as the feedback that was given by each member of their group, with one student stating that it was “good to think about how you did and rate yourself” (Tabitha).

The Value of Peer- and Self-Assessment

In summary, students and teachers found the feedback meaningful and helpful to student learning because it required students to collaborate and learn from each other in a non-traditional classroom environment. Student small-group presentations and feedback generated student input, resulting in perceived student ownership. In a more comfortable atmosphere, students could check and refine understandings.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our research addressed the challenges and possibilities in addressing key dimensions of personalised learning Stockhill (2011). In setting up formative assessment processes entailing peer assessment and student choice, it is possible to foster personalised learning, provided that the students are coached about appropriate roles. The teachers reported positive outcomes, suggesting that this approach should be used more widely across their school. Most students felt that there were significant benefits from both peer- and self-assessment, with several stating that it was easier to assess peers than to assess themselves. The three teachers reported benefits for students when formative assessment processes were introduced, suggesting that enhanced student input allowed students to be more engaged in their learning. These teachers explained that the students wanted to perform well in front of their peers and worked consistently in class to achieve this goal. Students were very positive about these formative assessment practices, indicating that they should be used more widely. The students reported that they learnt more about areas that they could improve through this process of presenting to a small group and receiving feedback than when assessed solely by their teacher, thus changing their perceptions of, and purposes for, assessment. The open-plan setting was a catalyst to encourage this curricular innovation, where teachers provided mutual support in introducing the focused student group work. The student responses to peer feedback indicate the potential for this kind of formative assessment to promote a close alignment between the goals of teachers and students' understandings of these goals. These signs of alignment, through guided processes of engagement, point to a theory of practice around conditions for effective assessment.

Our study confirms that learning can be made individually meaningful for students and be perceived by them to meet their learning needs, and thus reflect personalising processes and experiences. For this to happen, teachers need to relinquish tight control of the focus and means of learning, but at the same time provide, at least initially, co-regulatory strategies that support students to adopt new roles. Students are encouraged to develop as considered and considerate reasoners, to make thoughtful choices, and take on new extended responsibilities for their own and their peers' learning. Some students, as in this case study, do not expect to participate in evaluating and providing peer feedback as part of their learning, and expect teachers to be solely responsible for assessment. Our case study suggests that these students can be encouraged to reframe their understanding. Some teachers under-estimate students' capabilities and offer at best token roles and choices. Our case study points to conditions that support more positive teacher accounts of student capabilities as instantiated in new practices.

As noted often in the literature, student voice is not a fixed or singular attribute, and the voices of student can flourish or atrophy depending on how teachers frame their own and students' roles in learning. Formative assessment in these open-plan classrooms gave students opportunities to share understandings, reason about, and

reflect upon their own and others' learning processes and needs. The peer assessment component of this voice allowed students to hear other students' views, allowing them to further develop their work and improve their learning. This position is consistent with findings from researchers such as Kuhn (2015) and Elliott-Johns et al. (2012) who suggest that increased student voice in classrooms promotes quality student learning.

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APPENDIX ONE: THE UNITED NATIONS TASK



Using the Thinking Skills covered complete the following task. You have six lessons to research, develop and present your report to a small group of your peers.

Assessment: This will be in two parts, a peer and self-assessment of overall project and time use in class. A rubric will be used as a basis for the assessment.

The United Nations currently has five key areas. The following website-<http://www.un.org/en/> is a direct link to the United Nations page which highlights these areas.

- Peace and Security
- Development
- Human Rights
- Humanitarian Affairs
- International Law

Within these areas the United Nations has identified key focus points where action is required in the world. You should select one area to work on for your project.



Task:

1. Choose at least three tasks from the grid provided.
2. You must choose one task from each column and one from each level.

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APPENDIX TWO: THE UNITED NATIONS GRID

	<i>Column 1</i>	<i>Column 3</i>	<i>Column 2</i>
Level 1	<p>State conclusions about what the future might hold for your area chosen of the United Nations Focus areas. Include the following topics: transport, communication, employment, housing, food and entertainment. Present your work as a news report, film it and submit it. This should be at least 500 words. Possible keys and hats to use are Brainstorming, What if, prediction and Interpretation picture, alternative, black and yellow.</p> <p>Locate and collate a collage of images to reflect the ethnic, cultural, social and economic diversity of the World region you have selected plus the current crisis being addressed. For each image attach an explanation of each pictures relationship to topic.</p>	<p>Write a submission to the United Nations and Government of the relevant country suggesting action needed to instigate positive change in the area. This should be at least 500 words. Possible keys and hats to use are prediction, what if, alternative and yellow.</p> <p>Design and create a resource or tool which would improve the living conditions of the people in the World area chosen. Highlight any programs that the United Nations may already be investigating. This should include a written explanation of this ideas impact on the society chosen. (300 words).</p>	<p>Evaluate the environmental footprint human activities are leaving in your focus area for both the current population and future generations. Construct an action plan for how the United Nations are assisting to create a more sustainable future for the area. This should be at least 500 words. Possible keys and hats to use are prediction, disadvantages, BAR, different uses, brick wall, alternative, black and yellow.</p> <p>Create a crossword including 20 clues which illustrate cultural activities and issues of the World area chosen. Each clue should be in sentence form. Possible keys to use are alphabet, question, brainstorming, invention and white.</p>

(Continued)

	<i>Column 1</i>	<i>Column 3</i>	<i>Column 2</i>
Level 2	<p>Compare some the United Nations bodies and how they contribute to solving current world issues. Possible keys and hats to use are commonality, brick wall, yellow and white.</p> <p>Construct a bar graph using a table to show the life expectancy for males and females of the region you have selected. Suggest a reason for the variations within this region and the statistics for Australia. Possible keys and hats to use are combination, forced relationships, interpretation and blue.</p>	<p>In what ways are some traditional cultures being challenged to adopt more egalitarian society? Present your findings as a Photostory. Possible keys and hats to use are ridiculous, brainstorming, forced relationships, black and yellow.</p> <p>Make a model which illustrates both the issues requiring resolution by the United Nations and your suggested solutions. Possible keys and hats to use are disadvantages, combination, BAR, variation, picture, invention, brick-wall, construction, black and yellow.</p>	<p>Investigate a natural disaster which has occurred in the World that has occurred in recent times. Explain the impact on the people of the region and steps being taken by the United Nations to make improvements in both the immediate and long term future. Possible keys and hats to use are what if, ridiculous and black.</p> <p>Write a letter to your family at home illustrating your experiences during a visit to a current area where the United nations is working describing the conditions which exist in this area and how the United Nations and Aid agencies are making a contribution to resolving the relevant topics. Possible keys and hats to use are reverse, interpretation, green and red.</p>

(Continued)

USING STUDENT VOICE IN SOCIAL STUDIES

	<i>Column 1</i>	<i>Column 3</i>	<i>Column 2</i>
Level 3	<p>Explain where the bulk of the population of the world lives. Suggest reasons for this pattern of where people live. Present a map and an interpretation as part of your submission.</p> <p>Provide a report on the structure and organisation plus the member states of the United Nations. Possible keys and hats to use are variation, brainstorming, forced relationships, white and blue.</p>	<p>Describe the work being completed by aid agencies to overcome problems related to water in underdeveloped nations. Possible keys and hats to use are commonality, invention, brick wall, green and white.</p> <p>On a poster or publisher document present a summary of the key items listed: Markets, traditions, modernisation, literacy levels, education and government structure in one focus country. Possible keys and hats to use are different uses, commonality, and white.</p>	<p>Select one of the United Nations millennium goals and predict whether this will be achieved in the time given. Provide reasons in your response. Possible keys and hats to use are prediction, question, brick wall and white.</p> <p>Create a list of key global issues which create hardship for those living in an area. Present your findings as a Wordle which indicates the problems being the most predominant as the largest items. Possible keys and hats to use are alphabet, brainstorming and red.</p>

APPENDIX THREE: PEER ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Very Good</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>
<i>Presentation</i>	Presentation was clearly expressed providing detailed information to the group. Eye contact was made with the audience. Questions were answered with confidence.	Presentation was clearly expressed providing some detail in information to the group. Eye contact was made at times with the audience. Questions were answered showing some knowledge	Presentation provided some information about the project. Some eye contact was made with the audience. Some audience questions were responded to.	Presentation was limited and did not demonstrate knowledge of project. Difficulty answering questions from the audience was evident.
<i>Thinking skills</i>	Student could explain and apply a large range thinking skills in the development of the project.	Student could explain and apply some thinking skills in the development of the project.	Use of a range of thinking strategies for exploring possibilities and responding appropriately to the questions about the United Nations.	Use of a small range of thinking strategies to the questions about the United Nations and AID agencies.
<i>Research material</i>	The final product contains detailed information about the work of the United Nations.	The final product contains good information about the work of the United Nations.	The final product contains some information about the work of the United Nations.	The final product contains limited information and lacks detail about work of the United Nations.

Comments:

Questions asked of presenter:

USING STUDENT VOICE IN SOCIAL STUDIES

APPENDIX FOUR: SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Very Good</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>
<i>Use of class time</i>	I utilised all lessons effectively and located resources, took notes and prepared my project for presentation.	I utilised most lessons effectively and located resources, took notes and prepared my project for presentation.	I utilised some lessons effectively and located resources, took notes and prepared project for my presentation.	I utilised minimal lessons effectively. I became distracted from work easily. I did not complete all parts of my project.
<i>Written work/ depth</i>	I presented the content clearly and concisely with a logical progression of ideas and effective supporting evidence.	I presented most of the content with a logical progression of ideas and supporting evidence.	I presented content which failed to maintain a consistent focus, showed minimal organization and effort, and lacked an adequate amount of supporting evidence.	I presented content which was unfocused, poorly organized, showed little thought or effort and lacked supporting evidence.
<i>Sources</i>	I identified highly appropriate sources in a variety of formats, and explained the information gained.	I identified mostly appropriate sources in a variety of formats and the information gained.	I identified a few appropriate sources but made little attempt to explain what information gained.	I identified no appropriate sources in any format or what information was found.
<i>Use of ICT</i>	I was able to use a large variety of ICT tools to locate relevant information and present.	I was able to use some ICT tools to locate relevant information and present.	I was able to use a small variety of ICT tools to locate relevant information and present.	I found it difficult to use ICT tools to locate relevant information and present my project to the group.
<i>Use of thinking skills</i>	During my preparation & presentation of my project I used a wide variety of the thinking skills covered.	During my preparation & presentation of my project I used several of the thinking skills covered.	During my preparation and presentation of my project I used some thinking skills covered.	During my preparation and presentation of my project I used limited or no thinking skills covered.