

INSIGHTS FOR PEDAGOGY FROM RESEARCH CONDUCTED AT NIE

(as published in Research in Education (ReEd) and SingTeach)

Reference is made to two articles in particular, one of which is in volume 4 (2011) of ReEd highlighting Assessment and Self-Regulated Learning, while the other is in issue No 33 (2011) of SingTeach focusing on imparting values in science lessons. Both articles, reporting on research projects conducted under the aegis of the Office of Education Research have direct and practical relevance to classroom teachers.

RESEARCH PROJECT: PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT

PROJECT TEAM

Principal Investigator: David Hogan,
Co-Principal Investigators: Phillip Towndrow, Serena Luo, Berinderjeet Kaur, Lazar Stankov & Guo Libo, All of National Institute of Education, Singapore.

Assessment and Self-Regulated Learning

When we look at assessment, we often focus on students' results. But there is more to them than just the scores. They have to do with learning. According to Dr Serena Luo, one of the researchers, "Self-regulated learning is also the outcome we want to achieve."

Taking Ownership of Learning

What is self-regulated learning (SRL) and why is it desirable? "It is learner initiated and controlled by the students themselves," explains Serena. "They plan for their learning, set their own learning goals, and dynamically monitor their own progress." In other words, self-regulated learners take ownership of their own learning. They are highly motivated to learn, even when faced with challenging tasks. They are also aware of their strengths and weaknesses and can adapt their learning strategies through the learning process. Assessment and SRL are thus closely linked. For Serena, both concern three key questions: *Where are the students going in their learning? How are they getting there? And where do they go next?*

Assessment as Feedback

Serena is involved in a large-scale study to find out the

relationship between classroom pedagogy, assessment practices and student learning. On the importance of assessment for the purpose of learning, she says: "if there are no assessments, students and teachers won't know where exactly they are in the learning process. It is like driving without the traffic signs—we don't know where we are." Assessments allow teachers an avenue to provide students with feedback on how they can improve. "We should provide clear and specific feedback in terms of where students are in relation to their learning goals and what they should do next." If used well, assessment can help to promote SRL behaviour. For example, teachers can enhance students' commitment and help them regulate their learning when the goals are clear and manageable. Serena notes that while assessments are given by teachers, students can also use the information from assessments to know their own level of understanding and progress in learning. "Students themselves play a very important role in assessment practices."

Assessment for Classroom Learning

SRL behaviour also affects the effectiveness of assessment.

"If students take their learning seriously, they will take their teachers' feedback seriously, and they may even actively seek feedback and look at their own progress. They'll then transform the feedback into actions of learning." Serena suggests that such feedback can be included in classroom interaction, and not limited to tests and exams. Class discussions and tasks elicit evidence about student learning, which can be used to make instructional adjustments. To achieve this, a positive classroom climate is important. Students shouldn't have to feel bad about making mistakes. Teachers can encourage them to constantly improve themselves and steer them towards mastering new knowledge and skills. Serena's research holds much promise for the formative and transformative potential of assessment for learning in Singapore classrooms. Nonetheless, there is still much to be discovered.



Dr Serena Luo (above) is interested in assessment & learning.