

comprises six constituent projects or complementary enquiries carried out, between 2000 and 2003, as part of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme. This well-written and extensively researched book is divided into three sections, each of which raises a critical question for the consideration of researchers, policy-makers and classroom practitioners.

Part one fore-grounds the issue of pupil voice and highlights the tensions between rhetoric and practice; that is, the government's general encouragement of the need to listen to pupils on the one hand, versus the lack of real practical support offered to carry out this idea on the other, especially in the context of the sustained prioritisation of 'performance'. In addition, this section provides a detailed analysis of the historical antecedents within the pupil voice movement, as a political backdrop to contemporary policy and practice, and usefully outlines the rationale for, as well as transformative potential of, enhanced teacher-pupil relationships.

Part two, comprising ten chapters, focuses more extensively on the emergent issues and themes, to produce a detailed examination of the 'problems and possibilities of developing consultation in the classroom'. Covering a fairly broad terrain, this section carefully maps the pedagogical settlements that constitute the landscape of 'pupil consultation', producing an analysis that focuses upon the following key questions: what does consultation look like in the classroom?; what do pupils say when consulted?; how do pupils talk about the practice and potential of consultation?; how is the impact of consultation regarded?; and how are the emergent problems of consultation effectively managed?

In part three, the authors reflect upon what has been learned and consider the overall implications of pupil consultation to the process of teaching and learning. Despite the fact that in practice pupil consultation has 'so far been pursued only in a limited number of schools', there is a wistful optimism that if done responsibly and authentically, it can have considerable transformative potential. Genuine motives that are characterised by sincere and supportive teacher attitudes to pupil ideas can enable mutually beneficial outcomes. For pupils, this can lead to improved confidence, agency and commitment to learning, whereas teachers can benefit from a 'practical agenda for the improvement of teaching and learning' that 'provides a greater insight into the social dynamic of a working group'. However, while potential may be one thing, reality is another. As the authors openly acknowledge, it remains to be seen whether the transformative potential of pupil consultation will ever mount a serious challenge to the hegemony of adult-led prescription and performance-oriented agenda. More positively, however, this book takes the first steps to 'laying the foundations for a commitment to learning that lasts beyond schools days and the last exam'!

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Improving learning through consulting pupils, by Jean Rudduck and Donald McIntyre, London, Routledge, 2007, 222 pp., £21.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-415-41616-0

For those of us involved in the business of learning and teaching, the idea of consulting our students, be they young children, teenagers or undergraduates, about how we teach

and how they learn can stop us in our tracks. It challenges traditional models of learning and teaching and forces us to think about how we are learning as teachers and what our learners can teach us. On behalf of the TLRP Consulting Pupils Project Team, Jean Rudduck and Donald McIntyre present a very full and convincing study that demonstrates the positive impact that consulting pupils can have not only on classroom experiences of learning and teaching but also on their sense of self, identities as learners and the enhancement of teacher–pupil relationships.

Areas explored within this study include beginning to consult pupils about learning and teaching, exploring the potential of pupils to act as co-researchers in learning and teaching, teachers' responses to what pupils said, beginning and sustaining the process of consultation and what pupils say about conditions for learning. A theme that runs through this study is value. The team reported that work and subject areas valued by teachers are also valued by pupils and although it seems quite obvious, in a culture of learning and teaching where the motivation of pupils can be called into question, this idea of value can be a simple tool with which to engage and motivate learners.

Like many readers would, I went straight to the results and could navigate my way there easily. On arrival I found some very interesting although not altogether surprising material. The quotations from the students about their teachers (the study is secondary school based) were enlightening and very helpful for me as a teacher who has experience with other age groups. Children want to have confidence in their teachers and very much valued those teachers with whom they could have a good relationship. The chapter on what pupils say about their own teachers' teaching expands on this by giving their views on what makes a good lesson and a good teacher.

Throughout this book, not only is there robust literature support for all findings, there is also considerable discussion about the methods used and refreshing critical honesty about the limitations of the study. Whilst highlighting the seriousness with which the pupils undertook the consultation, they raise the question of how helpful is it for teachers to keep being given information about how to improve. They also are fully aware that the teachers taking part in the study welcome the consultation process whereas not every teacher would.

The whole book gives several very clear messages: that pupils can be co-operative and comprehensive co-researchers and can inform the learning and teaching process intelligently and honestly whilst not using consultation as an opportunity to make personal attacks on their teachers. It demonstrates that consultation with learners does much more than just improve the learning and teaching, it improves the quality of human relationships within the learning environment. It also provides a very strong model for a cohesive, honest and well supported research project. I hope the book inspires teachers to want to contribute to the research by taking on some of the recommended strategies and improve their practice through consulting with their learners.

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