

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDENT AUTHORITY

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When teachers facilitate rather than lead class discussions, students realize that they are valued contributors to their learning development. The most rewarding aspect of teaching is assisting students in expressing their ideas with confidence and taking a commanding role in a learning experience. Enabling students to participate in discourse that includes projecting good attitudes, explaining their thinking, and taking feedback will lead to the development of their understanding of a topic. However, to integrate prior knowledge and existing knowledge, students must have control and power over their thinking in any discussion.

The teacher is the authority figure in a traditional classroom. We must break down this hierarchy to involve students in meaningful student dialogue. Students may only articulate ideas or concepts that they believe are favorable or valid. Assimilation of new knowledge with prior experiences enables them to build neural networks of information, leading to the formation of long-term comprehension and continuous learning. The new information is perceived as personal and relevant.

Student authority in the classroom refers to the idea that a teacher delegates control of classroom discussions to students rather than the traditional discussion sessions. If a teacher only solicits volunteers in class without strong encouragement, students who do not volunteer may realize that they are not part of the discussion. When a teacher raises various questions for the students to answer, only a few from the class will participate. Also, some students choose not to partake in class discussions. This must be addressed.

Enhanced student authority in the classroom builds students' self-esteem to be involved in public speaking. It is a secure learning environment because all students are involved in the conversation. Furthermore, when students hear varied ideas from each other, they learn more. If students only absorb information from the teacher's viewpoint, they will never have a chance to clarify their answers or recognize other points of view. When students participate in a class discussion, they recognize the value of their learning environment and are more likely to give thoughtful responses because they understand that everyone has something to add value to.

Classroom discussions also support teachers in the delivery of quality learning. Teachers can properly manage the classroom to determine if there is a complete understanding while the assigned student performs his or her role of being a discussant. If a teacher notices that several students have given incorrect answers, they can modify their lesson to discuss a concept before moving on to the next chapter of the lesson.

To increase authority and improve student knowledge construction, the teacher's main purpose is to encourage and guide the discussion, only contributing when necessary. The goal is to keep misunderstandings of intended information from occurring. Individual students must feel motivated by their viewpoints, but they must also recognize other students as important characters in classroom interactions.

## SUGGESTED STRATEGIES TO FOSTER STUDENT AUTHORITY

Outline the discussion.

Consider the intended flow for knowledge construction before the discussion. Begin with open-ended questions to require the integration of all ideas, and then provide follow-up questions and prompts to assist the discourse in the appropriate direction. These should also convey incorrect assumptions and incomplete information. Plan your alternative plan, or how you will end the discussion with a clear and precise conclusion of topics.

Provide students enough time to wait for the processed ideas.

Giving enough time is desirable in increasing students' authority. It gives them time to think and reshape ideas. When a student asks a teacher a question, the teacher could step back and wait. Modeling this kind of behavior can help students to feel that it is safe for everybody to respond. This period of silence allows students time and space to process the question and react.

Students understand the rules of conversation just as well as we do – one person speaks and another one responds. A student can take advantage of this standard rule of conversation during the wait time. It emphasizes that the teacher is not the authoritative figure in the learning experience. It also prohibits students from switching off their attention when another student speaks, because everyone is expected to think and process.

Strategically use prompts.

Teachers can avoid unnecessary situations by using prompts that do not add substantial value by contributing to an authoritative answer but rather redirect and facilitate a student's ability to respond authoritatively. This method perpetuates the notion that students have authority and should listen to one another. It also confirms the community learning experience, in which the teacher serves as a guide on the side and models communication abilities that students can apply outside of the class.

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