



Summary: Kathleen Kryza – Advanced Differentiation

Hawker-Brownlow Conference May 21, 2011

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Kathleen Kryza has worked for over 20 years in a variety of educational backgrounds – special needs, gifted education, alternative education in juvenile prisons, and multicultural settings. She is an international coach, consultant and trainer and is very practical in her application of learning. You can find out more about her and her work at <http://www.kathleenkryza.com/> and <http://www.inspiringlearners.com/> where Kathleen and her team have a wide range of downloadable resources.

The following is my summary of Kathleen’s material and my impressions (and additional footnotes) of what I found valuable and useful. More information is available at www.intuyuconsulting.com.au.

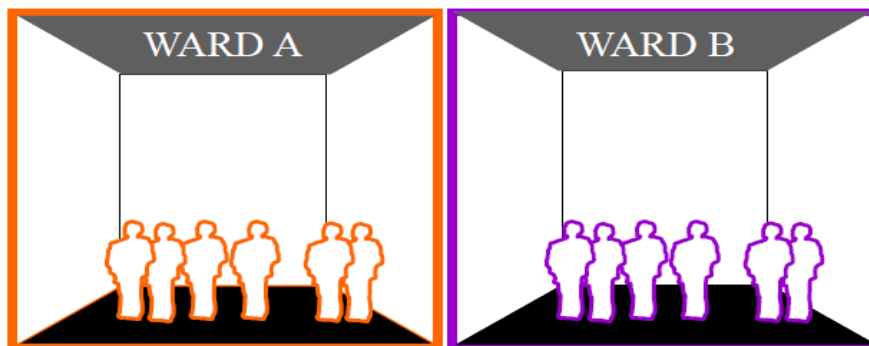
NOTES

- Kathleen’s overarching idea for the session revolved around what I perceive as the need to make our classrooms authentically and legitimately ‘fair’ for all students; regardless of their learning preference or the stage of learning they are at.

“We need to ensure that kids have ample opportunity to demonstrate their understanding in their own way.”¹

- Kathleen identified three specific points in the learning process, at which students can be given opportunities to make choices in their own learning. The importance of choice and responsibility is illustrated powerfully in a study of aged care patients conducted during the 1960s and used by Minds at Work²

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*FIXED EGG DIET PLAN
FIXED MOVIE TITLE & DATE
FIXED PLANT TYPE & POSITION
SYSTEM DECIDES & PROVIDES*

*CHOOSE EGG DIET PLAN
CHOOSE MOVIE TITLE & DATE
CHOOSE PLANT TYPE & POSITION
PATIENT DECIDES AND MANAGES*

¹ Kryza, Kathleen: ‘Advanced Differentiation’ Hawker-Brownlow Education Conference, May 23rd, 2011

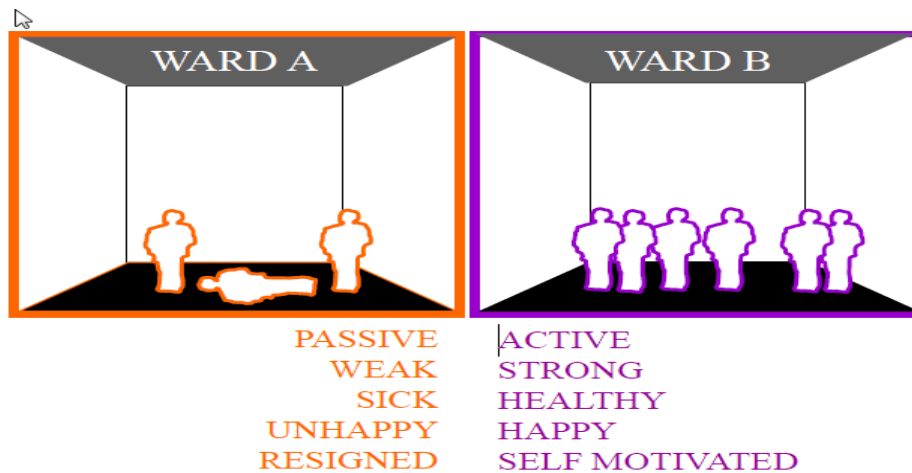
² Clarke, Jason: ‘Minds at Work’ 2010



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- In the above example, patients in Ward A are given no choice or responsibility in their daily routines. In Ward B they are given some choice and responsibility as to how they manage their routine.



- The results (tragically, some patients in Ward A reportedly died) indicate that choice and responsibility are critical. Teachers must, however, be strategic in how and when they offer it, and Kathleen uses her '*Chunk, Chew and Check*' system to incorporate choice into tasks.³
- Kathleen also makes the important point that choice often means more rigour than teacher-directed tasks because the students **must think deeply about the connections between the ideas and the way they are interpreting them**. John Hattie's extensive research into Visible Learning⁴ recognises this thinking as '*Deep Learning*' and discusses it as being thinking that is of the greatest value to students, because it requires the most deep thinking from them.
- Additionally, the choice they have been given acts as inspiration (rather than 'motivation', which can be fragile and finite) and this leads to highly engaged students that produce high quality work...and enjoy doing it!
- Opportunities for differentiation at Kathleen's three 'stages' are explained thus:

CHUNK - this is the early stage of the learning, where students acquire new information. Teachers can offer choice as to **how** students acquire the information, **when** they do it, within a specified time-frame and the **mode** of the information (hard copy, e-resources, human resources etc) 'Chunk' can also be described as **input**. As Kathleen explains in 'Differentiation for Real Classrooms', 'When we present new information, we can differentiate how students acquire, or chunk, the new information based on learning preferences, readiness level and classroom

³ Kryza, Kathleen et. al. 'Differentiation for Real Classrooms' Hawker-Brownlow Education, 2010.

⁴ Hattie, John 'Visible Learning: a synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement' First published by Routledge, Oxon, RT, 2009.



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circumstances. If we input new content in the same way day after day, we are most likely **not** teaching all learners because we are not teaching to their preferred ways to take in information.’ The **‘chunk’** stage of learning, therefore, is a critical moment for differentiation; if students are not able to make sense of the new content/ideas in their own way at this point, they risk spending the rest of the unit or topic feeling confused, disempowered and left behind.

CHEW – this is the stage at which students process what they’ve learned. Choice can be offered here as to **how** they choose to **organise** and **represent** their thoughts/ideas and reflections. Chew may also be referred to as **‘process’** Enabling students to make their own choices about the ways in which they process what they have discovered supports retention over time, because it gives the learning meaning.

Kathleen touched upon the problems with the traditional ‘input/output model of learning, where students memorise facts, extract the information for a test or essay and then ‘dump’ it over the weekend, before beginning the process all over again on Monday. Allowing **ample time for the ‘chewing’** to take place can circumvent this problem. ‘The importance of processing and connecting to new learning in meaningful ways is vital...yet often left out, as we go from input to output (or **‘chunk’ to ‘check’**) Ultimately, this leads to what David Perkins refers to as ‘fragile knowledge’.⁵

CHECK – The third point at which teachers can offer choice to students is the point at which they are asked to ‘show us what they know’, or, in VELs-terminology to ‘demonstrate understanding.’ Check is also referred to as **‘output.’** Traditionally, checking has been done via tests and exams, essay ad reports. Sometimes, if we’re feeling really creative, we’ll have students make a poster or a slideshow to demonstrate their understanding. But do these conventional forms of assessment reflect the world of the twenty-first century? Kathleen suggested a mixture of assessment is required, not only to mirror the world ‘outside’, but to ensure that all students are given the chance to demonstrate their understanding in ways that enable them to experience success.

“I hate writing essays. I know I could do well if the teacher would let me make a film clip discussing Nazi Propaganda...but he won’t let me. So I know I’m going to fail.”

– Natasha, Year 10 student.

Natasha said this to me two days after Kathleen spoke at the Conference. It really brought home the importance of differentiation in ‘checking’. **Not allowing students to show their learning in their own way not only inhibits their learning, but it can severely damage their self-esteem...and the teacher-student relationship.**

- This system highlights the importance, not only of offering choice at the assessment stage (which is traditionally what teachers have done, often using Bloom’s Taxonomy) but

⁵ Perkins, David ‘smart Schools: Better thinking & learning for every child’ The Free Press, NY 1992.



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throughout the learning process so that students can truly immerse in the learning and feel that they are entering into an **authentic exploration**.⁶

⁶ *It is my strong belief that what is true for students is also true for teachers. At an organisational level, schools must make efforts to support teacher learning in ways that will develop them as inspired, deep-thinking and responsible professionals.*