

"Yes it did because everyone in my group got a chance to THINK or BUILD on new ideas", as mentioned by Boy M when asked if reflection time helped his group move toward their goal.



Guided Reflection and the Collaborative Learner

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"I learnt that collaboration and co-operation in groups is more VALUABLE than intelligence." Boy I

Further Information
This poster and further information is available at <http://www.theibsc.org/>
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The Research Question

How might guided reflection enhance the power of group learning in Year 6 boys?

Introduction

The basis of my research stemmed from identifying an issue not only within my own teaching practice but also within my conscience. Knowing that I am unable to even predict what world my students will live in, work in, contribute to, or redefine, how do I equip them with the skills necessary to be critical thinkers and engaged citizens who could change the world? I began hunting for a way in which to tackle this, and when I listened to Dr Shimi Kang speak at the IBSC Conference in Vancouver, Canada in 2016, I knew that I had the inklings of an idea.

Kang (2014) speaks of a skill set of this future citizen, describing it as 21st Century Skills or Consciousness Quotient (CQ), encompassing four elements; communication; creativity; critical thinking and collaboration. So what task would encompass all of these skills and be worthy of action research? It needed Reichert and Hawley's (2010) transitivity factor (the ability of the lesson to hold the attention of students to enable mastery of the content or skill) and Kidd's (2004) 'boyology' (the ability of the lesson to be based within the interest of a boy).

I chose to use an iBook to develop a program to provide background knowledge on Australian immigration. Using this tool, the boys completed a number of interactive tasks, in pairs, in small groups and participated in whole class discussions.

Whilst completing the task, the boys were required to work together on the research component as well as the presentation component. This group-worthy task required the boys to use Kang's CQ skills. CQ requires the learner to use both left and right brain function, integrating intelligence quotient and emotional quotient to use the 'whole brain' (Kang, 2014; Gregory & Kaufeldt, 2015). Kang supports the notion of taking regular breaks and classifies it as 'downtime' in her theory that boys of today need 3 essential things: play, others and downtime.

- Play - reduces stress, stimulates the frontal part of the brain, allows us to step on a new neural trail, makes it okay to make mistakes, promotes comfortableness with uncertainty and moves away from rigidity.
- Others - our connection to our family and friends.
- Downtime - includes slowing down and integrating periods of relaxed wakefulness.

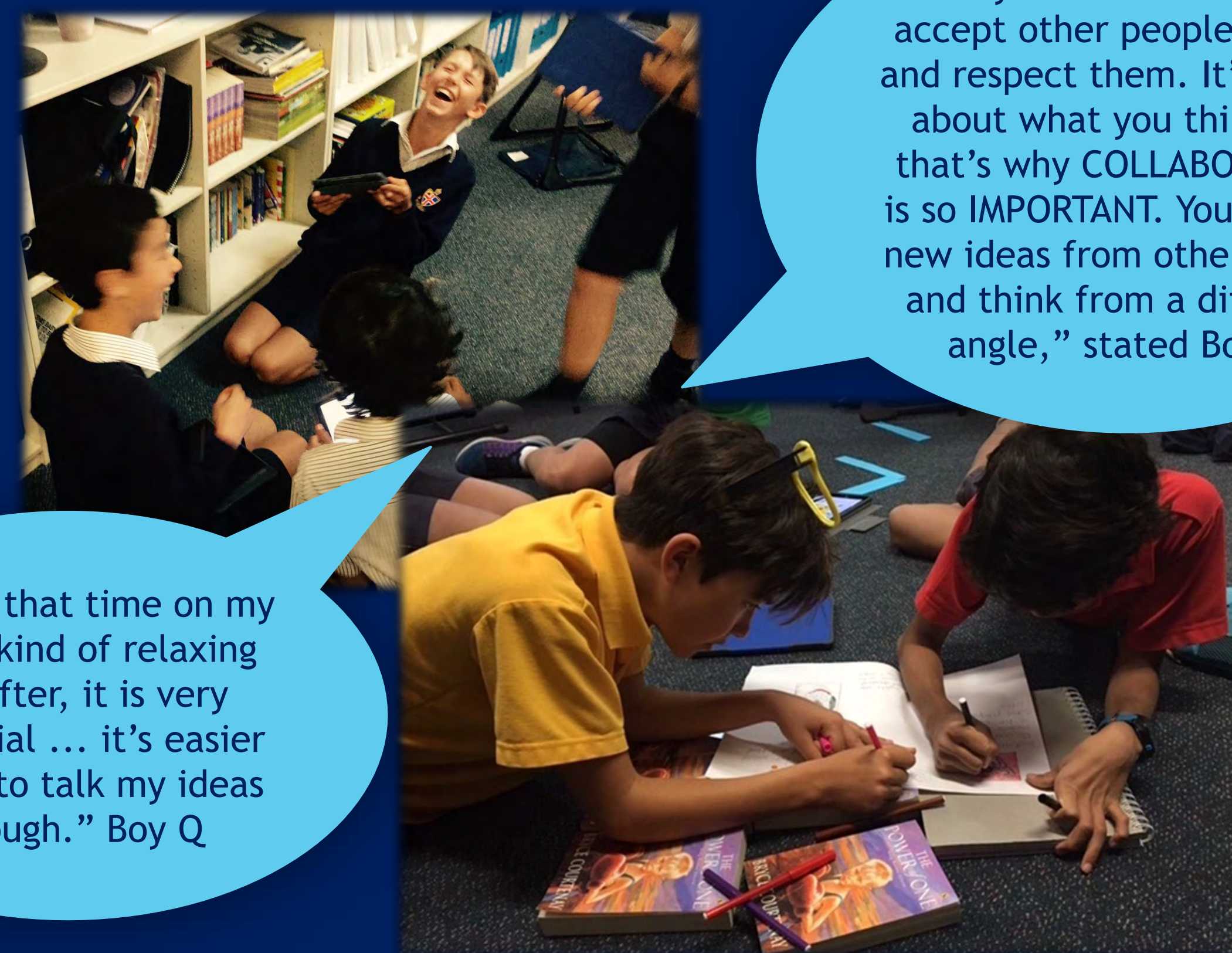
My action research project focused on 'downtime' under the guise of independent guided reflection. Downtime, Kang says leads to an increased capacity to adapt, changing the neuroplasticity in the brain (2014).

And, adaptation is the key to survival in this ever-changing world.

Research Context and Participants

Nurturing around 1600 boys, Christ Church Grammar School situated in Claremont, Perth, Western Australia is a leading non-selective school for boys. The School's vision, 'building good men' is etched into the limestone, embedded into the fabric of the school and underpins the values of staff and boys alike.

The participants of my action research were a diverse group of 23 Year 6 boys with a range of academic abilities, from varied cultural backgrounds and who participated in a range of co-curricular activities. I chose my Year 6 class as I was their classroom teacher and had access to them for most of a 6 period day, 5 days a week.



"They need to sometimes accept other people's ideas and respect them. It's not all about what you think and that's why COLLABORATION is so IMPORTANT. You can get new ideas from other people and think from a different angle," stated Boy A.

"Having that time on my own is kind of relaxing and after, it is very beneficial ... it's easier for me to talk my ideas through." Boy Q

The Research Action

The change in my practice for the action research project, lay in scheduling reflection time within the four sequences planned for a History unit that spanned a period of 10 weeks. This reflection time was guided by the researcher. Collecting and analysing the thoughts of my boys on what they were learning and more importantly, how they were learning was enlightening and eye-opening to say the least. The data collected on my specific question were invaluable to my project and to my evolution as a practitioner.

Key Readings

Cain, S. (2012). *Quiet: The power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking*. New York: Crown Publishing Group.

Kang, S. (2014). *The Dolphin Parent*. Canada: Penguin

Reichert, M. & Hawley, R. (2010). *Reaching Boys, Teaching Boys: Strategies that work and why* [Kindle iOS version]. Retrieved from <http://www.amazon.com>

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection for the purpose of this action research project was embedded in the principles of Stringer (2013). The cyclical nature of action research and especially Stringer's 'Look' and 'Think' phases lend itself to qualitative data collection. Listed below are my methods of data collection:

- Interviews (closed, semi-structured and open questions)
- Guided reflection questionnaires (anonymous open and closed questions)
- Video (questions were targeted toward the processes of the group project)
- Photographs (candid throughout all tasks)
- Reflection journals (personal journals used by the boys whilst taking time away from their group)

After collection, the analysis of the qualitative data was triangulated by comparing the guided reflection questions with the interviews, photographs and videos. It was essential that the voices of the participants were the focal point and this influenced the method of collection and added to the legitimacy of the findings.

Key Findings and Discussion

- Guided reflection is beneficial to some and not to others
- Unguided reflection time is beneficial to most
- Personalities affect the dynamics of the group, and therefore its success
- The 21st century classroom needs the complete quotient (CQ)



"When doing a group project, I think it is important to have a REFLECTION period any time when it is NEEDED. Also, if any group member is stuck for ideas, they should be able to take a reflection time out." Boy H

"The other people in my group had a lot of interesting and valid points that I hadn't seen or thought of when I was doing my own work. When everyone contributes with their best ideas, EVERYONE BENEFITS..." Boy F

"This was beneficial [a break from partner] because I had TIME to THINK of ways to stem from my partners ideas." Boy G



Conclusions

This action research project gave the participants the opportunities and skills to reflect on their learning. This reflection, whether guided, or unguided, resulted in them gaining a deeper understanding of what makes collaboration and learning groups worthwhile.

Moving forward, this action research project has many branches. Firstly, research into personality traits and the effect on collaboration, secondly, a study on how knowledge of personality traits affects tolerance and empathy, and finally, research on how unguided reflection affects the collaborative learner. I believe this action research project can have far reaching implications for future research. **The scope is wide, the door is open and the task up for the taking.**