

Silence is golden in the classroom, says researcher

September 25 2012

Silence in the classroom can enrich children's educational experience and improve behaviour and exam results, the University of Stirling's Dr Helen Lees has reported.

These conclusions are presented in her controversial new book, *Silence in Schools*, which discusses recent scientific research pointing to the benefits of silence practices, and explores case studies from schools which employ silence as an innovative pedagogic tool.

Dr Lees uses testimonials from teachers and headteachers across the UK who have introduced silence techniques – such as meditation, mindfulness, pausing, [silent reading](#), silent moments, and quiet spaces – to outline the positive effects these initiatives have had.

Dr Lees, a Research Fellow in the Laboratory for Educational Theory in the School of Education at Stirling, says: "This new employment of 'strong silence' is what education has been waiting for. 'Weak silence' has been used in the classroom for a long time, but traditionally this weak form harnesses silence as an oppressive tool, whereby children are punished or controlled through the process of enforced noise cessation.

"This negative application of silence is badly conceived and a misuse of silence's power to unlock children's potential. However, when used positively silence offers much more and, if they are managed and developed appropriately, silence schemes can have a hugely beneficial and transformative effect on both [pupils](#) and teachers."

As a practising meditator for 15 years, Dr Lees has a strong interest in the power of silence to improve lives and stimulate well-being. In addition to enhancing learning and encouraging good behaviour, the Stirling researcher argues silence can bring a special feeling to the classroom, creating an environment in which joy, contentment and [calmness](#) are stimulated and tolerance for others is promoted.

Dr Lees emphasises whilst the techniques "may turn people's understanding of what education ought to be on its head", the discussion of silence in her book is not "hippy nonsense". Rather, "it is based on testimonial evidence and scientific research, the findings of which cannot be ignored."

Dr Lees concludes: "This book presents an overview of a fascinating and exciting new educational area which can create school improvements at little or no cost.

"However, further discussion and debate are necessary to establish not only how silence might revolutionise children's learning experiences, but also how it might transfer successfully as a positive practice in other environments, such as prisons and young offender institutions."

Silence's reputation as a valuable, cost-free educational resource is growing rapidly. This is in part due to the attention it has garnered from the work of high-profile celebrity figures like Goldie Hawn and David Lynch, who have promoted its merits and funded special silence programmes in schools.

More information: www.silenceinschools.org/

Provided by University of Stirling

Citation: Silence is golden in the classroom, says researcher (2012, September 25) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-09-silence-golden-classroom.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.