INCREASING LEARNER AUTONOMY

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ielts.com.au/teacher

Introduction

Tell your group:

- Your name, your job, your Centre

- What you hope to gain from this workshop

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(5 mins)

Workshop Objectives

- Better understand principles of Learner Autonomy

- Explore Self-Assessment

- Share and reflect on current practice

- Action planning

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Discuss objectives
- **Better Understand principles of Learner Autonomy** – Dispel Common misconceptions about Learner Autonomy
- **Explore Self-Assessment** – Understand what is driving interest in Self-Assessment and how it can be used as an effective tool to foster Learner Autonomy
- **Share and Reflect** – Current classroom practices
- **Action Plan** – Opportunity to plan first steps to make any required changes

Activity

- In groups, brainstorm points for what Learner Autonomy **is** and **is not**

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- Group activity - Share and discuss

(5mins)

Learner Autonomy IS:

- Capacity to take charge of one's own learning

- Construction of knowledge from direct experience rather than just responding to instructions

- Ability to set appropriate learning goals

(Holec, 1979, Benson, 2001, Suij-Ojeda, 2018)

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Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will sit in a boat all day and drink beer.

Unknown

Learner Autonomy is NOT:

- JUST self-instruction/learning without a teacher
- The banning of intervention or initiative on the part of a teacher
- Something teachers do to learners; i.e. a new methodology
- A single easily identifiable behaviour
- A steady state achieved by learners once and for all.

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- Learner Autonomy manifests in varying degrees. Learner Autonomy can fluctuate depending on a number of influencing factors.

Significance

- Language Awareness, Motivation, Strategy Use, Learner Beliefs, Metacognition

- Psychological / Second Language Acquisition

- Political / Economical

- Educational Policy / 21st Century Learning

- Graduate Attributes

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Why is Learner Autonomy considered important, not just for language learning but for learning in general?

- **Language Awareness, Motivation, Strategy Use, Learner Beliefs, Metacognition**
  It is difficult to research benefits of true learner autonomy because it is nearly impossible to measure in isolation. It appears to be closely related to **language awareness, motivation, strategy use, learner beliefs and metacognition.** On the other hand, this is beneficial as if we can increase Autonomous Learning, there is a good chance we will consequently nurture an environment where motivation, strategy use etc will also thrive.

- **Psychological / Second Language Acquisition**
  Language learning is a lifelong endeavour, not one that begins and ends in a language classroom. Language learning consumes a considerable amount of time and Learners have to work within and beyond the classroom to develop their language skills.

- **Political / Economical**
  Benson states that the new capitalism, is primarily based on services and knowledge work and, in the face of rapid technological change, generic skills, flexibility and the ability to learn how to learn are at a premium.

- **Educational Policy / 21st Century Learning**
  There has been a tendency towards the globalisation of educational policy, in which the development of the individual has become a central concern. Principles of Learner Autonomy align with 21st Century Learning skills

- **Graduate Attributes**
  Autonomous Learning skills reflected in University graduate attribute statements. Adequate preparation in ELICOS / DE programs is important.

4

ESSENTIAL RULES
OF
21ST-CENTURY
LEARNING

1. Instruction should be student-centered
2. Education should be collaborative
3. Learning should have context
4. Schools should be integrated with society

teachthought
WE GROW TEACHERS

Example Graduate Attributes

- A capacity for self-reflection and a willingness to engage in self-appraisal (UOA)

- Lifelong learning: the ability to be responsive to change, to be inquiring and reflective in practice, through information literacy and autonomous, self-managed learning (SCU)

- The ability to work and learn independently and effectively (UQ)

- Evaluate own strengths and weaknesses as a leader / team member, and/or autonomously working in a team context (CQU)

- Professionals capable of ethical, self- directed practice and independent lifelong learning (UNSW)

- Confident, creative lifelong learners who can use their understanding of themselves and others to achieve their goals in work and learning (VU)

- Effective personal skills, including critical reflection on performance skills, learning and personal ethics and managing time and workload (UWA)

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NEAS Principles

- **A1** - Course design supports quality learning outcomes.
- **A4** - Course delivery, assessment and teaching approaches optimise outcomes for students.
- **A5** - Students are encouraged to take control of their language learning.
- **B3** - Students are provided with support to be actively involved in their learning program.
- **C2** - Teaching and study spaces facilitate language learning.
- **C4** - The Centre has resources for each course to meet a range of student learning needs, styles and preferences.

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- The NEAS QA Framework covers aspects of learner autonomy in various areas. These are some of the key principles in which there are drivers directly related to learner autonomy.

Discuss…

- Good practices you are aware of
- Why these practices are effective
- What barriers need to be overcome

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- Group discussion
- Share ideas together

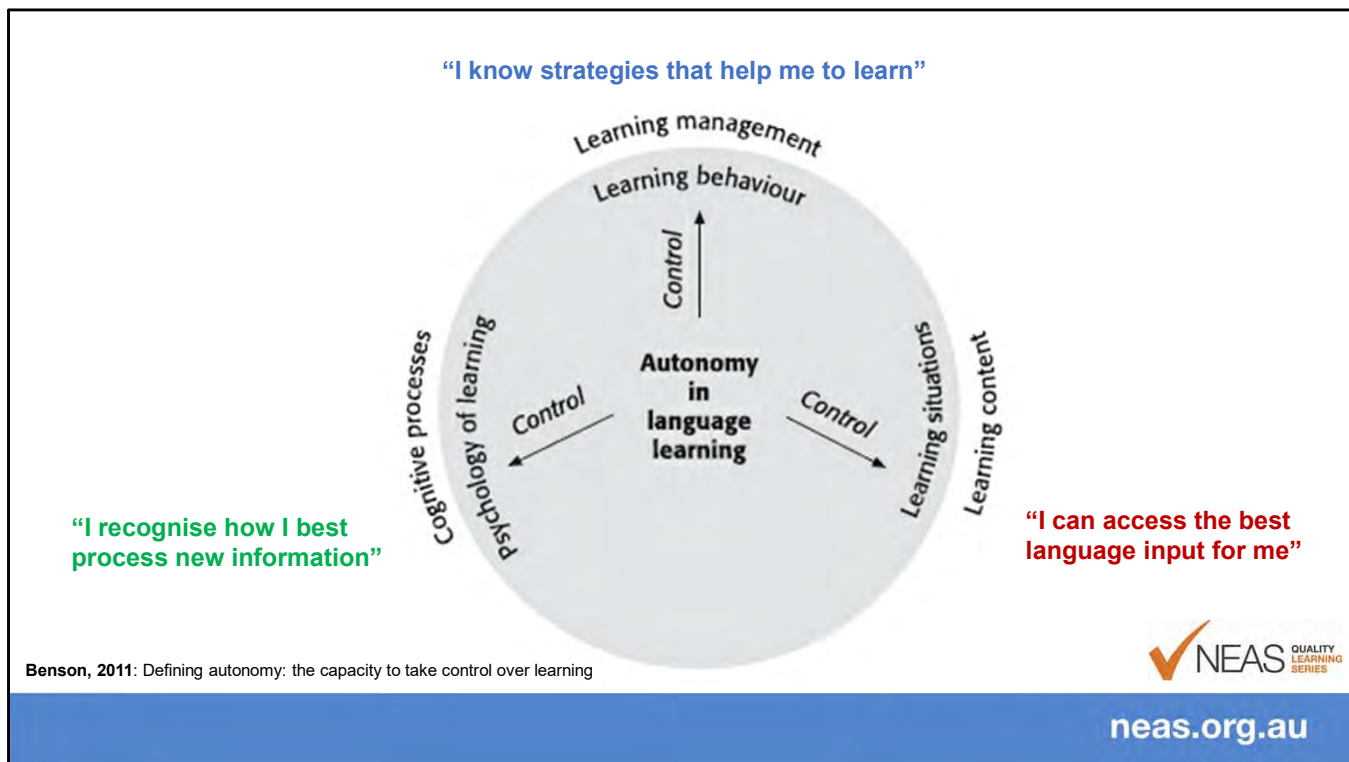(15 mins)

Examples of good practice…

- Well designed and well implemented Student Self-Evaluation processes

- Fore fronting Learning Outcomes;

    - Students provided with a grid of learning outcomes to monitor progress and highlight areas for further learning

    - Discussion about the learning outcomes with students

    - Self Assessment against learning outcomes

    - Systematic feedback about learning outcomes

- Opportunities for students to suggest additional outcomes they would like to achieve and identifying in ILP.

- Explicit mapping of learning outcomes to all activities and assessments

- Clear communication of assessment expectations and structured feedback directly related to the learning outcomes

- Students lead sample moderation activities

- Learner Autonomy principles explicitly covered in PD and integrated into PD program

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- Provide Student Self Evaluation template for discussion

- 40 mins -

"I know strategies that help me to learn"

Learning management
Learning behaviour

Control

Autonomy in language learning

Cognitive processes
Psychology of learning

Control

Learning situations
Learning content

Control

"I recognise how I best process new information"

"I can access the best language input for me"

Benson, 2011: Defining autonomy: the capacity to take control over learning

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- These three dimensions of control are clearly interdependent. Let's take a look at each dimension;

Learning Management

- behaviours involved in the planning, organisation and evaluation of learning.

PLANNING	DIRECTED ATTENTION	SELECTIVE ATTENTION	SELF-MANAGEMENT
	SELF-MONITORING	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	SELF-EVALUATION

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- Learning management is mainly a matter of observable behaviour.
  - **Planning:** proposing strategies for handling an upcoming task; generating a plan for the parts, sequence, main ideas, or language functions to be used in handling a task
  - **Directed attention:** maintaining attention during task execution (creating optimum learning conditions)
  - **Selective attention:** attending to specific aspects of language input during task execution. Focussing on parts as per areas for improvement. For example, strategies for tending to intonation in speaking input.
  - **Self-management:** understanding the conditions that help one successfully accomplish language tasks and arranging for the presence of those conditions. Similar to Directed Attention, but also includes physiological conditions, such as diet, caffeine, sleep, time of day, study periods & breaks etc.
  - **Self-monitoring:** checking, verifying, or correcting one's comprehension or performance in the course of a language task.
  - **Problem identification:** explicitly identifying the central point needing resolution in a task or identifying an aspect of the task that hinders its successful completion.
  - **Self-evaluation:** checking one's language repertoire, strategy use, or ability to perform the task at hand.

Learning Management

Spaced Repetition

How much of a lesson do you remember?

(Hill, 2017)

- If people hear or read about something once but then don't review it later, they will generally retain less than 10% of the information after a month. Reviewing immediately afterwards increases retention quite significantly but still, the majority of information is soon lost. Repeated review, at increasing intervals, can lead to the majority of information being retained (Hill, 2017)

Cognitive Processes

Reflection

The autonomous learner is essentially one who is capable of reflection at appropriate moments in the learning process and of acting upon the results.

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- Reflection has also been seen as a tool for 'deconditioning' learners from learning habits or ways of thinking about learning that are inimical to autonomy.
- Reflective journal writing and group discussion of beliefs about approaches to learning – key to recognising connections between strategies and outcomes in order to control their learning.

Cognitive Processes

Popular learning style models

Fleming & Mills' Visual, Aural, Reading/Writing, Kinaesthetic	VARK
Gregorc's Style Delineator	GSD
Honey & Mumford's Learning Styles Questionnaire	LSQ
Kolb's Learning Style Inventory	LSI
Myers-Briggs' Type Indicator	MBTI
Sternberg's Thinking Styles Inventory	TSI
Gardner's Multiple Intelligences	MI
Allinson & Hayes' Cognitive Styles Index	CSI
Dunn & Dunn's model and instruments of learning styles	-
Hermann's Brain Dominance Instrument	HBDI

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- Includes the controversial area of Learning Styles - characteristic **cognitive, affective, and physiological factors** that serve as relatively stable indicators of how a learner perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment
- **Risks:**
    - Misconceptions about terminology
    - Pigeonholing students – effecting self-efficacy
    - Questionable evidence and validity of assessment instruments
- **Rewards:**
    - Used to ensure pedagogical balance
    - Introduce vocabulary to talk about learning, motivation and metacognition
      (Coffield, 2004)
    - Increase student awareness of learning strengths and weaknesses

- Do you use Learning Styles at your Centre?

Cognitive Processes

Growth mindset

- Belief that qualities such as intelligence, talent and ability can change

Cultivating the growth mindset

- Be a role model
- Give a sense of progress
- Emphasise challenge not success
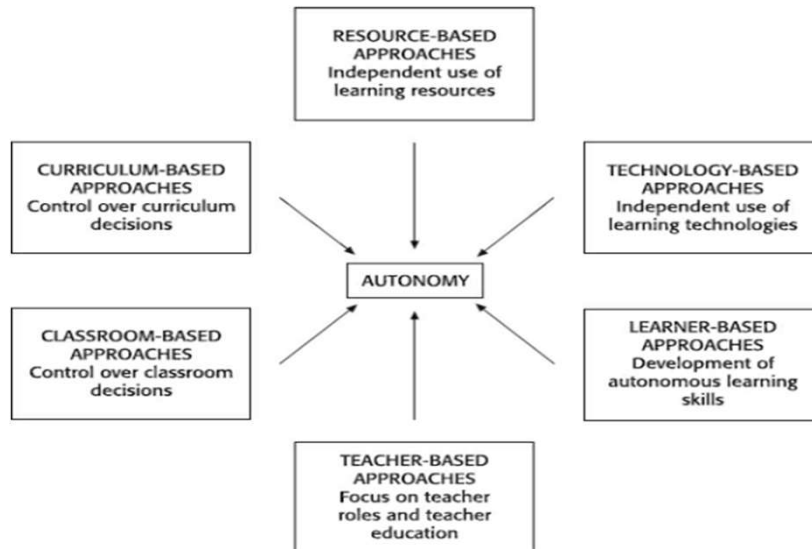- Highlight the value of mistakes in the service of learning
- Use praise (wisely)

Growth mindset in an EFL Classroom - http://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2018/05/03/growth-mindset-efl-classroom/

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- Students often believe that the reason they can't learn a language is because, unlike their peers, they don't have the 'knack' for languages. They may therefore give up easily and not try or, as may be the case with learners who believe they have the talent, they may avoid stretching tasks that may show them up as not good enough. These learners plateau early and fossilize before reaching their potential.

Learning Content

RESOURCE-BASED
APPROACHES
Independent use of
learning resources

CURRICULUM-BASED
APPROACHES
Control over curriculum
decisions

TECHNOLOGY-BASED
APPROACHES
Independent use of
learning technologies

AUTONOMY

CLASSROOM-BASED
APPROACHES
Control over classroom
decisions

LEARNER-BASED
APPROACHES
Development of
autonomous learning
skills

TEACHER-BASED
APPROACHES
Focus on teacher
roles and teacher
education

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Activity

- Outline current Centre practices and areas for improvement in each dimension.

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- Complete individually or with colleagues

(15 mins)

Principles of course design for autonomy

LLS1: Analyses own language learning strengths, weaknesses and needs

LLS2: Plans and prioritises learning activities with regard to identified strengths, weaknesses and needs

LLS3: Uses strategies for independent language learning

(Hill, 2018)

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- Learning outcomes are at the heart of integrating anything into a curriculum.
- Learning outcomes for learner autonomy can be independent of proficiency level.
- Group discussion – To what extent do your courses assess Learner Autonomy?

(5 mins)

BREAK

Self-Assessment

Interest in Self Assessment has been driven by:

- Changing conceptions of teaching and learning

- Contemporary practice of students' active engagement in their own learning

- Graduate attributes of critical thinking, reflective learning, emotional intelligence and self monitoring (21st Century Skills)

There is extensive interest in self assessment.
- The interest in self assessment is partly driven by changing conceptions of teaching and learning.
- Contemporary practice emphasizes active engagement of students in their own learning, learner responsibility and collaboration. Traditional teaching and learning models position the teacher with all the power, making all the choices and decisions around assessment. Contemporary models are emerging which see teachers invite students to share in assessment processes.

All assessment comprises:
1. Setting standards around performance
2. Making judgements about the quality of performance in relation to those standards
(Boud, 1995)

Self-Assessment

"Self Assessment is a process of <u>formative assessment</u> during which students <u>reflect on and evaluate</u> the quality of their work and their learning, judge the degree to which they reflect explicitly stated <u>goals and criteria</u>, <u>identify</u> <u>strengths and weaknesses</u> in their work, and revise accordingly."

(Andrade and Du, 2007)

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Activity

- In groups, brainstorm benefits and challenges of Self Assessment

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- Group activity - Share and discuss

(5mins)

Benefits of Self-Assessment

- Builds on the natural tendency to monitor one's own learning

- Helps develop meta-cognitive skills that contribute to graduate attributes

- Further learning is only possible after recognising what has been learned

- If a learner identifies their own progress, this may motivate further learning

- Encourages self-reflection and critical reviewing skills

- Promotes learner responsibility and independence

- Encourages student ownership of learning and greater agency

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Challenges of Self-Assessment

- Studies have shown that lower performing students tend to overestimate their achievements

- Students may resist self-assessment, perceiving that assessment and grading is the teacher's job

- Students may lack the confidence to assess themselves

- Conflicts may occur when the student's self assessment contradicts the teacher's assessment

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- Some forms of autonomy may be pedagogically undesirable in certain cultures.

Implementing Self Assessment

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- Teachers need to coach their students by using examples and models. It is important to follow a process in stages.

Stages in implementation

1. Provide a rationale – why are we doing this?
   - refer to graduate outcomes and 21st Century Learning

2. Provide explicit procedures – what is expected of me?
   - use explicit criteria, e.g. learning outcomes and a rubric

3. Reassure students – will my honesty be used against me?

4. Assure the students that all will do likewise – am I being singled out?

5. Give them practise in assessing themselves

- Much of the self assessment literature argues that self assessment can enhance learning most effectively when it does not involve grading – ie, is formative, low stakes and criterion referenced. (Kirby and Downs, 2007).

Self Assessment activities

Softly softly…

Two stars and a wish

Green, yellow, red

- Softly introduce the concept of Self Assessment. Allow plenty of opportunities for practice.
- Engaging, low-stakes, formative activities such as these can be effective in familiarizing students with SA and establishing a culture of SA.

Two stars and a wish
- Areas where the student's work excelled and an area where there can be some level of improvement.

Green, yellow, red
- Red means a student still need a lot of practice and re-teaching. Yellow means a student kind of understands, but there are still some things they are unsure about. Green means the student understands and could teach someone else the concept.
- Process for guiding group structures and encouraging peer support.

Case Studies

- Discuss the case studies with your group.

- 10 mins each, then report back to whole class.

(40 mins)

Case Study 1

Chen is the new DoS at an English Language Centre. One of her immediate major projects is to overhaul the Centre's courses, which are outdated and no longer meeting the needs of the current student cohort. How might Chen go about ensuring that the courses are redesigned to reflect 21st Century Skills and foster Learner Autonomy to a greater extent?

Case Study 2

Roger has recently tried to implement Self Assessment activities in order to foster learner autonomy to a greater extent in his EAP class. Roger is aware of the benefits of autonomous language learning but has been facing some resistance from his students. Some are actively asking why and complaining that their peers don't do this with their teacher in the other EAP class. Other students are more passive in their resistance, using their phones and/or appearing to talk about unrelated topics during the Self Assessment activities. What advice would you give Roger?

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Case Study 3

Academic Manager, Eve has recently implemented a student self-evaluation tool at her Centre. She has found that many teachers are reluctant to provide their own evaluative feedback on their students' self-evaluation processes. The implementation of this tool was discussed at a teachers meeting, but no formal PD has been conducted to support this.

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Case Study 1 - Chen

- Change Management, e.g. Kotter's 8 step process; Create a sense of urgency, build a guiding coalition, forma vision/strategy, communicate the vision clearly etc…
- Identify the key problem(s) – Course design, Learning Outcomes, resources, assessments etc
- Involve staff to illicit valuable input, contribute to a sense of teamwork and increase overall buy-in
- Consider the student profile – where are they going? What do they need? Map LOs to graduate attributes / popular language frameworks
- Illicit and integrate student feedback

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Case Study 2 - Roger

- Identify the initial problem faced in the class. Articulate this problem clearly to the relevant people, including outlining the negative impacts caused (i.e. create a sense of urgency, build a guiding coalition)
- Discuss with the AM ways to integrate systematic SA into Centre processes, including a strategy for tackling student perceptions and educating them on the benefits of SA as a process to support LA and preparation for Language Learning / University etc.
- Could Roger deliver some PD to teaching staff?

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Case Study 3 - Eve

- Plan and deliver appropriate PD; Ask teachers for feedback, Needs Analysis
- Provide opportunity for follow up questions, discussion and consolidation of PD
- Develop guidelines outlining expectations of students and teachers. Clarify what is required. Model the process.
- Negotiate and be flexible. Consider alternative processes to support initial implementation, e.g. If there is resistance to providing evaluative feedback, teachers could begin by suggesting resources or references to help students with their weaknesses.

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Recap Objectives

- Better understand principles of Learner Autonomy

- Explore Self-Assessment

- Share and reflect on current practice

- Action planning

- Recap Objectives
- Complete Action Plan if time

Action Planning

1. What are key take-away points from the workshop?
2. What ideas may require further investigation?
3. What is my centre currently doing well?
4. How has this impacted students?
5. What could my centre do better?
6. How would this impact students?
7. What are the first steps I must take to action this?
8. Who needs to be involved?
9. What barriers might I face?
10. How might I overcome these barriers?

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- Complete Action Plan if time

Useful Links

- IATEFL's Learner Autonomy SIG - https://lasig.iatefl.org/
- The Extensive Reading Foundation - http://erfoundation.org/wordpress/ (Graded Reader Scale)
- Extensive Reading Central - https://www.er-central.com/
- Anki (free app for spaced repetition): https://apps.ankiweb.net/
- Paul Nation's free book for learners learning autonomously: https://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/about/staff/publications/paul-nation/foreign-language_1125.pdf
- Fostering Growth mindset in an EFL classroom: http://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2018/05/03/growth-mindset-efl-classroom/
- TEAL: http://teal.global2.vic.edu.au/professional-learning/involving-learners-actively-in-assessment/

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Feedback

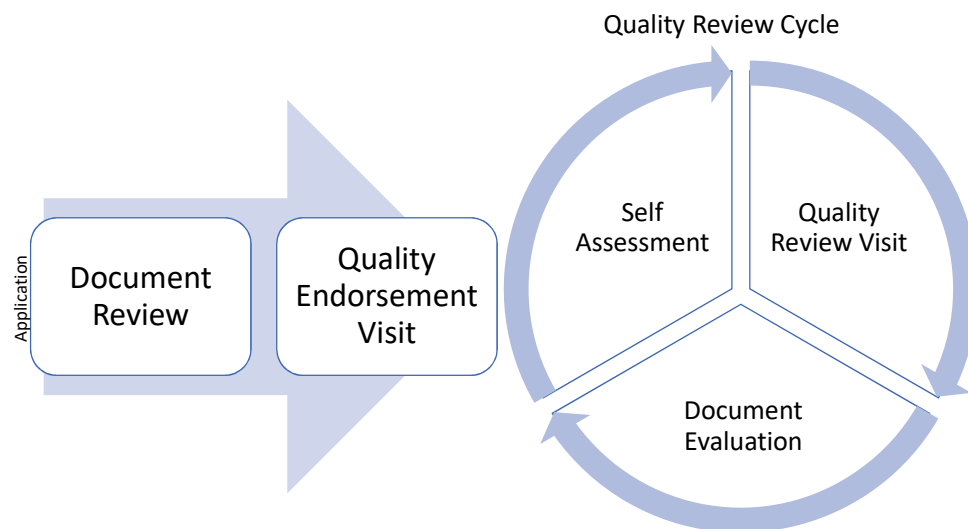**We value your feedback. Please take a moment to fill out this short survey.**

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Application

Document Review → Quality Endorsement Visit

Quality Review Cycle

Self Assessment

Quality Review Visit

Document Evaluation
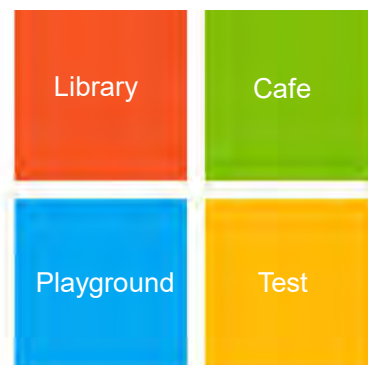
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