

**CONNECTED EDUCATION**  
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TEACHER, EVERY LEARNER

**BRIDGE**  
LINKING INNOVATORS IN EDUCATION

# TEACHER TALK

**AUTHORITATIVE AND DIALOGIC DISCOURSE IN THE  
CLASSROOM**

A BRIDGE Knowledge Product



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LINKING INNOVATORS IN EDUCATION

The following document details 1 of 7 innovative ideas as shared by Clement Khoza, a participant of the Axis Education Forum 2016.

Here, you will find:

a) A brief explanation of authoritative and dialogic discourse and the key differences between them

b) Resources to help you encourage discourse in your classroom

Clement Khoza discussed **classroom discourse**, identifying two forms of discourse used in teaching, namely, **authoritative and dialogic**. He stressed that educators must shift from the former to the latter in productive ways if they hope to drive meaningful engagement in the classroom.

### **What is authoritative and dialogic discourse?**

**Authoritative discourse** consists of monologic or transmission modes of communication. In the classroom, authoritative discourse takes the form of lectures, recitation activities and the completion of textbook or worksheet activities. In these activities what comes to count as knowledge is based on 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

**Dialogic discourse** comprises more conversational communication. In the classroom, this may involve comparing and developing ideas. Dialogic discourse is open to different perspectives, there are no fixed 'right' or 'wrong' answers. This form of discourse encourages participants to become aware of differences in points of view. In dialogic discourse, there is always the attempt to acknowledge and understand the perspective of others.

### **Moving from authoritative to dialogic discourse**

Clement explained that while authoritative discourse is an important part of teaching, there needs to be room for learners to vocalise and engage

with their ideas. Dialogic discourse creates this space. Classroom discussion and dialogue are the principal means of exchanging ideas, evaluating mastery, developing thinking processes, and reflecting on content and shared thoughts. When educators move from authoritative to dialogic communication, they ensure learners aren't simply participating, but are in fact engaging.



To introduce learner-led discourse, explicitly model the talk. Have them lead discourse about a topic many are passionate about, such as social media rights for young people, as a way to get them more comfortable and familiar with leading discourse.

### **Conventional Classroom Discourse**

Convergent responses

Known answer questions atypically posed

Predominantly teacher-driven and led

Learners rarely afforded latitude to build on peers' thoughts

Teacher relies on a few learners to carry talk

Aim is to have correct answer given in shortest time

### **Rich Classroom Discourse**

Divergent responses

Multiple answers/explanations possible

Learners co-construct, drive, and often lead discourse

Learners build on, challenge, revoice, and share ideas with peers

Many learners eagerly participate

Goal is to have learners articulate strategic thinking

Engaging learners in effective classroom talk begins by creating a discourse-rich classroom culture. For resources that will help you encourage discourse in your classroom, click [here](#).

