

A dialogic understanding of inclusive pedagogy: tracing professional conversations

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Dialogic understandings of education highlight the importance of talk and other forms of communication for all who are involved with the complex demands of policy and practice. In school this applies not only to classroom conversations between teachers and students, but also to wider discussions between staff, parents and other professional colleagues. In this seminar I present two small-scale qualitative approaches to tracing primary school teachers' conversations about the complex educational practices of 'inclusive pedagogy', drawing on sociocultural discourse analysis and other ways of investigating language-in-use. The concept of 'inclusive pedagogy' can be understood as a set of educational values, beliefs and practices that foreground inclusion as a transformative educational aim. Inclusive classroom learning can be seen as fundamentally collective, involving the sociocultural and dialogic processes of classroom talk, joint effort and knowledge sharing that enable children to participate in their day-to-day classroom activities and apply their learning in different contexts (Kershner, 2009). The pedagogical aspects also extend beyond overt teaching and learning practices to encompass actions aimed at developing the essential conditions of learning, such as pupils' personal sense of belonging to a classroom and school community (Black-Hawkins, Kershner and Cooper, in preparation). Inclusive pedagogy therefore has cognitive, affective and social dimensions when considered in practice, and essential to these are classroom relationships between teachers and students (Black-Hawkins, 2014).

I refer to a British Academy funded research project (called 'BUILDing Inclusive Pedagogy') that was conducted in collaboration with Faculty colleague Kristine Black-Hawkins. It comprised a one-year research and development network with seven early career teachers in English primary schools. Each teacher recruited a senior leader from their school to join the network in order to incorporate a whole-school contextualised perspective on inclusive pedagogy. One analysis of dialogue from this project focuses closely on teachers' early discussions within one session about key concepts of 'Belonging', 'Learning', 'Diversity' and 'Participation' (Kershner, 2016). The second takes a broader perspective, tracing a series of linked conversations about pupil grouping decisions that took place on different occasions between the teachers, their senior school leaders, pupils and university researchers (Kershner and Black-Hawkins, submitted). The findings suggest that attending closely to even a short series of conversations can enhance understanding of a complex phenomenon like inclusive pedagogy, acknowledging multiple and shifting perspectives. For instance, in one case particular attention was drawn to early career teachers' sense of professional responsibility and the value of having opportunities to experiment with different strategies. Conclusions are drawn about the possible benefits of tracing professional conversations in this way, when practitioners are working together to develop inclusive pedagogy in school.

Kershner, R. (2016). Including psychology in inclusive pedagogy: Enriching the dialogue?. *International Journal of Educational Psychology*, 5(2), 112-139.

Kershner, R. and Black-Hawkins, K. (submitted) A dialogical method for understanding a complex educational phenomenon: tracing professional conversations about inclusive pedagogy between early career primary teachers, children, school leaders and university researchers