

**0451**

**Student and mentor perspectives on how post-graduate student teachers learn to enhance children's learning through talk on their first placement in primary schools**

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**Background**

Much has been written about the kind of classroom talk necessary for structuring children's thinking and learning (Alexander 2008; Myhill et al: 2006; Mercer and Littleton: 2007). Little research has focused directly on how student teachers learn to enhance children's learning through talk. Alexander (ibid) has argued that, due to the historically low status of talk in the UK and the QCA and National strategies' reductionist view of dialogue as an acquirable skill, rather than a process teachers and children engage in, the implications of talk for teachers' pedagogy is not fully understood by many. Therefore, a focus on how student teachers learn about this aspect is timely.

**Research Questions**

The paper will draw on a study that is part of my PhD work and is currently ongoing. The focus of this enquiry is to investigate how 13 Primary PGCE students begin to learn to enhance children's learning through talk on their first four week teaching experience. On this placement the aim is to place students in pairs, so they can learn with a peer as well as from their classroom teacher mentor. The study traces how both the students and mentors are prepared for the placement in salient respects; how students have learned about communication, that enhances children's learning, from their mentor and their peer and what they have understood about this process in assignments they have written after the placement. Furthermore, the role of students' observations of their mentor and each other, student/mentor and peer/peer discussion, along with the nature of student/mentor and peer/peer relationships will also be explored.

**Methods**

The approach to the study will be interpretive and case study material based on interviews with students, analysis of assignments and interviews with mentors will be discussed. Some visual methods will be embedded in the interviews.

**Frame**

A key concept in analysing the case studies will be Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation. Edwards and Protheroe (2003) have argued that a good understanding of this participatory approach could enable mentors to support student teachers to understand the complexity of situations in the classroom and make increasingly informed interpretations of and responses to children's learning. Therefore, the extent to which students had the opportunity to gradually increase their participation, with respect to enhancing children's learning through talk will be of particular interest. This is because Edwards and Protheroe (2003) found in their study that students lacked the opportunity to participate on the periphery in order to be able to interpret how children were learning. This they blamed on the pressure to quickly increase participation and 'deliver' a curriculum. A further important concept for the theoretical framework will be Osbourn et al's (2000) notion of creative mediation. This is because the implications of students' and mentors' attitudes to the development of their own professional judgement and the possible impact of this on their relationships will also be considered in the analysis.

**Research findings**

The hoped for contribution to knowledge, is that this paper will start to shine a light on how student teachers are enabled to begin to consider and develop their practice in relation to what Alexander (2008) has described as a pedagogy of the spoken word.