

Learning with imagination

Enquiry, power, positioning, and communities in the Mantle of the Expert system

A: Enquiry and power

In the everyday world, people mostly learn through collaborative enquiry where power is distributed and shared with others in your classroom, who tends to have the power to:

- move;
- interact;
- interpret?

Power relationships are central to every classroom

Using power with others

People position one another with broadly equal power -

- In meaning-centred interactions adults and children use power with others.
- They use the language of 'we' e.g. 'how would we be able to ...?'
- 'We were wondering why she might have done that?'

within which is nested ...

Using power for others

A person positions themselves (and/or is positioned by others) with less power -

- In pupil-centred interactions adults use power for others.
- They use the language of 'you' e.g. 'what do you need right now?'
- Would you like to ...?

within which is nested ...

Using power over others

A person positions themselves (and/or is positioned by others) with more power ...

- In teacher-centred interactions adults use power over others.
- They use the language of 'I' e.g. 'I would like you to ...'
- 'I thought we had agreed to ...'

B: Social positioning

As you reflect on classroom interactions, ask yourself how adult/child power is being used to make/block meaning-making:

- whose ideas are dominant/marginalized?
- who's being heard/silenced?
- whose ideas are central/at the edge?
- who needs a support/constraint?

C: Adult mediation of meaning-making

'Lending a hand' and positioning pupils in order to make a difference in how power is used:

- to change the group dynamics;
- to bring an idea at the edge to the centre;
- to support an idea;
- to challenge a position;
- to introduce a new discourse;
- to create 'liberating constraints' to make spaces for meaning-making.

D: Everyday and imagined communities

The type of classroom community is created over time by how adults position children and how children position one another -

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- A collaborative, cooperative community is created as adults and children share power with each other.
- A caring community is created as adults and children use power for one another.
- An authoritarian community is created as adults control children.

The imagined communities created through the mantle of the expert system have a permeable relationship with the everyday classroom and school communities (what happens in one affects the other)

