WHAT ROLE DO FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING DISPOSITIONS HAVE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMARY PUPILS’ WRITING?

Alice Robinson

Rationale

This small scale research project has been carried out to investigate how class room teachers are able to make use of developing young writers’ learning to learn dispositions (Claxton) and the funds of knowledge available. What has become clear is that meeting 30+ learners’ ZPDs (Vygotsky) and scaffolding (Bruner) them all is impossible for one ‘more capable peer’. I wanted to see if children could make use of each other and the resources surrounding them, as they do at home and in Moll and Greenberg’s study (1990). In doing so, would the children develop more independent learning skills – ‘learning how to learn’?

Key Questions:

Is there evidence that children’s home experience of drawing on funds of knowledge transfer into the classroom setting?

What funds of knowledge are children able to access independently within school to develop their writing?

Is there evidence that providing resources for self- and peer-assessment encourages learners to access funds of knowledge?

Is there evidence that all ability groups equally draw upon available funds of knowledge and develop learning dispositions, particularly the use of self- and peer-assessment in their writing?

Process

A 30 minute 3x per week over 6 week writers’ workshop was established. The children could work on any text type and with anyone. Their targets were their focus and they had conferences with the teacher, TA, Student Teachers and Head teacher to identify their next steps. Children had freedom in whom they worked with, what resources they used (computers, books, peers, dictionaries, adult support etc. They noted down the resources that they used and the dispositions (resilience, reflectiveness, resourcefulness, reciprocity) that they used which was monitored. In addition, the class spent time discussing each of these dispositions and different funds of knowledge available to them including their parents.

Data Collection Methods

- Questionnaires at beginning and end of intervention
- Semi-structured interviews of children and staff
- Observations
- Research Diary
- Samples of children’s work
- Anecdotal comments made by parents
- Record of conferences

Pre-intervention Questionnaire findings:

I ask my peers for help with my writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I use learning from home at school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Initial Result Findings:

Taking the process further & Next Steps:

Sharing data in the partnership to find common language to further develop ‘learning to learn’.

(Photo of a meeting, June 2013)