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Development of inclusive communities of learning through relational work and feedback

ABSTRACT

Research topic

In Denmark the goal of the new reform of the primary school from 2013 was to develop and raise the pupils' academic skills, but the reform also had a strong focus on students' well-being and development of inclusive learning communities. The question is how this is developed or are managed successfully? A report from the Danish Ministry of Education in 2015 showed that inclusion, well-being and the development of learning communities have not yet succeeded according to ambition by 2016. The report suggested among other things that practitioners and researchers should address these matters, on both a macro, meso and micro level. This project, which is still in progress, is based on the issues of the micro level to target teachers and educators who work in classes marked by students in complex learning situations in the so-called LKT-problems (Learning, Contact and Well-being). There are classes where teachers have been successful in establishing appropriate and stimulating learning environments for the students. The project focuses on their concepts and understandings of well-being, relational work, feedback and motivation to approach and resolve some of these problems.

Teacher's competences concerning the relational work is one of the key factors in students' academic and social development (Nordenbo et al 2008). The report further states that in addition to her own competence to establish and further build relations with students, the teacher also must be able to develop settings characterized by acceptance of diversity in order to develop social learning communities. In this line of work the concept of feedback is essential.

Furthermore, relational work is connected with two other essential perspectives: feedback and motivation. Feedback processes are often linked to academic learning (Hattie, Nottingham, Askew and others), but in this project one of the hypothesis is that feedback alongside relational work is important for the student's education, personal development, motivation - and academic learning.

The goal with giving feedback in schools is to give students some insight as to: Where am I right now? - What can I do to move forward? This applies both when feedback is focusing on academic skills but also in regards to social skills and behavior. There is both a cognitive and an affective element in this process, and that is why good relations between teachers and students is essential. In this project we investigate the interaction between the teacher's relational competence, communicational skills and how/or if it makes a difference when giving feedback - especially when dealing with students in complex learning situations.

Based on the above central questions in our research are:

- How can we, with focus on the relational work and feedback with students in complex learning situations, understand the active / functional or dysfunctional learning communities?
- How can forms of interaction when working with relations in a class be understood - and developed, so well-being is increased and the learning environment develop for these students, but also for the entire community?

Theoretical framework

The project is based on a variety of literature studies regarding the relational work of teachers, well-being, motivation and feedback. The project is carried out using methods connected to action research and interventions studies (Madsen 2012) using a variety of mixed methods (Morse 2016). In the project, we make video-observations and interview teachers and students both in groups and individually and on top of that carry out interventions closely connected to their everyday work as teachers.

Expected findings

We expect to be able to gain new result regarding how teachers work and how they perceive the concepts of relational work, feedback and motivation using the same concepts in our work of research (thus addressing a micro level).

Preliminary literature

Askew, Susan and Lodge, Caroline (2000): *Feedback for Learning*, Gifts, ping-pong and loops - linking feedback and learning, Routledge

Hattie, J. (2014): *Synlig læring – for lærere*. Dafolo

Madsen, B. (2012): *Aktionsforskning, Illustreret med en case: Aktionsforskning om aktionslæring*. Arbejdsrapport. <http://pure.au.dk/portal/files/52637979/Arbejdsnotat.pdf>

Merton, R. C. (1996): *On Social Structure and Science*. The University of Chicago Press.

Ministeriet for børn, undervisning og ligestilling (2016): *Af rapportering af inklusionseftersynet – Den samlede af rapportering*. Lokaliseret på World Wide Web 3.5.16

<http://www.uvm.dk/Aktuelt/~UVM-DK/Content/News/Udd/Folke/2016/Maj/160511-Inklusionseftersyn-96-procents-maalsaetningen-droppes>

Morse, J. M. *Essentials of Qualitatively-Driven Mixed Methods Designs*. Routledge.

Nordenbo, S. F. et al. (2008): *Lærerkompetanser og elevers læring I barnehage og skole*. Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitetsforlag og Dansk Clearinghouse for uddannelsesforskning.