University of Cumbria

Wright, Phil (2023) Primary teachers' views about trying to support children's learning without using 'ability' grouping. In: University of Cumbria's Seminar and Lecture Series, 13 December 2023, London, UK / online. (Unpublished)

Downloaded from: http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/7454/

Usage of any items from the University of Cumbria's institutional repository 'Insight' must conform to the following fair usage guidelines.

Any item and its associated metadata held in the University of Cumbria's institutional repository Insight (unless stated otherwise on the metadata record) may be copied, displayed or performed, and stored in line with the JISC fair dealing guidelines (available here) for educational and not-for-profit activities

provided that

- the authors, title and full bibliographic details of the item are cited clearly when any part of the work is referred to verbally or in the written form
- a hyperlink/URL to the original Insight record of that item is included in any citations of the work
- the content is not changed in any way
- all files required for usage of the item are kept together with the main item file.

You may not

- sell any part of an item
- refer to any part of an item without citation
- amend any item or contextualise it in a way that will impugn the creator's reputation
- remove or alter the copyright statement on an item.

The full policy can be found here.
Alternatively contact the University of Cumbria Repository Editor by emailing insight@cumbria.ac.uk.

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-ND

Primary teacher's views about trying to support children's learning without using 'ability' grouping.

Phil Wright

Why this session?

Share some findings (things I think I currently understand) from my work and study to date

Create space for new/nuanced thinking - disrupt our inner workings?

Share & discuss potential, alternate approaches to ‘ability’ grouping – the mechanics of ‘doing’ differently

Our learning stories

Time, space and opportunity to explore (Mine)

Labelling and lifelong learning

(My brother's)

What's your story?

First respond to these statements to help you reflect on your beliefs about intelligence (adapted from Dweck, 2006) Tick options that you agree with:

- [ ] Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't change very much
- [ ] You can learn new things, but you can't change how intelligent you are
- [ ] No matter how much intelligence you have you can always change it quite a bit
- [ ] You can always substantially change how intelligent you are

What do you think and why?

Agree?

Mainly agree?

Mainly disagree?

Disagree?

- Some people are born ‘clever’ and others are not
- Intelligence is inherited
- Academic ability and the ability to learn are the same thing
- Given the right circumstances everyone can achieve high academic outcomes
- Long term academic outcomes can be predicted
- No matter how hard you try your intelligence will determine your achievement in life

What does research in the field suggest?

- Adjusted curriculum and pedagogic diet
- Diminished learner/participatory identity
- Diminished teacher expectations
- Diminished self-concept and self-efficacy
- Self-fulfilling prophecy
- Social reproduction
- Othering

How might children explain their experiences and thinking?

Rachel Marks (2016) published her findings from some school case studies and highlighted the experiences of particular pupil groups:

Each group will become 'expert' in one perspective and share back with everyone else to add to our collected understanding

Marks, R. (2016) *Ability-grouping in primary schools case studies and critical debates* . Northwich: Critical Publishing.

Pedagogy for Transformability

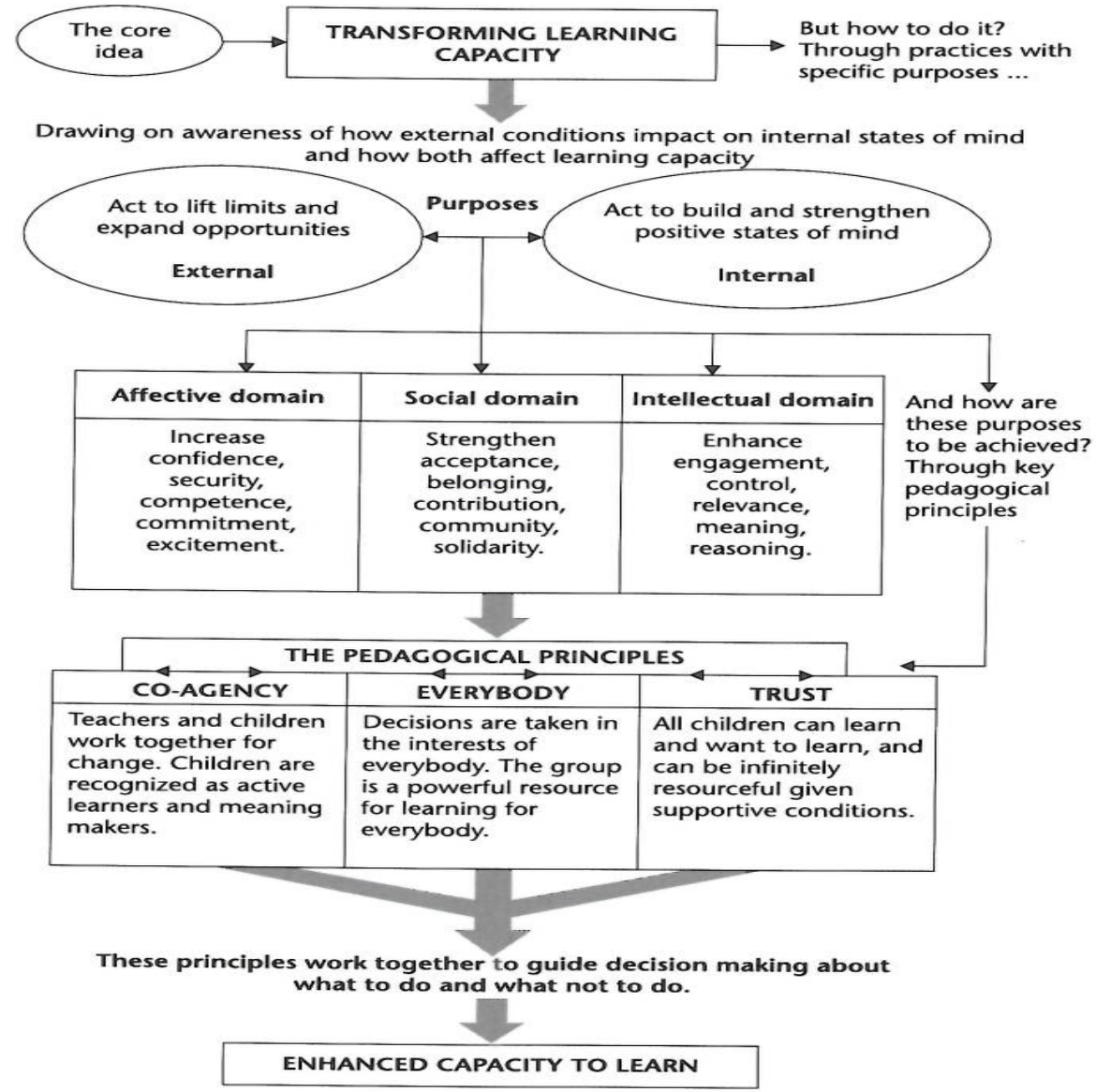


Figure 1.1 A practical, principled, pedagogical model

Source: Adapted from Hart *et al.* (2004).

Co-agency:

- Pupil choice (level/type of challenge)
- Self-assessment dialogue
- Re-group in response to assessment/marking
- Self-selection for support
- Paired talk (MKO) – development of reasoning, demonstration of understanding

Everybody:

- Access to resources (expectation for all)
- TA deployment
- Pause for thought/celebration/reset/struggle
- Pupil choice
- Language and interactions that demonstrate the value of all
- Constructivist approaches to developing learning
- Focus on what children can do and rather than what they can't
- Focus on next steps rather than end goals
- Focus on what is to be taught (and how) rather than who is learning it

Trust:

Demonstrate belief in each individual to be successful – celebrate the successes with all

Pupil choice (including movement between levels of challenge)

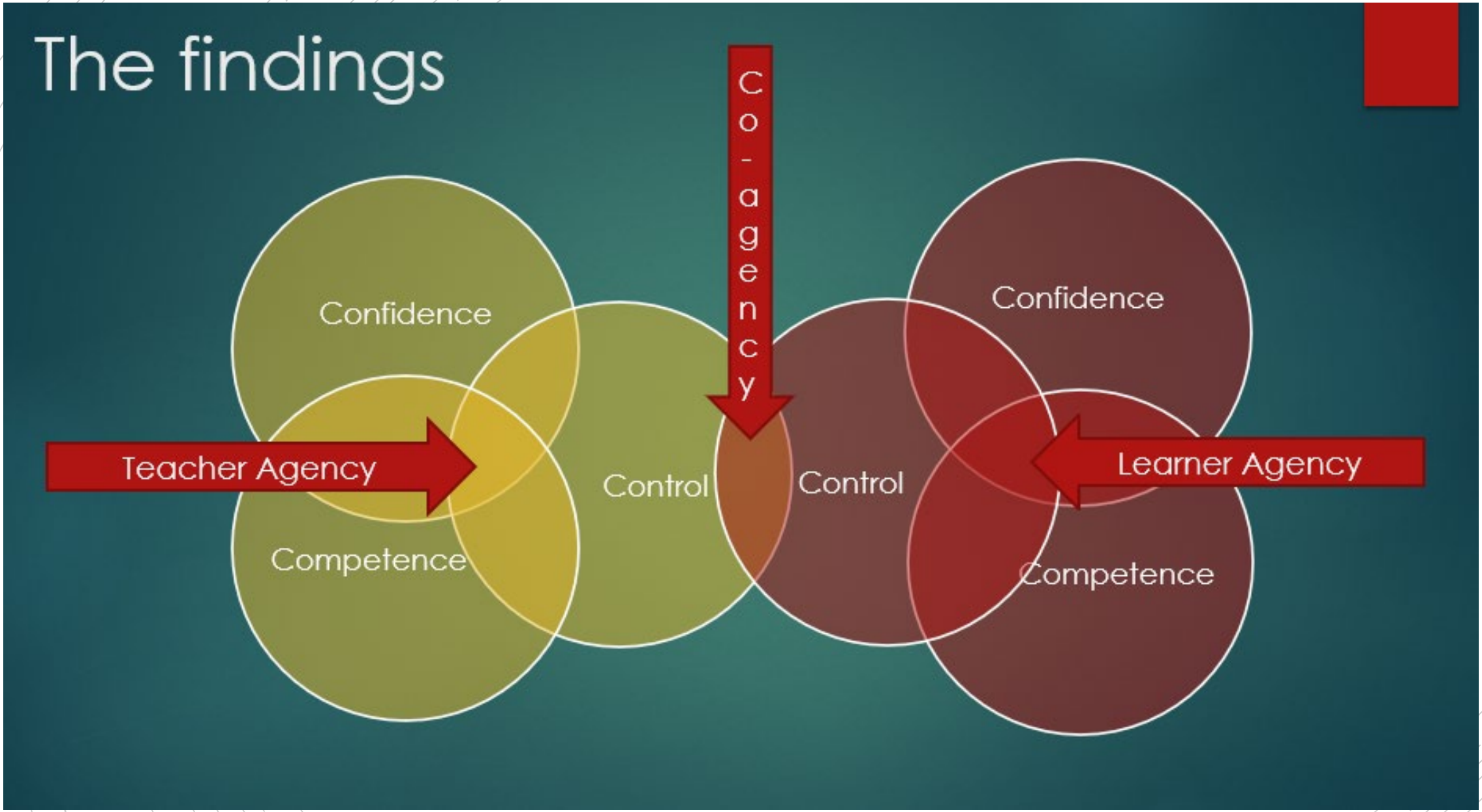
Self-assessment (alongside in the moment or post completion)

All children have the chance to explain their thinking

Develop culture of 'sharing the struggle' rather than hiding weakness

Deployment of TA support (short burst and return)

The findings



It starts with me . . .

- My thinking
- My interactions
- My language
- My expectations
- My pedagogic choices

Questions?

References

- Boaler, J. (2005) 'The 'Psychological Prisons' from which they never escaped: the role of ability grouping in reproducing social class inequalities', *FORUM 47*(2 & 3): 135-143.
- Claxton, G. (1990) Teaching to learn, London, Cassel Education.
- Francis, B., Archer, L., Hodgen, J., Pepper, D., Taylor, B. and Travers, M. (2017b) 'Exploring the relative lack of impact of research on 'ability grouping' in England: a discourse analytic account', *Cambridge Journal of Education 47*(1): 1-17.
- Hart, S., Dixon, A., Drummond, M.J, & McIntyre, D. (2004) *Learning Without Limits*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Marks, R. (2016) Ability grouping in primary schools: case studies and critical debates, Critical Publishing, St Albans.
- Wright, P. (2023) Teachers' perspectives on how collaborative engagement with pedagogic principles to challenge fixed-ability grouping allowed them to re-consider and reframe their practice in English primary schools, Doctoral Thesis, Staffordshire University