

DISCIPLINED DIALOGUE

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What are professional conversations?

In medicine, psychology, social work and education, for example:

- they are measured discussions related to particular cases with a view to addressing needs, managing issues, improving circumstances or facilitating change based on sound evidence.

Why is a strong evidence base important to the professions?

- It provides the basis upon which professional judgment is applied
- It underpins professional knowledge and learning
- It acts as an aide to professional accountability

Professional Accountability:

Essential tenets derived from Erault (1992)

- A moral commitment to serve the interests of clients, patients or children
- A professional obligation to extend one's repertoire, to reflect on evidence and experience and to develop one's expertise
- A professional obligation to self-monitor and to review the effectiveness of one's practice in the interests of clients, patients or children.

Evidence should be used in:

- constructive problem talk (Robinson & Timperley, 2007)
- professional learning conversations (Earl & Timperley, 2009; Danielson, 2009)
- disciplined dialogue (MacBeath & Dempster, 2009)

Call it what you will...

What is Disciplined Dialogue:

By this we mean: all-embracing professional conversations that are positively focused on the moral purpose of schools.

Disciplined Dialogue is not based on stereotype, hearsay or prejudice, but on reason and values, stimulated by helpful qualitative and quantitative data.

From Swaffield and Dempster (2009)

Dialogue should be 'disciplined' in at least two ways

1. by a **focus on data or evidence** as the source for understanding student learning and achievement
2. by a **professional commitment to improve** teaching and learning and the conditions which support them

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A professional discussion which:

- reinforces 'moral purpose' as the motivation for action
- focuses on learning, achievement and key contributing factors
- scaffolds analysis on qualitative and quantitative data
- seeks improvement strategies as the outcome

The question now is: How is 'Disciplined Dialogue' conducted?

Disciplined Dialogue Questions

1. What do we see in these data?
2. Why are we seeing what we are?
3. What, if anything, should we be doing about it?

What do we see in these data?

When we address this question we should exhaust the data for as much descriptive detail as possible without jumping to explanations or conclusions.

It takes discipline to do so.

Why are we seeing what we are?

- This question enables those who understand the context to bring their professional judgment into play.
- Multiple reasons are possible from the perspectives of those engaging in the discussion.
- Some explanations are likely to be more influential and credible than others.

What, if anything, should we be doing about this?

This question links discussion to moral purpose.

It acts as the motivation for decisions about what to do or not to do.

Priorities for action will be raised and discussed.

Professional judgment again is essential.