

Revealing Tensions between Curriculum Goals and Classroom Norms

Curriculum materials sometimes require teachers to enact new social roles associated with norms of scientific inquiry practices. Curriculum materials designed to include an emphasis on scientific inquiry give teachers the responsibility of making sure that a priority is given to evidence. A priority on evidence requires teachers and students to learn new social roles in the classroom. This leads to the following research question, what social roles, rights, and responsibilities do teachers assume when leading discussions about phenomena with a reform based curriculum? Four teachers enacted the IQWST curriculum in three schools. Data sources included video recordings and transcriptions of discourse. The techniques of conversation analysis permit a detailed study of patterns in interaction which implicate certain identities, roles and/or relationships of the participants. In general, analyses across the three classrooms show a continuing tension between the goals of IQWST and the structure of classroom conversations. The traditional structure of classroom talk places the teacher in a position of both intellectual and social authority. Shifting to a mode of classroom discussion where the teacher maintains social control while intellectual authority shifts to students' discussion and interpretation of evidence is a complex process that the teachers accomplished only rarely.