DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 447 444   CS 014 141

AUTHOR   van Kraayenoord, Christina E.
TITLE   Features of Communities of Literacy Practice.
PUB DATE   2000-07-00
NOTE   10p.; Paper presented at the International Reading
                Association World Congress on Reading (18th, Auckland, New
                Zealand, July 11-14, 2000).
PUB TYPE   Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   *Classroom Environment; *Classroom Techniques; Elementary
                Education; *Literacy; *Student Development; *Student Role;
                *Teacher Role; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS   *Literacy as a Social Process

ABSTRACT
                This paper argues that the creation of communities of
literacy practice in classrooms can contribute to students' development of
learnings of and about language, literacy, and texts. Such development can
occur when literacy learning is seen as a social practice shaped by complex
and dynamic participants and events. In these communities, participants
interact to construct knowledge; they take on different roles and are engaged
with language, literacy, and texts in reflective and critically thoughtful
ways. Pedagogies refer to teaching approaches that recognize individual
abilities and needs and aim to develop deep understanding, higher order
thinking skills, an appreciation of multiple points of view, and a
willingness to engage in social action. The five approaches recommended are:
explicit teaching; scaffolding; joint construction; guided speaking,
listening, reading, and writing; and teaching for repetition and practice.
Attention to the provision of meaningful environments, the teacher's and
students' roles, and the use of pedagogies such as have been suggested in the
paper as features of communities of literacy practice will foster these
goals. Contains 31 references. (NKA)

Features of Communities of Literacy Practice

Christina E. van Kraayenoord
Schonell Special Education Research Centre
The University of Queensland
Queensland 4072
Australia

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Recent understandings of literacy learning have suggested that teachers and students are engaged in processes of reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing which are strongly tied to specific social contexts (Myers (1992). The processes of literacy are learned in social interaction with others and these processes are shaped by the settings in which they occur. In other words, literacy is seen as a social practice which takes place variously in different contexts.

Based on the notion that literacy is a social practice, students involved in the acquisition and development of literacy have been seen in the literature as active constructors of the activities in which they engage (Green, 1990; Heap, 1991). Specifically they are involved in the creation of negotiated and joint meanings as they participate in activities inside and outside the classroom (Brown, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). As students interact with each other in specific situations they create relevant purposes and generate meanings related to the written and spoken texts they are sharing. As teachers work with their students they promote and support the purposes and meanings by scaffolding the students' thinking. In such a manner new learnings of and about language, literacy, and texts are developed.

A number of writers have also suggested that it is not sufficient for teachers to facilitate the development of these new learnings, rather teachers and students together should use their literacy learnings for genuine outcomes and social action. This may involve using their language and literacy learnings and critically examining their social worlds and identities, as well as confronting the barriers that bring about social division and inequities (Banks, 1995; Fránquiz, 1999; Shor & Friere, 1987; Lankshear & Knobel, 1997). In doing so students are encouraged to analyse and evaluate what they are reading, writing, saying, hearing and viewing in order to interpret and challenge their own and others' experiences.

When students and teachers work together to develop new learnings of and about language, literacy and texts and use these to interpret and respond to the world they can be said to be developing a community -- a community in which learners are engaged in particular practices. Wenger (1998 as reported by Barab & Duffy, 2000, p. 36) has suggested that "... a community of practice involves a collection of individuals sharing mutually defined practices, beliefs and understandings over an extended time frame in the pursuit of a shared enterprise."

In the research literature, communities have been discussed in terms of having particular attributes. Communities are seen as complex arrangements of participants and events where knowledge is socially constructed through actions and activities. Renshaw (1998) has noted that the knowledge in such communities is tentative in that it can be challenged and reconsidered. Collaboratively participants create the knowledge which can be altered as existing knowledge is questioned and additional information is gathered.

Participants do not just belong to one community, but to multiple communities which overlap (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Moll, 1990). Kamberelis (1995) has suggested that:

... most communities of learning are hierarchical, complexly differentiated, and historically dynamic social sites. They are full of specific individuals and institutional interests, and they are shaped by multiple interactions among a host of social and political forces ..." (p148).

Earlier, Myers (1992) suggested in his study of literacy book clubs, as examples of communities, that they comprised three main features. He referred to these features as "dimensions". They were membership, knowing and risk. Myers (1992) stated:

Membership describes the degree to which words and actions, literate or not, created a sense of belonging or exclusion among participants. Knowing describes the degree to which participants defined knowledge of the world, others, and oneself as (a) received from an abstract authority, (b) dualistic - received from external authority and constructed from personal sense, or (c) negotiated by the sharing of participants' experiences and ideas. Risk describes the degree to which participants could be different in their meanings, could be inventive, or alternatively, had to reproduce highly conventional meanings to have club membership. (p. 303)

In discussing communities of learners, The New London Group (1996) has argued that members take on "multiple and different roles based on their backgrounds and experiences" (p. 85). Communities comprise experts and expert novices. The former are individuals who have "mastered certain practices" and the latter are individuals who are "experts at learning some domains in some depth" (p.85). As well as arguing that community members play particular roles, another feature of communities of practice offered by The New London Group is that the "affective and sociocultural needs and identities" of the members is taken into account (p.85). Finally these authors suggest that communities are places where members can take risks and can trust fellow members.

In drawing on these notions of communities and applying them to literacy learning, it is evident that communities of literacy practice are complex and dynamic, involving participants who interact through words and actions which indicate both their membership and shared aims. Participants of these communities construct knowledge together and individually. They take on different roles of expert or expert novice in creating language, literacy and texts and do so in environments of trust and support where risk-taking and individual abilities, motivations and needs are considered. In communities of literacy practice learners are engaged with language, literacy and texts in reflective and critically thoughtful ways. Based on such notions, I would argue that the following features would ideally be seen in communities of literacy practice. In the next section these features have been organized in terms of learning environments, teachers' roles, students' roles and pedagogies.

The creation of meaningful learning environments
One of the hallmarks of literacy communities is that the activities that take place there occur in meaningful learning environments. *Meaningfulness is gained by the participants seeing the value and purpose of the activities.* In particular, meaningfulness is accomplished by creating environments where connections between the students' lives outside the classroom as well as within it are made, and connections between their present and future lives are forged.

Meaningful learning *environments are also shaped by the introduction and use of authentic learning activities.* Authentic here refers to activities that are relevant to the participants and their situations. For example, the participants engage in activities that they recognize as making a contribution to their literacy development their lives as citizens.

Meaningful learning environments are also ones in which a range of activities are used to foster the comprehension and production of meanings. This range of activities allows for learning to occur in whole class group and individual organizational arrangements.

Meaningful learning environments also allow for a variety of topics to be introduced that create or extend students' experiences and knowledge, and build on their interests. By tapping students' prior knowledge and interests motivation is enhanced.

Teachers' roles
The teacher within communities of literacy practice is seen as having a number of roles which are enacted simultaneously to support the learners. Sometimes they are the expert and sometimes they are the expert novice.

The first role is that of having *high expectations of the students* in the classroom. Specifically the teacher perceives the students as readers and writers with various abilities and needs. However, irrespective of the abilities and needs the students are expected to act and think as readers and writers. This will contribute to the students' feelings of confidence and independence.

The second role of the teacher is to *give the students "voice"* (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Oldfather 1995). This means that students' ideas are acknowledged and respected. Students are encouraged to share their ideas and see themselves as equal contributors to the shaping of the learning that occurs in the classroom.

The *provision of challenge and choice* in activities and materials is the third role of the teacher. Turner Parkes, Cox, and Meyer (1999) have stated that "... activities that are sufficiently challenging and novel, yet malleable enough to suit a range of interests and abilities, seem to be the optimal goal" (p. 134). They suggested that "open tasks and opportunities for autonomy, collaboration, and self- regulation seemed to provide valuable access routes for students to adjust challenge and skills and maintain their engagement in literacy" (p.134).

The fourth role is for teachers to *allow students to self-select books and other resources.* A number of authors have demonstrated that self-selection of books promotes student interest in recreational reading (eg., Heathington, 1979; Wendelin & Zinck, 1988). Thus, allowing students to select books appears to be an important element in developing interest and enjoyment in reading. However some authors (eg., Mohr & Linek, 1995) have suggested that helping students to identify their own interests and assisting them to develop strategies for making book selections is also important.

Students' roles

One of the students' roles within communities of literacy practice is to *have a high level of participation and engagement*. This means that members do not see themselves as passive receivers of information, but are active in sharing what they know about topics, asking questions, leading discussions, documenting their learning and reflecting on and reviewing their work with their classmates and teacher. Again the roles of expert and expert novice are taken on as the contexts change.

A second role that students' adopt within such communities is that of *assuming responsibility for their participation and engagement*. The students see the value of the tasks that they are given and the self-selection of books and other resources, and assume ownership and responsibility for their efforts in contributing to community membership, attempting tasks and successfully completing work.

Consistent with a view that learners should strive to become strategic and self-regulatory (Brown, 1978; Paris, Lipson & Wixson, 1983), the third role for students is *to develop and control strategies for planing, monitoring, revising, fixing up and evaluating learning*. This role involves the development of metacognitive awareness and control before, during and after learning.

Multiple pedagogies

Pedagogies refer to teaching approaches that recognize individual abilities and needs and aim to develop deep understanding, higher order thinking skills, an appreciation of multiple points of view, and a willingness to engage in social action. The use of the plural form of the word is deliberate as it is argued that there is no single approach to teaching literacy (Duffy & Hoffman, 1999; Luke, 1998). Thus multiple pedagogies are used to engage students with resources which develop the their intellectual and social skills as critical thinkers. Teachers therefore should have a repertoire of teaching approaches which are used in a conscious, flexible and skilful manner based on the various contexts and the learners' needs. In this section five approaches are mentioned. They will be described in turn.

Explicit teaching involves the direct exposition of content and strategies through demonstration and modelling. The purpose of such teaching is to make students aware of their own and others' knowledge and strategies and use them appropriately and effectively in a range of contexts. By demonstration and modelling students identify the knowledge and strategies, their value, and application (Munro & Munro, 1994; Westwood, 1998).

Scaffolding has its genesis in the social constructivist writings of Vygotsky (1978) and Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) and describes how together a teacher and student construct a "structure of shared meaning" (Meyer, 1992, p.50). During scaffolding a temporary support is provided to bridge the gap between what students know and can do and completing a task without assistance. The temporary support or scaffold is removed gradually, and "the student completes the constructive process by assuming ownership and using the acquired knowledge" (Meyer, 1992, p.50).

Joint construction in this case refers to the joint construction of text. Joint construction of text involves the teacher and students in the process of creating texts together though using the relevant writing skills and strategies for particular genres. The teaching/learning cycle involves modelling and joint negotiation, leading to the independent creation of text (Literacy and Education Research Network and Studies Directorate, NSW, 1989)

Guided speaking, listening, reading, writing and viewing refers to the use of prompts, cues and reminders to support the various literacy processes. Similar to scaffolds they assist the learners to engage in the literacy processes by framing responses. They may take the form of a stencil, graphic outline, key words, pictures and the like.

Teaching for repetition and practice. The revision and review of work is an important part of learning. The development of innovative ways in which repetition and practice can be undertaken is necessary. Authors such as Pearson and Gallaher (1983) have called for teachers to adopt approaches which allow for guided practice before transitioning students to independent practice and application.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that the creation of communities of literacy practice in classrooms can contribute to students' development of learnings of and about language, literacy, and texts. Such development can occur when literacy learning is seen as a social practice shaped by complex and dynamic participants and events. In these communities participants interact to construct knowledge, they take on different roles and are engaged with language, literacy and texts in reflective and critically thoughtful ways. Attention to the provision of meaningful environments, the teachers' and students' roles and the use of pedagogies such as have been suggested in this paper as features of communities of literacy practice will I believe foster these goals.

References

Aronowtiz, D.E., & Giroux, H. A. (1993). Education still under seige (2nd ed.), Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Banks, J. A. (1995).The historical reconstruction of knowledge about race: Implications for transformative teaching, Educational Researcher, 24(2) 15-25.

Barab, S., & Duffy, T.M. (2000). From practice fields to communities of practice. In D.H. Jonassen & S.M. Land (Eds.), Theoretical foundations of learning environments (pp. 25-55). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Brown, A.L. (1994).The advancement of learning. Educational Researcher, 23(8), 4-12.

Brown, A.L. (1978). Knowing when, where and how to remember: A problem of metacognition. In R. Glaser (Ed.), Advances in Instructional Psychology, 1 (pp. 77-165). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Duffy, G.G., & Hoffman, J.V. (1999). In pursuit of an illusion: The flawed search for the perfect method. The Reading Teacher, 53(1), 10-16.

Fránquiz, M.E. (1999). Learning in the transformational space: Struggling with powerful ideas. Journal of Classroom Interaction, 34(2), 30-44.

Green, J.L. (1990). Reading is a social process. In J. Howell, A. McNamara & M. Clough (Eds.), Social context of literacy: Selected papers from the 15th Australian Reading Association Conference (pp. 104-123). South Carlton, VIC: Australian Reading Association.

Heap, J.L. (1991). A situated perspective of what counts as reading. In C.D. Baker & A.Luke (Eds.), Towards a critical sociology of reading: Papers of the XII World Congress on Reading (pp.104-139). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 1991

Heathington, B.S. (1979). What to do about reading motivation in the middle school. Journal of Reading, 22, 709-713.

Kamberelis, G. (1995). Performing classroom community: A dramatic palimpset of answerability. In K.A. Hinchman, D.J. Leu & C.K. Kinzer (Eds.), Perspectives on literacy research and practice. Forty-fourth Yearbook of The National Reading Conference (pp. 148-160). Chicago: The National Reading Conference.

Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (1997). Critical literacy and active citizenship. In S. Muspratt, A. Luke & P. Freebody (Eds.). Constructing critical literacies: Teaching and learning textual practice (pp. 95-124). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Literacy and Education Research Network and Studies Directorate, New South Wales Department of Education. (1989). A genre-based approach to teaching writing: An approach to teaching writing K-12. Years 3-6, Book Three. Sydney: Author.

Luke, A. (1998). Getting over method: Literacy teaching as work in 'new times". Language Arts, 75(4), 305-313.

Mohr, K.A.J., Linek, W.M. (1995). Teacher facilitation of student recreational choices. In K.A. Hinchman, D.J. Leu & C.K. Kinzer (Eds.), Perspectives on literacy research and practice. Forty-fourth Yearbook of The National Reading Conference (pp. 305- 311). Chicago: The National Reading Conference.

Moll, L.C. (Ed.). (1990). Vygotsky and education: Instructional implications and applications of sociohistorical psychology. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Munro, J., & Munro, K. (1994). Reading-strategy teaching: A means of empowering those who find reading difficult. The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, 17(1), 7-23.

Myers, J. (1992). The social contexts of school and personal literacy. Reading Research Quarterly, 27(4), 296-333

Oldfather, P. (1995). Song "Come back most of them": Students' experiences as researchers. Theory into Practice, 34(2), 131-137.

Paris, S.G., Lipson, M.Y., & Wixson, K.K. (1983). Becoming a strategic reader. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 8, 293-316.

Pearson, P.D., & Gallagher, M.C. (1983). The instruction of reading comprehension. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 8, 317-344.

Renshaw, P. (1998). Sociocultural pedagogy for new times: Reframing key concepts. Australian Educational Researcher, 35(3), 83-100.

Shor, I., & Friere, P (1987). A pedagogy for liberation: Dialogues on transformation education. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers.

The New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiple literacies: Designing social futures. Harvard Educational Review, 66(1), 60-92.

Turner, J.C., Parkes, J., Cox, K.E., & Meyer, D. (1995). The role of optimal challenge in students' literacy engagement. In K.A. Hinchman, D.J. Leu & C.K. Kinzer (Eds.), Perspectives on literacy research and practice. Forty-fourth Yearbook of The National Reading Conference (pp. 126-136). Chicago: The National Reading Conference.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). <u>Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes</u>. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wendelin, K. H., & Zinck, R.A. (1998). How students make book choices. <u>Reading Horizons, 23</u>, 84-88.

Wenger, E. (1998). <u>Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity</u>. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wertsch, J. (1991). <u>Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action</u>. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Westwood, P. (1998). Reducing educational failure. <u>Australian Journal of Learning Disabilities, 3</u>(3), 4-12.
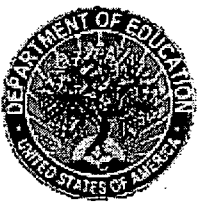
U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

CS 014 141

Reproduction Release
(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Features of communities of practice	
Author(s): Christina E. van Kraayenoord	
Corporate Source:	Publication Date:

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents in journal of the ERIC system, Resources in Education (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper cop: through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction re notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options a following.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY [SAMPLE] TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY [SAMPLE] TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISS DISSEMI MICROFICHE [SAMPLE] TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
Level 1	Level 2A	Level 2B
[✓]		
Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g. electronic) and paper copy.	Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only	Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche, or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Signature: [signature]	Printed Name/Position/Title: Dr
Organization/Address: Schonell Special Education Research Centre, The University of Queensland	Telephone: 61 7 3365 6472 Fax: 61 7 3365 8553
Queensland 4072 Australia	E-mail Address: Date: 13/11/00

c.vankraayenoord

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

mailbox.uq.edu.au

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC/REC Clearinghouse
2805 E 10th St Suite 140
Bloomington, IN 47408-2698
Telephone: 812-855-5847
Toll Free: 800-759-4723
FAX: 812-856-5512
e-mail: ericcs@indiana.edu
WWW: http://eric.indiana.edu

EFF-088 (Rev. 9/97)