



**PROSIECT DYSGU
CYDRADD**
Facilitating Teacher Engagement
in More Inclusive Practice



“I haven’t got time to think!”: Contradictions as drivers for change in an analysis of joint working between teachers and school psychologists

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Introduction

Prosiect Dysgu Cydradd* (PDC) is part of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) and is facilitating teachers, working with the support of school psychologists, to develop their inclusive practice. This work is beginning to identify significant tensions which hinder teacher and school psychologist participation; the challenge is now to interpret these findings using a theoretical framework which will both deepen our understanding and move the analysis forward productively for practitioners.

Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) has the potential to do this. It is a theoretical framework which enables us to understand learning as a socially constructed process that involves many participants. It offers a perspective which explains why problems and difficulties are inherent to the process and suggests a method for the understanding of these problems in the context of their cultural historical origins which will assist practitioners to develop new solutions.

We will begin this paper by describing the work of PDC, followed by a brief summary of CHAT. We will proceed by analysing some of the emerging findings of the study using the theoretical framework of CHAT. Many of these findings relate to tensions and contradictions in the work of the teachers and school psychologists which may be hindering their use of action research to develop their inclusive practice. By using CHAT as an interpretive framework, connections will be made between these tensions and their historical–cultural roots. We will conclude the paper by examining the potential value of CHAT for developing new practice from these findings and the implications for how we implement dissemination to participants and stakeholders.

*The Welsh name chosen for this project reflects the aim and methods for teachers and learners. 'Dysgu' means in Welsh both 'teaching' and 'learning' and our project is about how teaching and learning is happening in secondary school classrooms. Our particular focus is inclusion which improves equality of opportunity for all learners ('cydradd' means 'equal' in Welsh). The stem of the word cydradd is 'cyd' which means 'together'. Teachers collaborating and networking together is an important part of the action research methodology that we are researching.

Prosiect Dysgu Cydradd

Inclusion can be defined in the following way:

‘Valuing all students and staff equally...by reducing the barriers to learning and participation’ (Ainscow and Booth, 2002 p. 3)

We believe that if teachers aspire to these values, this has considerable implications for all aspects of their learning and teaching practice. Inclusion is not a “bolt-on” to the curriculum that is the preserve of specialists; it is something that should permeate the pedagogy of all teachers (Corbett, 2001). To do this, practitioners must dig below the surface of their day to day teaching and expose the thinking and values that underpin their practice.

It is our belief that the methodology of action research can enable this to happen. The value of action research lies not only in developing knowledge and skills but also for its ability to grow professional self awareness (Noffke, 2002). Many writers have suggested that this deeper level of change is a necessary part of the development of inclusive practice in schools:

‘Researching inclusion involves a focus on educational values rather than a narrow emphasis on schooling, and needs to be receptive to the diverse places in which learning happens’ (Corbett, 2001 p. 38).

Action research is typically implemented by groups of practitioners working together to reflect upon an issue, in order to make a change in their practice which they can then evaluate, providing evidence for further reflection. PDC is exploring all the factors that help and hinder teachers to engage in action research. The project is designed around the recognition that teachers may need support to become ‘research aware’, and require an intermediary to support their project (Hargreaves, 2000 cited in McLaughlin, et al. , 2004). This is often someone who has research experience but may have knowledge of their school, such as the school psychologist or a local university researcher. This is an enterprise which involves joint working between different agencies, and it is this interaction which is the focus of this paper.

PDC is working in partnership with six local education authorities (LEAs) , four in Wales and two in England. Within each LEA a group of teachers from one secondary

school are working on an action research project to develop their inclusive practice; the shared focus being improving pupil attitude to learning. They are being supported by their school psychologist who has the role of facilitating project meetings.

This is a small scale study that is gathering case study data about factors that impact on teacher engagement, including the involvement of the school psychologist. Whilst there has been some ethnographic research conducted, the data has been largely generated by the use of questionnaire schedules and interviews. School psychologists have kept a reflective journal throughout their interaction with the teacher group and this has informed their responses to more formal data gathering. A questionnaire was administered to school psychologists at the end of this phase of school action research projects, and these have been followed up with interviews which have probed to obtain further details about interesting and significant responses. These interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The headteacher of each school was interviewed at the beginning of the project to provide contextual information, and this included the head teacher's views on systemic working by school psychologists. These interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The perceptions of all teachers involved in the project to date (N= 32) was gathered by the administration of questionnaires before and after the teachers undertook their action research projects; there was also participation in focus groups that were video recorded and transcribed. Teacher data generation concerned a wide range of factors but only data that relates to the role of the school psychologist will be discussed in this paper. PDC has also gathered data from pupils, but because this does not relate directly to the focus of this paper it will not be discussed further here.

Cultural Historical Activity Theory

A valuable conceptual framework for analysing joint working is provided by cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 2005). The theory originated in the work of Vygotsky (1987) who pioneered a Marxist social psychology that placed social mediation, including the use of cultural tools, at the centre of the acquisition of learning. Yrjö Engeström pioneered the further development of activity theory. Initially he built on the work of Leont'ev (1978, cited in Warmington et al, 2005) by placing the development of mediational tools or artefacts at the centre of activity theory. There then followed a further enlargement of the theory by the expansion of the triadic focus,

from just the interaction of individuals, to include the analysis of the social relationships of communities engaged in joint learning:

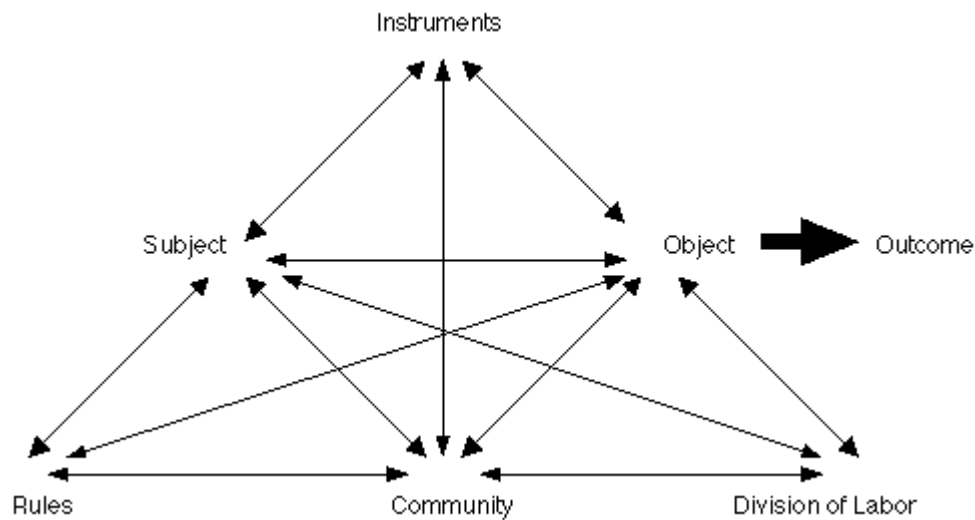


Figure 1 Engeström's model of an activity system

Further expansion of the theory has moved on to the interaction between activity systems (Engeström, 2005). According to this expansion, analysis that uses the CHAT framework must follow five basic principles, summarised in Engestrom (2005):

- The prime unit of analysis is the collective, artefact mediated and object-orientated activity system, seen in its network with other activity systems. In this study the activity system under study is the joint working of teachers with school psychologists, using the artefact of action research to achieve the object of greater inclusive practice. However this activity system must be seen in the context of a network of many other activity systems such as the school and the School Psychology Service (SPS).
- Activity systems are composed of many voices. In this study they are the participants who are the teachers and the school psychologists, and the users who are the pupils. However there are many other perspectives in the network, such as school management, SPS management and LEA staff.
- Historicity is the third principle. An activity system must be seen in the context of its historical evolution, and the evolution of other activity systems with which it networks. Therefore co-working between teachers and school psychologist

should be viewed in its historic context, for example, of the development of the school psychologist's role over time.

- Contradictions are central as sources of change and development. When an activity system includes a new element conflicts may result as this new element collides with older elements. An example in the present study would be the introduction of the facilitation of action research, which may exacerbate a contradiction about the effectiveness of individual case work to develop inclusion.
- Contradictions can be a stimulus for collective envisioning and change. When this happens, the activity system is transformed in such a way that new learning happens that can accommodate these contradictions but also new possibilities. This is the fifth principle and is called expansive learning.

Expansive learning between agencies can occur by crossing boundaries between previously separate practices. Engeström (2005) conceptualises 'boundary zones' as spaces where learning can occur at a horizontal level of practice between practitioners. However change can only be sustained where there is vertical learning which links strategic and operational levels of practice (Warmington et al., 2005).

Central to this analysis is the identification of contradictions as drivers of change:

'Contradictions are not the same as problems or conflicts. Contradictions are historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems. The activity system is constantly working through tensions and contradictions between its elements. Contradictions manifest themselves in disturbances and innovative solutions. In this sense, an activity system is a virtual disturbance- and- innovation- producing machine. ' (Engeström, 2005, p. 95)

Schools as activity systems

In this study we are working with six secondary schools. Their characteristics can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of schools

School code	No. of pupils	Catchment area	Language medium	Pupils entitled to free school meals (%)	Pupils on special needs register (%)	Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds (%)
School A	1000	Semi-rural	Bilingual* – but English mostly spoken	10.3	17	1.6
School B	900	Semi-rural	Bilingual* – but Welsh mostly spoken	7.6	11	0.2
School C	1044 (exc. 6 th form)	Suburban	English	Missing data	3.7	16.0
School D	1028	Urban	English	13.8	27.1	0.1
School E	1800	Urban	English	5.3	12.3	5.0
School F	600	Semi-rural	Bilingual* – but Welsh mostly spoken	1.6	34	2.3

*Bilingual in this context means Welsh and English languages.

Educational policy and practice in the UK over the last 15 years has been dominated by the ‘standards agenda’. Improving standards has been generally narrowly interpreted by government agencies to mean raising levels of performance in key exam indicators such as GCSEs. Publication of exam results performance in school league tables, drives competition between schools, not least for pupils who bring with them revenue. There is now a market place in education where different schools (and different types of schools in England) compete to attract consumers (parents and children). This commodification of education has created many different tensions for teachers and managers working within the system.

Some of these are evident in factors that have hindered teacher engagement with this project. Firstly teachers are under sustained pressure year on year to achieve improved results. For example the school psychologist observed of School B:

“The school itself is very geared towards high exam results –takes precedence over pupil attitudes perhaps? Teachers feel continuous pressure. ”

In secondary schools, it is very likely that raising standards will be interpreted as improving the teaching of an academic subject, using materials focused on exam content, delivering to pupils who are likely to accomplish five A-C GCSE grades, in order to gain better exam outcomes for the highest achieving pupils.

The pupils who are the focus of our project were unlikely to be this latter group. In addition the use of action research could be perceived as non-subject specific and not aimed at 'getting results'. When discussing this with one deputy headteacher he made the point more than once that when it came to preference for inservice training "their *[the teachers]* priority is teaching and results" (Deputy Headteacher, School B) So action research to develop inclusion may be viewed by the teachers as a distraction from their priorities, particularly when teacher time is heavily prescribed with relatively little time for reflection and planning.

This tension will be experienced more powerfully when teachers recognise, or begin to recognise, the value of action research for both teachers and pupils but continue to experience the pressures of committing all their energies to the delivery of higher exam results.

The focus on exam success leads in many schools to the classification of children according to levels of achievement. The result in practice is the setting and banding of children according to ability in a subject area. This has many repercussions in the mindsets of both pupils and teachers. It can negatively influence pupil self esteem, and it may reinforce teacher perceptions of an inherent deficit, leading to lower expectations. There can also be a failure to recognise and meet the needs of 'low achievers' (Slee,1998). These pupils may be disaffected from school; teachers may struggle to motivate them and manage their behaviour and the school may resort to seeking special/alternative provision or exclusion. Teachers differ in how they account for these pupils' poor motivation. Some teachers in our study located the causes as 'within the child' using a deficit model, and were inclined to situate the responsibility for meeting these needs with specialist teachers or teachers of special classes. Other teachers placed emphasis on causation originating in the social environment and on meeting these needs by changing pedagogy in the mainstream classroom (Davies and Howes, 2005). These opinions were a further influence on the teachers' perception of the value of engaging in a project to develop inclusion. Those who saw

inclusion as something that was their responsibility and should happen in mainstream classrooms were much more likely to prioritise the project.

A further significant issue for teachers was the availability of time. Recent changes have been made to teachers' workload by transferring many routine administrative tasks to support staff. This remodelling of teachers' responsibilities should have released for teachers more time for teaching related activities but gains may be minimal (Gunter, 2005). The teachers in our study reported difficulties finding time to collaborate and reflect together. This was often because as well as their teaching, they were also engaged in many other initiatives set by internal and external agendas e. g. departmental reviews, preparations for inspection.

Action research does require an investment of time in order for participants to engage in reflection before, during and after making changes in practice. One teacher, after first hearing about the process of action research, tellingly remarked "I haven't got time to think".

When asked to reflect on the factors that are important to support action research, all of the teachers rated the resource of time, both when teaching and during non-contact time, as being of major importance but difficult to realise in practice. However observations of school projects indicated that if this investment of time does not take place then the process is not as valuable or productive for pupil and/or teacher learning.

Therein lies a tension. If the investment of time is not made, particularly from the outset, then the action research may not be a useful process; however the teacher may be reluctant to make a commitment of time when the product is not evident from the start.

A third obstacle to teacher participation was collaborative working. Teachers' professional practice, in their day to day delivery of lessons, is isolated. They almost invariably teach alone and many teachers, particularly those whose practice pre-dates early professional mentoring, are unused to discussing with colleagues what is happening in their classrooms. Collaborative learning is the most common CPD activity (Surman, 2005) but this often relates to curriculum related activities such as developing schemes of work. Working together in an action research group means

sharing with colleagues many of the qualitative features of teaching, including being frank about difficulties, as well as successes. Observation of teacher groups and records of discussions show a substantial number of teachers who chose not to engage at this level.

We have examined the historical–cultural context of areas of tension for teachers which have been observed in this study. What are the contradictions that are implicit in these tensions?

It is a widely held view in secondary education that pushing up examination results is an effective route to an improved education system. There will be a contradiction, if it can be found that by doing so there is an adverse effect on the on the quality of education for pupils and /or the professional development of teachers. Teachers being judged by their results and the pressure that results can leave little space in their practice, or their professional lives for them to experiment with, or reflect on, their practice. However research indicates that reflective teachers are often the best teachers (Pedder et al.,2005). In this study there was observed to be specific tensions relating to this contradiction:

- A strong pressure to produce good exam results for a teacher’s subject specialism. This creates an imperative which leaves little space for other aspects of learning and professional development.
- A difficulty prioritising time for reflection particularly when outcomes are not known in advance.

The second contradiction lies in teacher opinion about the causes of pupil difficulty. If a teacher locates these problems as originating within the child; the teacher may hold the view that responsibility for change lies with the child him/herself, or with those who can ‘fix’ the child e.g. the therapist or the specialist. This will produce a contradiction because, if learning is socially constructed, an exclusive focus on ‘within child’ issues will fail to resolve, and may exacerbate, the pupil’s difficulties. In this study a specific issue that related to this contradiction was:

- Some teachers had a perception of pupils difficulties that was based on a ‘within child’ deficit model. As a result this was an obstacle to changing their practice and reduced the effectiveness of their action research.

A third contradiction lies in the nature of the teacher role. Schools are socially complex and diverse places with many individuals teaching and learning together. Learning, including teacher learning, occurs most effectively in socially mediated situations, yet teachers' professional integrity is often premised on being able to cope alone with a class of pupils. This 'effectiveness through autonomy' can often be a contradiction when working alone results in missing opportunities to improve professional practice by collaboration. In this study:

- Some teachers were nervous to share and collaborate. This was evidenced by a reluctance to engage in frank discussions with colleagues about their practice.

The activity system showing teacher participation in the project is shown in figure 2; the contradictions that have been discussed are illustrated by use of lightning shaped arrows between parts of the system that are in tension:

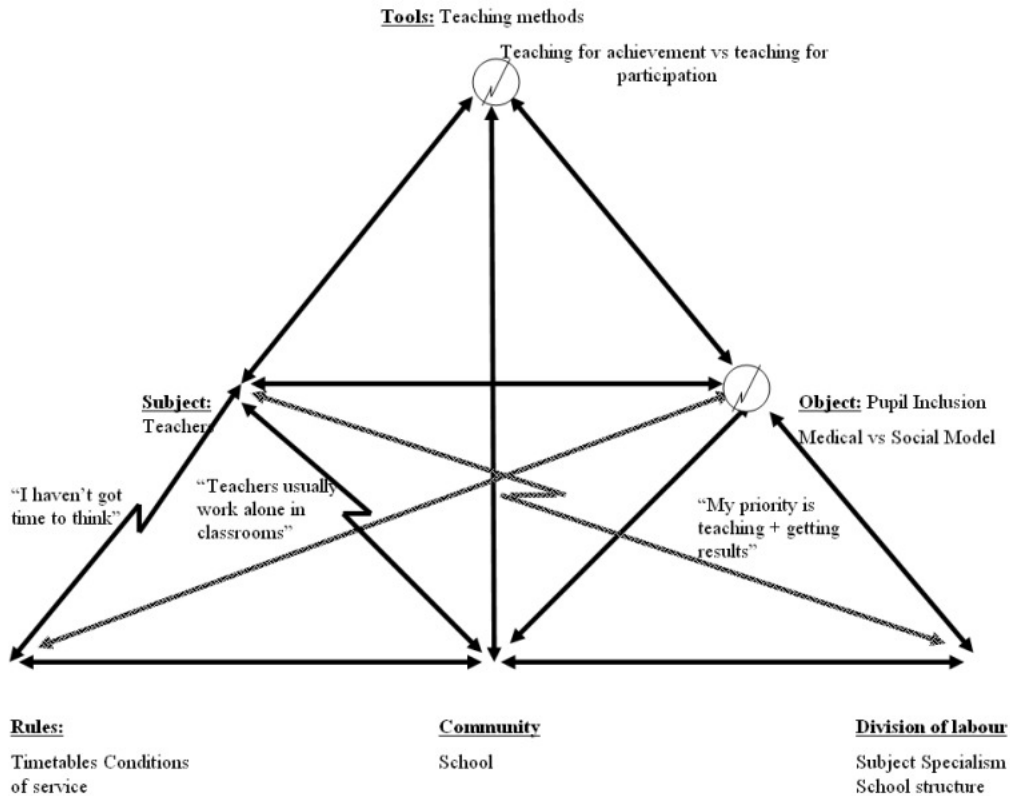


Figure 2 Showing contradictions in teachers' participation in action research to increase inclusion

School Psychological Services as activity systems

The origins of school psychology in the UK lie in the development of psychometric testing in the early years of the twentieth century. The first public report on school psychology, the 'Summerfield Report' (HMSO, 1968), traced the emergence of school psychologists' practice from psychometric test development in the early years of the twentieth century; through the appointment of the first educational psychologist in 1913; to the proliferation of school psychology services just before and after the second world war. Special education has a strong historical association with medical identification and treatment (Corbett and Norwich, 1999) and these new services predominantly followed a medical model of disability and worked closely with doctors. During the 1970s school psychologists took over the management of this process and continued the deficit focus of assessment, but transferred it to psychological processes presumed to underlie learning (Corbett and Norwich, 1999). The psychologist's role was to assess a child's capabilities and very often act as a gate keeper to special educational provision.

There have been significant changes in society and education over the last thirty years that have influenced the role of the school psychologist. There has been a movement away from a 'medical model' of disability; this began with the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) which introduced the concept of integration and has gathered momentum with inclusion now the benchmark for good practice. Recognition that school psychologists can often better use their 'psychology' by developing the skills of others such as teachers and parents, has resulted in the increasing influence of consultation as a comprehensive model for school psychology service delivery (Watkins, 2000). Consultation 'may be described a, systemic, interactionist and constructionist psychology' (ibid. p. 5) which accommodates well work at all levels. Nevertheless for many educational psychologists the focus of their activity in schools remains individual casework with children. This is not least because the SEN Code of Practice (DFES, 2002; NafW, 2002) places a mandatory duty on school psychologists to provide evidence for statutory assessments of individual children's special educational needs. Many LEAs have moved away from statutory assessment as the main funding

mechanism for SEN however in general it continues to be a significant element. A recent study commissioned by the National Assembly for Wales found that over 80% of school psychologists spend at least one quarter of their time on work related to the SEN Code of Practice; of these 50% spend more than half their time on this type of work (NAfW, 2004). The achievement of benchmarks for completion of statutory work is an important driver for LEAs which may detract from prioritising the use of school psychologists for systemic or preventative work.

Some authors have contested that psychologists are also still bogged down in notions of individual pupil deficit when analysing student failure (Thomas and Glenny, 2002). Evidence from interviews suggests that some of the school psychologists participating in this project experienced tensions that can be traced to roots that lie in their historical role as caseworkers with individual children.

There are school psychologists who are able to work on a regular basis at systemic level. For example one school psychology service in our study top slices school psychologists' time to provide time resources for systemic projects. However for many school psychologists, regular systemic working remains an aspiration even though it has been recognised that this may be a more effective use of a resource that is often in short supply (NAfW, 2004). Some LEAs feel that schools are slow to recognise the potential of school psychologists working in this way:

“Well historically ...schools have seen EPs as the gatekeeper to resources and I think we've [*the LEA*] broken away from that in several ways including the survey and consultation model. But I think old habits die hard and schools very often will focus on the individual child and not see the potential that's there really inside the service for EPs to work more systemically”

Access to Learning Manager, LEA 'D'

The school psychologists participating in this study were asked to report on the type and frequency of systemic working that they have engaged in the course of their professional practice. Three of the six school psychologists had occasionally worked in a systemic way to provide teacher in-service training and to contribute to discussions on policy. School psychologist A is a typical example. She has worked for seven years as a school psychologist, and covers a large, mostly rural 'patch' of 25

schools including two secondary schools. She has provided teacher inset sessions on issues relating to autism, behaviour management, and bullying and has occasionally worked with schools on policy issues such as the use of a 'no blame' approach to bullying. She has not had previous experience of using action research in evaluating her own work or in facilitating a group of teacher researchers.

Three of the school psychologists had a quite different professional profile and could perhaps be judged less typical because of this. Two of them were working, or had worked, as professional tutors on school psychology training courses. Therefore they had a wide experience of professional and field research methods although they had not previously facilitated a school based action research project. The remaining school psychologist had previously been part of a university project that had used action research to develop inclusion in one of his schools. However for two of these three colleagues, systemic working still remained an occasional aspect of their work which was still mostly focused on individual casework.

Within this very small sample it can be seen that systemic work, generally related to delivering training courses, is an infrequent rather than regular aspect of school psychology work. A recent report on school psychology in Wales surveyed the perceptions of schools about service delivery. Highest ratings of priority for use of school psychologist time were given to individual work with children; research based work was given one of the lowest ratings (NAfW, 2004). The opinions of headteachers of schools participating in this study corroborate the results of this survey. When asked about the school psychologist's engagement at the systemic level in school, they reported only instances of infrequent teacher training work. Asked if they would welcome an increase in more systemic working three of the six responded positively but gave no clear commitment to doing so; the other three were content for the situation to remain unchanged unless more school psychologist time was allocated to the school:

"I would [*welcome an increase in systemic working*] but not at the expense of the main duty...to work for the children...we have children we know who are queuing at the door and some of them with intense problems. There is a tension there." Headteacher, School B

“No, I am happy for the focus to be with individual pupils-time constraints mean her[*school psychologist's*] time should be dedicated to individual pupils. ”
Headteacher, School F

Therefore the systemic role that the school psychologist is undertaking in this study is a different collaborative role with teachers who may have only previously perceived the school psychologist as a caseworker.

The school psychologist attempting to carry out work that moves away from the role of individual caseworker is most likely to experience these tensions in the prioritisation of time. Within most LEAs, schools are given a limited allocation of school psychologists' time but they are free to prioritise its use. Four of the six school psychologists in this study found that the schools or the LEAs would not release time from usual duties to participate in the project. This was experienced by the school psychologists as a contradiction between achieving the object of their joint activities with teachers, and the rules that were laid down for their professional working in schools.

The historical –cultural context of the school psychologist's role have been discussed. Individual casework continues to be the favoured approach for most schools, and a model of SEN built on individual assessment frames the demands that come from central and local government. A major contradiction lies in the effectiveness of the individual casework model for developing inclusion if it precludes work at the systemic level. This is because for inclusion to happen there must be changes in the social systems of learning. The following specific observations were made of some school psychologists in this study:

- The difficulty of changing professional practice from individual casework to systems work. Particularly when the pressure of meeting case work related deadlines and performance indicators is always present.
- Persuading LEAs and schools that systemic work should be prioritised during the allocation of school psychologist time.

The activity system illustrating the participation of the school psychologist in the project is shown in figure 3; the contradictions that have been discussed are illustrated by use of lightening shaped arrows between parts of the system that are in tension:

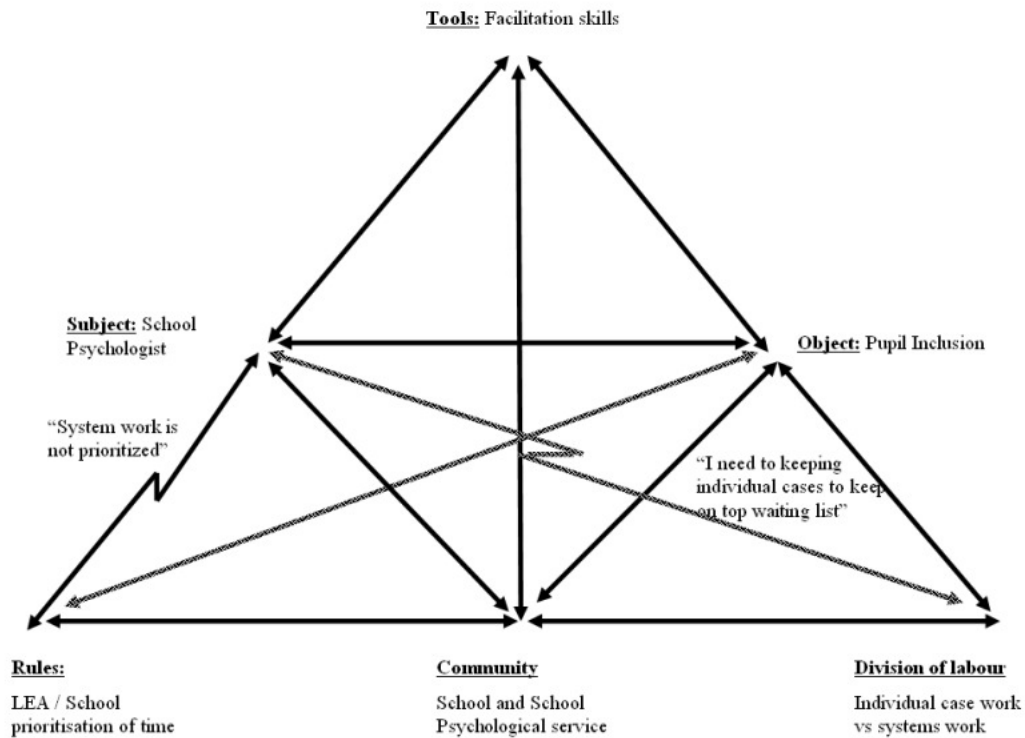


Figure 3: Showing contradictions in school psychologists' participation in action research to increase inclusion

Contradictions that result from joint working

The activity systems of the school and the school psychological services have been considered separately and the contradictions that arise when the teachers and psychologists start to work in these new ways.

The paper will now examine the contradictions that arise in the joint working between the teachers and school psychologists.

We have discussed the pressures on teachers that include:

- Delivering ever improving exam results;
- Improving their skills in order to do so;
- Accommodate this within already busy professional lives;

- Doing so from limited CPD budgets.

One consequence of these pressures has been to find favour, when spending CPD budgets, with teacher development courses. These courses are often organised by private companies that offer short, sharply focused training events aimed specifically at improving pupil performance on key exam indicators. These courses typically involve the quick and efficient delivery of teaching ideas and materials to groups of teachers who absorb them with little opportunity for active participation and reflection. It has been found that the impact of this type of training experience is generally limited to the specifics of the course and so does not generalise into the teacher's wider teaching repertoire and skills (Little, 1989; Wilson & Berne, 1999).

One outcome of regular exposure to this type of training is the expectation that satisfactory training must entail an expert who will *direct* the teacher to new methods for improving pupil results. Action research is not led by an expert, it is facilitated by a critical friend. This can create a tension particularly in the early stages of the project; this tension will be exacerbated if teachers are unfamiliar with the methods of action research.

Teacher questionnaires, completed before they began to work on their action research projects, showed a lack of knowledge about and experience of action research in our sample. When asked to define it only 15% of the sample knew what it was and could clearly describe it. 25% made an attempt at a description of action research but the response was found to be too vague or inaccurate. 60% had no knowledge at all of action research. Only 5% had any practical experience of using it. This concurs with research by Sturman (2005) who found action research to be one of the least common CPD activities for teachers.

Although the teachers were then given clear descriptions of action research, before beginning their projects, many continued to find the concept hard to grasp and the lack of expert direction difficult, until the experience of how it worked, was actualised by practical experience. The lack of an 'expert' was observed to create discomfort for the teachers in the early stages of their projects. This resulted in some cases in hostility towards the school psychologist, who was acting as the facilitator. We can illustrate this tension by contrasting the perceptions of the psychologist and the teacher from School A about the school psychologist's facilitation:

Psychologist: “I was reluctant to be regarded as an expert and give too much guidance, preferring to encourage participants to make their own decisions about how to work differently, emphasising the process of action/evaluate /change in the light of experience”.

“She could have suggested new ideas for us to use instead of us having to come up with the ideas” (Teacher)

The role of the facilitator is a challenging one and this was sometimes exacerbated by a lack of experience and knowledge. Three of the school psychologists, all of whom lacked previous experience of action research, agreed that they would have liked more support in order to better understand the skills needed to facilitate the teacher group:

“We were given new snippets of theory but that’s not the same as going through and understanding the process [*of action research*], the EPs[*educational psychologists*] lacked that...more discussion of ideas and support for the EP is needed”.

School psychologist, School C.

There is a tension between ‘school psychologist as expert’ (teachers preferred role for school psychologists?) and ‘school psychologist as facilitator of action research’ (school psychologist’s preferred role). There is also a contradiction. If teachers think that an expert is necessary to increase the effectiveness of CPD they may move the psychologist into the role of expert. However this is likely to have a contradictory effect: the value of the process will be lessened because of a reduction in opportunities for teacher reflection and collaboration. This contradiction is illustrated schematically in figure 4.

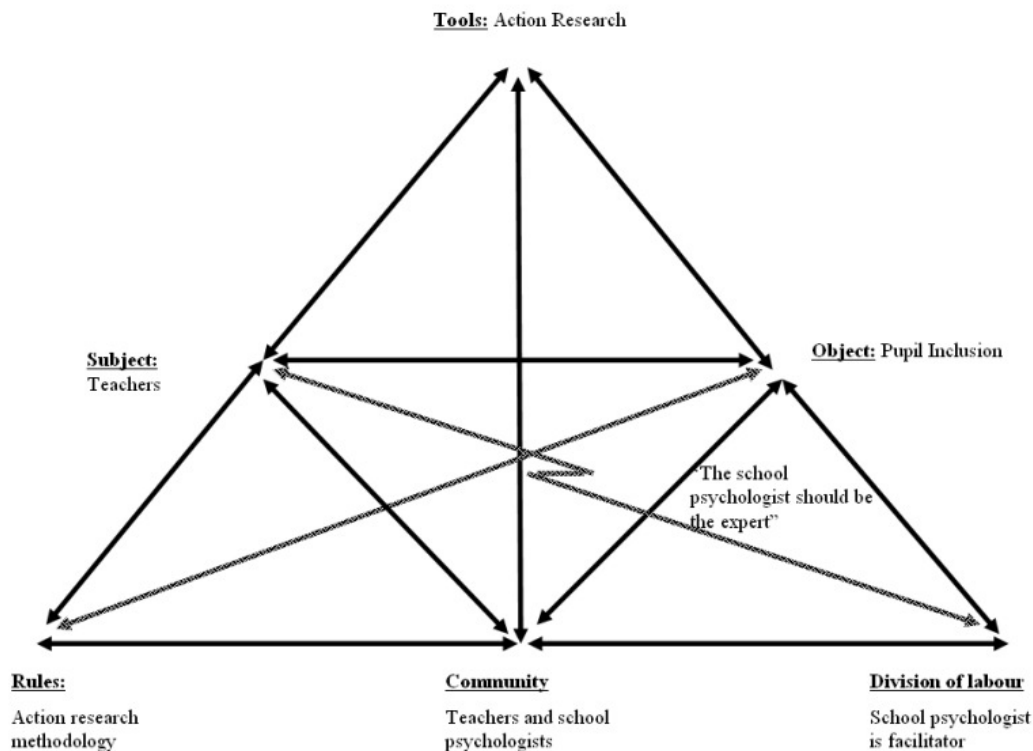


Figure 4 Showing contradictions between teachers' and school psychologists' perception of the school psychologist's role.

Achieving expansive learning

How can we harness the creative potential latent in the awareness of these contradictions and tensions?

Engeström (2005) has researched methods which enable practitioners to analyse the everyday tensions and disturbances by using the shared analytical framework of CHAT in order to generate knowledge creation and new expanded forms of practice. He has developed 'change laboratory workshops' which facilitate workers to engage with the contradictions to which they have been exposed in their joint working and to create new conceptual tools that will move their practice forwards.

These workshops bring together practitioners developing their practice at a horizontal level with researchers to explore key data (typically video data) that researchers will provide to stimulate discussion and enable analysis using activity theory to take place. Warmington et al (2005) describe their use of similar workshops as,

'Using activity theory as a shared analytic framework...to support reflective systemic analysis by confronting practitioners 'everyday' understanding with 'scientific' (in Vygotskian terms) understanding of system relationships, dynamics and the structural contradictions that might point towards new, expanded forms of practice. ' (p. 11)

This analysis will include the surfacing of contradictions that may arise as a result of past and present practices and the examination of potentials for new ways of working that have arisen because previously separate professions are engaged in new forms of collaboration. These workshops may then be followed by further similar events that bring together those at a higher strategic level, and this enables cross fertilisation of discourses between practitioners and managers. Engeström (2005) has described the use of this methodology to produce expansive learning in a number of sectors including education. The process of a typical workshop can be described as following these steps:

- A group of key participants who are part of the activity system or network of systems, such as practitioners who are engaged in joint working or their operational managers are invited to take part. Other participants are the researchers who have carried out a study of the activity system using activity theory.
- The researchers present the other participants with key data illustrating problem situations, which may be indicative of contradictions, and which will stimulate discussion.
- The practitioners are initially encouraged to analyse the data using their 'everyday' understanding of practice.
- Then researchers encourage the practitioners to unpack the concepts through critical analysis of their historical development.
- By doing so they are able to move to a 'situation free' conceptualisation of their practice which becomes the tool for imagining future practice (Warmington et al. , 2005)

Following the workshop further practical stages involve the implementation and evaluation of the new model which leads to further reflection.

The purpose of the present study is to enable teachers to use action research to develop their inclusive practice. This includes finding ways to make teacher participation, and the facilitation of the school psychologist, more effective. Change laboratory workshops may be a way forward for this study to seek new models for systemic working in schools.

As PDC enters its final phase, an important focus will be the dissemination of findings to partner teachers, schools, LEAs and the wider community of stakeholders. It has been decided that outcomes will be shared in small scale, developmental workshops for these groups. As would be expected these workshops will deliver findings about critical 'success factors' that need to be present for effective action research for building inclusion. However it is our intention for the workshops to go further, by challenging participants to engage analytically with issues that have been identified as barriers to the development of success factors.

Would change laboratory workshops provide a dissemination route that will enable stakeholders not only to participate in the challenge of examining tensions and difficulties but also facilitate a search for solutions for the problems that the study has identified?

The analysis that has been undertaken in this paper has demonstrated that CHAT can create some fresh perspectives of the tensions that are being identified in our work with teachers and school psychologists. It provides a theoretical framework which enables us to interpret the problems that have been observed in the activity systems in this small scale study , in the context of their wider socio –cultural setting, and to identify the contradictions that are manifested in these tensions.

However although this has polemical value, a number of questions remain about its effectiveness as a tool for developing new practice:

- Will the theorising of the data, using CHAT, be an enabling device for practitioners, when searching for solutions?
- Can these workshops be productive using data sets that have not been gathered specifically from the perspective of activity theory? Data gathered for this study have not been predicated on activity theory, in common with most real life situations.

- Can discussions that use this analysis, rather than discussions that remain at the 'everyday' level, achieve more powerful solutions?
- Can activity theory, and specifically change laboratory workshops, be a productive tool for this study?

Conclusion

This paper has examined some of the findings of PDC using the framework of activity theory. CHAT is a valuable tool for the examination of the learning of individuals within complex social systems. To apply CHAT we need to understand the centrality of the artefact mediated relationship between the subject and the object; the cultural-historical roots of the social learning systems (activity systems); the multi-voicedness of the activity systems, and the tensions and contradictions that are an inevitable result of the activity. We believe that the power of CHAT lies in the recognition that with the identification of contradictions comes the potential for new and expansive learning.

Following this model we have examined some of the findings of PDC. This has enabled us to make connections between tensions observed in teacher and school psychologist engagement and the underlying historical-cultural contradictions. These have included contradictions that result from the pursuit of the 'standards agenda' and a 'within child' deficit perception of pupils who are not being included.

CHAT also provides us with 'expansive' methods for dissemination and as the Project enters its final phase we will be further examining the value of incorporating CHAT into the developmental workshop events that will conclude Prosiect Dysgu Cydradd.

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