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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

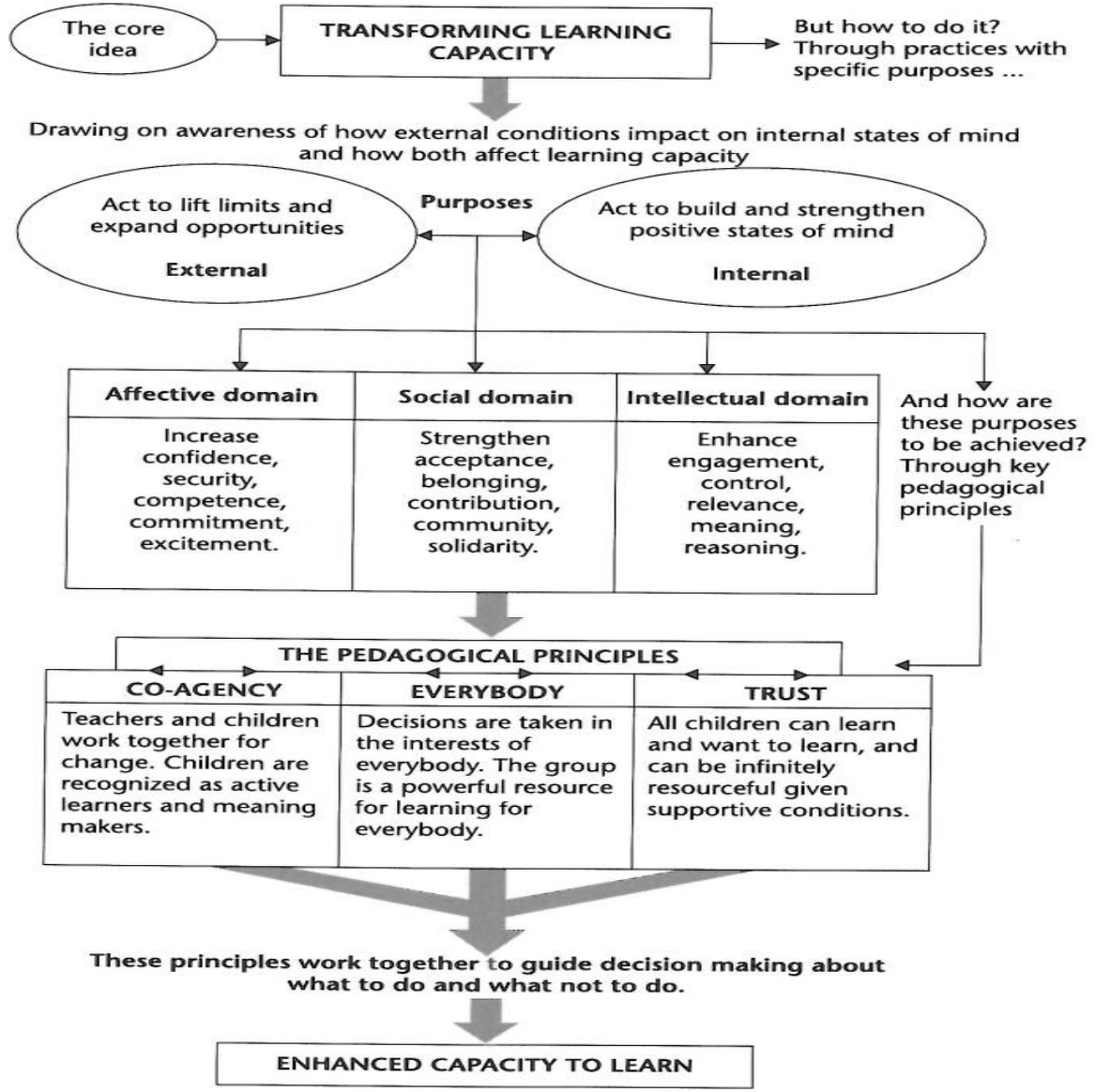


Figure 1.1 A practical, principled, pedagogical model
 Source: Adapted from Hart *et al.* (2004).



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

All children have the chance to explain their thinking

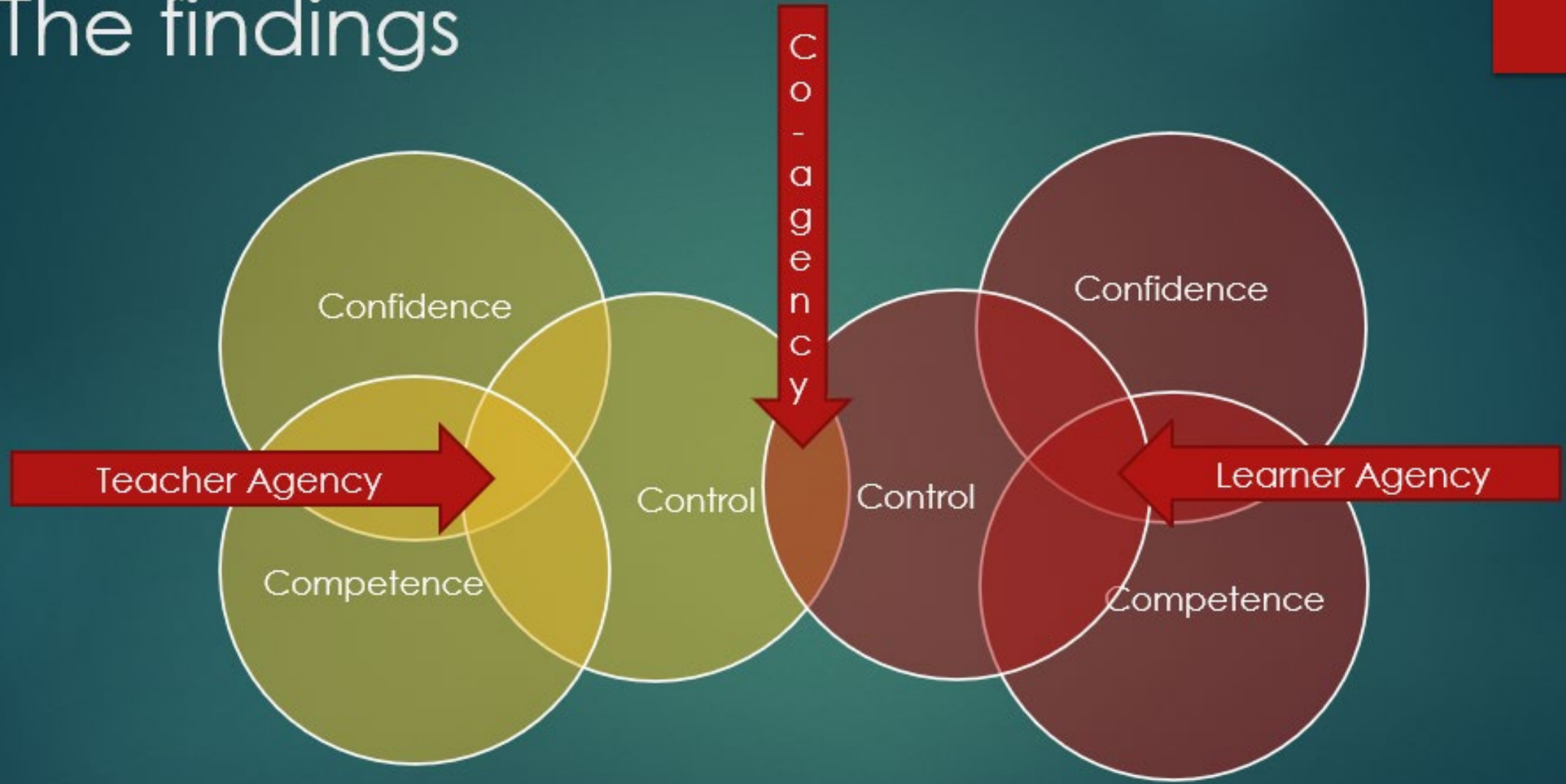
Pupil choice (including movement between levels of challenge)

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

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

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

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