Dialogue as a safe space
Aims

• To stimulate reflection on dialogue as a safe space to support, develop and celebrate teaching expertise

• Introduce the concept of psychological safety, the role of trust and what it means to have a relational approach underpinning professional dialogue
Being a good teacher

I felt as if somebody had kind of at last said to me, in the sort of more formal way, yes actually some of the things you do when you are being a teacher are good things and you’re doing them well (Edward)
And there was something about sharing, having a face to face validation of your work, that was going to feel very different from sending a piece of written work off into the blackness, there was something more real, there was something more possible, and there was a genuine interest, or a curiosity about how that might feel. (Chloe)
However

- I still don’t know that I am good enough for it and you can hide behind a written assessment but you can’t hide around a dialogue (Karen)
- If you are being assessed in front of someone your own sort of self-esteem doesn’t want to be hit (Rosie)
Imagine

• Telling someone they may have 20 years teaching experience but they do not meet the criteria of the UK PSF
• Imagine being that person and others knowing you didn’t make it
• Imagine what it might do to your confidence?
Quick discussion moment!

• Describe a risk you were willing to take because you were conscious of a safety net?
• Reflect on times you did not feel safe in your work environment?
• What is the role of courage in your scholarship, teaching?
A culture of accountability

- Teaching quality
- Targets
- Erosion of personal autonomy
- Where do opportunities for collaborative professional learning fit in?
- Can we use dialogue effectively to celebrate teaching expertise within this current context in a way that is supportive and safe?
Dialogue
Why should we bother?

• Slowing down to go faster (Ellinor & Gerrard, 1998)
• An authentic way of being rather than just a type of communication
• A value laden process of acknowledging and engaging with the other- Buber, Freire (Rule 2011, 2004)
• Builds in collective thinking (learning to teach focuses on individual competence)
• Learning to teach in a challenging world involves reciprocal relations (Kahn 2017)
Value of Dialogic Assessment

I think it’s much more valuable than submitting an application on paper, which is very one sided and one directional, and you agonise over it for so long, and then you write it and you send it off and that’s the end, and then you get a ‘yeah you’re an A’. The dialogic form is so much more interactive and mutual (Pat)
The research project
Relationality

• How individuals are connected, what it means to be part of a community, how that self is experienced in relation to others, and the ethical and caring dimensions of such relationships

• Establishing connections
• Critical friendship
• Being a good teacher
Spatiality

• How do we enter the space the dialogue provides:
  – Is this different in mentoring compared to the assessment
  – How do those who have portfolios inhabit the virtual space
  – Is the space inhabited as part of dialogue separate to other spaces

• Is space experienced differently to place?
Lived Space

- Thinking space – physical and virtual
- A reflective space – making connections
- A developmental and sharing space
- Dialogue as a retreat space – space to stop
- Space to talk
- Empathetic space
- Formative space
Connections between space and relationships

• Micro level dimensions of space
  – Relationships
  – Trust

• Macro level
  – Cultural structures and patterns
  – (Baker 2010)
Trust and Psychological safety

• Trust is the expectation that others actions will be favourable to ones interests

• Psychological safety refers to the climate in which people are comfortable being themselves
  – Both involve perceptions of risk/vulnerability
  – Both are about making choice to minimize negative consequences
  – Both have potential positive consequences for groups

• Edmonson (2003)
Psychological Safety and Trust

Trust
Giving others the benefit of the doubt
Tends to be dyadic
Choice

Psychological Safety
Will others give *you* the benefit of the doubt
Tends to be group
Limited choice
What is a safe space?

Quick discussion moment!

- How do you build trust in dialogue both interpersonally and from a process perspective?
- Can we make it too safe?
- What conditions/guiding principles would you identify as important for creating safe space for dialogue?
Safe space

Accountability for Meeting Demanding Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Safety</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>LOW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comfort zone</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Employees really enjoy working with one another but don’t feel particularly challenged. Nor do they work very hard. Some family businesses and small consultancies fall into this quadrant.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Here the focus is on collaboration and learning in the service of high-performance outcomes. The hospitals described in this article fall into this quadrant.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apathy zone</td>
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<td>Employees tend to be apathetic and spend their time jockeying for position. Typical organizations in this quadrant are large, top-heavy bureaucracies, where people fulfill their functions but the preferred modus operandi is to curry favor rather than to share ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety zone</td>
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<td>Such firms are breeding grounds for anxiety. People fear to offer tentative ideas, try new things, or ask colleagues for help, even though they know great work requires all three. Some investment banks and high-powered consultancies fall into this quadrant.</td>
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https://hbr.org/2008/07/the-competitive-imperative-of-learning

The link for this image is the second one above but it does not appear. The first link takes you to a different version. Both are attributed to Amy Edmonson.
Effective learning through professional dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge and Value</th>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of UK PSF</td>
<td>Timeliness</td>
<td>Trust development:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of process</td>
<td>Matching peers</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills to encourage critical reflection</td>
<td>Relationships that facilitate open dialogue</td>
<td>System</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional competence</td>
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Borgatti and Cross model of relational variables, 2003
references