



**Inclusion and professionalism: reducing fixed term
exclusions in a South West secondary school.**

*A Cultural Historical Activity Theory study of a
disciplinary Inclusion Room.*

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Abstract

This thesis presents an exploration of the nature, extent and characteristics of a disciplinary Inclusion Room (IR), from the perspectives of students and staff in a South West secondary school. Over the past five years, this school has significantly reduced fixed term exclusions and improved school attainment against Local Authority averages. This research presents an organisational response to a socio-cultural problem and the paradoxical lenses of social inclusion and discipline.

The research uses Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a theoretical and methodological framework. I explore inclusion and professionalism using the perspectives of nine students who entered disciplinary IR and nine staff who knew the students. Inclusion constructs explored include participation, equality and diversity. Professionalism is deliberated through a continuum of managerial control/discretionary judgement, individualistic models/collegial approaches and bureaucratic/continuous learning dimensions. Mixed methods used include document analysis, an on-line questionnaire, student and staff interviews, visual timelines and observations of the students in classrooms.

The analysis of IR considers primary, secondary and tertiary contradictions along with disciplinary rules, community and division of labour/power constructs amongst participants to develop a rich understanding of the context. Exploratory data, in the form of a questionnaire, suggests that the students and staff broadly share understanding of inclusion policy, practice and culture in this school. Interviews, further informed by examination of documents, student timelines and observations, show how a disciplinary IR is integrated into, and complements, educational processes; participation (being there), equality and diversity, within the school. Professionalism is characterised by discretionary lenses, collegial working and continuous learning governed by problem solving to support that educational vision. Findings from this work are generalisable as the research develops experience of the school in a naturalistic manner and is illustrative of expectations rather than formal predictions. Nevertheless, schools can use the findings to consider how a disciplinary IR can complement educational processes through increasing participation, equality and diversity. Goals for inclusion can be enhanced through collaborative partnerships and active, ongoing engagement amongst students and staff to develop the educational experience.



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I propose a quote from Harrison (2004, p.179) that summarises my way of looking at researching professional educational situations as they have been constructed during our professional work and this thesis.

The stories we tell are neither stable or universal, but constantly in play and always containing the seeds of their own contradictions, as well as the possibilities for 'thinking differently', for envisaging new ways of understanding learning and learners'.

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