

Exploring the ontological nature of teachers' conversations

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The systemic influence of the neoliberal ideology, with its political and social business rationalities, appears to be having an impact on a teacher's way of being. In this context, the ontological nature of teachers' conversations is largely hidden and seemingly silent. This study reports on the findings of a hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry exploring teachers' ways of 'being in' conversations (Schubert, 2018). Everyday teacher experiences of being in conversation were described by participants and interpreted for powerful phenomenological themes against the backdrop of the philosophical writings of Heidegger. Conversations were shown to have a human condition of 'thrownness'. Yet conversations are imbued with linguistic meanings, interrupted in moments of unrest and uncertainty, which are felt by teachers. These moments glimpsed the nature of a teacher's ways of being a teacher. Teacher's ways of being notice, see, feel and act with intent. In their human capacity the teachers sought to question, what is good, and to act with intentionality toward the human wellbeing of others. In summary this research inquiry challenges the dominant ideology that labels quality teaching in managerial terms. It is a timely paper addressing the reductionism that occurs when humans are seen as merely products serving a system.

Introduction

There have been numerous researchers who are critically aware of the dominant ideology in our schools. Observations have been made of the ideological influence of managing and making judgements about 'quality teaching', effective pedagogy, evidence-based assessment and the like (Aspland, 2012; Connell, 2013; Mockler, 2013; Kelsey, 2014). Technocratic conversations that result have prescribed educational roles and responsibilities on how we ought to 'be together' in the world of education. What is missing in these conversations are teachers' experiences of what is happening within the conversation across their school environments.

Conversation about the quality teacher has been objectively defined. Priority has been given to those visible activities that are quantifiable and measured against standards and competencies while relational conversations are largely overlooked, concealing the subjective complexity of our 'Be-ing'. What we do know, is that a context does not determine a person's being but it can enable, limit and cover a person's way of being in conversation (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009; Kelsey, 2014). In these situational experiences, the nature of the conversations show an intentionality to 'see' and albeit glimpse the inner selves of teachers' care and concern. The purpose of this article is to report on a research inquiry which sought to uncover meanings and understandings within conversations as they were experienced by teachers within an Australian secondary school context.

The prevailing 'presence' of technocratic conversations

The first appearance of the dominant neoliberal ideology occurred in the academic literature in the later part of the twentieth century. The ideology brought a challenge to the educational policy and practices of the day (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009). At this time, the New Right advocates of neoliberalism were to drive change. In Australia, the ideological advocates legitimised their position against a weak central government and budget deficit during the Whitlam era (Orchard, 1998). This was done through economic rationalist policies seen as 'saving' measures, curbing fiscal spending and creating a more competitive economy.

Education was seen as a lucrative market for reform. Existing hierarchies were supplanted by seemingly efficient, performance-based business model. Managerialism had arrived (Tsui & Cheung, 2004). This administrative system strengthened a power structure of gatekeepers with rules, competencies and compliance standards promoting competition and self-advancement. In an endeavour to promote community and soften power structures, strategic plans appeared, using collections of data to align school structures, community achievements and work practices.

This political-economic intrusion became taken-for-granted and seen as a natural and pragmatic progression, believed to provide the 'good society' with maximum space for private markets and individual choice to be normalised (Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavis, 2005; Connell, 2013; Rowlands & Rawolle, 2013). Power within educational organisations and individual agency appeared deterministic; as common sense. Economic rationalism was ingrained within the fabric of capitalism, reducing what was thinkable and shown in the making of an effective, quality teacher (Chopra, 2003). Below the surface of a pragmatic and efficient legislative structure, the autonomy of market-orientated educational departments took place with central control over budgeting and policy. A reliance on corporate management bodies supported competitive growth and individual progression (Orchard, 1998; Windle, 2014). Australia having identical capitalist rationalities as other OECD countries was shown to cast their school improvement reforms into economic terms (Brady, 2014).

In Australia, the managerial structure of schools has shown increasing commodification of their practices and intensified performance surveillance through mandatory monitoring. PISA triennial international student testing (OECD, 2018), Australia's NAPLAN annual national assessment for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (NAPLAN, 2016) and Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2017a) are now established measurements of what is seen as 'quality' schooling (Santiago, Donaldson, Herman & Shewbridge, 2011; Connell, 2013).

A teacher's self-assessment tool supplied by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2017b) provides an elaborate improvement schema. Some schools have 'mandated' the *Classroom Climate Questionnaire* (CCQ) (NSIP, 2019) to enable reflection on teaching practices and a forum to share quantifiable insights. In this designed and controlled system, the 'quality' teacher's practices are commodified into a set of

valued quantifiable requirements. Teachers must meet prescribed levels of competence with defined expectations in rules and regulations to attain 'Head' teacher, and finally 'Lead' teacher status with increased remunerations (Aspland, 2012). In Australia, the government agencies provide requirements for curriculum, teaching standards and funds for a devolved system enabling permissible spheres of government activity like audits and performance indicators to emerge as normal requirements (Kelsey, 2014). In this transactional model of interaction managing, measuring, accounting and fitting constraints within a market does not give a sense of 'life' to teachers' passion, imagination and creativity (Connell, 2013). Other studies outside Australia have found that teachers

... feel subordinate within these structures [They] can feel forced to act in ways that are inconsistent with their core beliefs and values (Lasky, 2005, p. 901).

With a managerial structure in place and a performativity priority, the impacts of this ideology on educational practice in the Australian local arena, has created tensions and conflicts (Mockler, 2013). There is abundant research evidence that objective measures placed on teachers and their work, privilege certain dimensions of human doing, over the more complex and less manageable aspects of being human (Lingard, Mills & Hayes, 2000; Mockler, 2011).

The research underpinning this article explored the nature of teachers' conversational experiences and how teachers retain and sustain their passion for their work. Teachers were questioned as to what engenders and strengthens their intentionality for deepening personal and professional 'life-centric' conversations within the ideological context.

Systemic changes and complexities for teachers

What is the current state of play in Australia? Is the education system failing teachers or are teachers failing the system? (Jensen, 2010). This is an ongoing debate focused on the commodification and conformity of teachers and their practices. Teachers in Australia are seen as having an increasing administrative function which is tied to their performance appraisal (Hay Group Australia, 2012). Transparency is a term used frequently to sound like a socially acceptable pathway. Accountability is seen to be important for the common good, electronic monitoring of class attendance and mandatory risk assessment forms for excursions are seen to be socially responsible. System-based audits, like record keeping of professional standards, are seen to be necessary evidence for quality performance (Strathern, 2000; Thrupp, 2006; Aspland, 2012).

The background to this research inquiry is questioning whether the nature of teachers' conversations has changed under the ideological invasions brought about through the adoption of a business model in schooling. Gadamer's writings opened the notion of the 'in-between' space existing in the *theoria-praxis* tension; where ideology and practice are not synonymous (Barthold, 2010). The question we asked then was, what do teachers' experiences of being in conversation point out about the changing characteristics of teachers' conversations and the essence of their 'being' a teacher? There did not appear to be any Australian study using a hermeneutical phenomenological research approach and

this type of engagement with experienced teachers (more information on the research approach can be found in the next section on the theoretical framework). In brief terms, hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on a phenomenon, in this case, conversations. Participants experiences are considered in terms of their taken for granted meanings and shared understandings of the phenomenon.

A literature review showed that there are teachers who are inspiring and passionate about their work, but also feel afraid, lonely, hopeless and disenfranchised within the schooling system (Day & Sachs, 2004). The completed research inquiry acknowledged that while administrative issues are considered a necessary part of governance, what occupies teacher's thoughts and actions are their practical concerns with pedagogical practices and the complexity of the rational, personal, moral, and emotional engagements that they have with their students (van Manen, 2007).

Theoretical framework

The existential philosopher, Heidegger, described the human condition as 'thrownness,' suggesting that as beings born into a world that already exists, we struggle with everyday uncertainties. While we have intentions we tend to depend on others to make them happen. This research inquiry defines intentionality as the strength to which teachers stay pointing to the things that really matter to them. According to Heidegger, intentionality has the structure of self-showing, 'to show in itself' (Heidegger, 1973, p. 51). The teacher's stories showed the intentionality of teacher's way of being as embodied in a "*characteristic of a mode of being*" (McGovern, 2007, p. 55). Being intentional involves 'seeing thought' and not as a reflection. It is not a directedness to, but towards what we are directed. Intentionality is grounded in the existing subject; the intentional subject is not separate from its objects. This mode involves an intuitive and improvised way of being for the teacher.

Heidegger's approach to phenomenology was centrally ontological and "emphasised a need to understand *being*, especially the ways in which humans act in, or relate to, the world" (Gutek, 2004, p. 88). What makes intentionality difficult to capture is its transcendent existence and temporality of care. Heidegger's concern has been described as the situated meaning of a human in the world, that is, the reality of human experience that is present in and hidden from awareness (Lavery, 2003). The term *Dasein* was used by Heidegger to describe the mode of being human and belongs to the notion of being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1973, p.49).

Philosophical foundations

Phenomenology is the study of the lifeworld; pre-reflective experiences do not resort to conceptualising, categorising or reflecting on it (van Manen, 1990).

We shall not get a genuine knowledge of essences simply by the syncretistic activity of universal comparison and classification (Heidegger, 1973, p. 52).

The lifeworld includes what is taken for granted, often forgotten or lost. Heidegger pointed out, what is essential to us, withdraws from us and we lose sight of being itself (ibid).

Hermeneutic phenomenological research describes phenomenological research influenced by the philosophical writings of Heidegger. For the most part, this research captured four major understandings. Firstly, it is phenomenological, as it explores a particular phenomenon, 'being-in conversation'. Secondly the hermeneutic 'method' of phenomenology is a "carefully cultivated thoughtfulness rather than a technique" (van Manen, 1990, p. 131). Heideggerian hermeneutics is revelatory or opening up for hermeneutics, which considers what is behind taken-for-granted meanings of our everyday existence. Thirdly, the retrospective thinking required by the researcher "can be understood only by someone who shares his/her knowledge of the subject matter." (Cubukcu, 2012, p. 112). Fourthly the phenomenon of conversation can be achieved by a discipline of questioning and inquiring, a discipline that guarantees truth (Gadamer, 2014, p. 506).

Phenomenological inquiry can only be "achieved by doing it as writing and researching[.] an integral process" (van Manen, 1990, p. 8). The challenge in doing hermeneutic phenomenology was to engage with a method, to bring into *presence* the intentionality embodied in teachers' ways of being in conversation, while living in a managerial world that directs their activity.

Research method

Phenomenology is ontology, and ontology is phenomenology; both terms holding shared meanings and pursuit (Giles, 2008). Phenomenology does not 'see' reality being 'something out there' but in the location of the person. The process is dependent on the phenomenon in question, is informed by philosophical literature and phenomenological researchers, and the lived through everyday experiences as the researcher (van Manen, 1990; Giles, 2010).

The phenomenon of 'being in conversation' is concerned with teachers' ways of being in conversation. The purpose of the research was to give voice to teacher's ways of 'being in conversation' as they sustain inspiring and hopeful ways of being amidst challenges and tensions which exist in their everyday teaching experiences.

The first stories gathered in the research were our own stories as being teachers in conversation with students, staff and management. Sharyn (doctoral candidate), recalled being invited into, what she described as a 'circle of trust', comprising three supervisors whose guidance was exemplified in the book, 'A hidden wholeness' (Palmer, 2004). Palmer identified ways of being in conversation that are non-judgemental or threatening and which allows one's inner self to be explored. Sharyn wrote about her experiences, reflected and dot-pointed learning and thoughts that emerged from that experience. Sharyn wrote about her experiences between February-April 2015. During this time she recalls being contemplative and questioning of understandings she held. The experience

shaped how she thought about her own experiences of the phenomenon and how significant it was to pursue the phenomenon of conversation to further glimpse the tenacity of teachers. Sharyn's stories later became a text for an exploration of prejudices and pre-assumptions she held in relation to the phenomenon.

Since the research was limited by time constraints a pilot study was mandated to build capacity for Sharyn to further develop listening and writing as a critical part of the process. The pilot study involved an hour long interview with a known, respected and experienced teacher. The pilot showed the importance of a semi-structured approach and the appropriateness of the snow-ball technique of finding other participants (Creswell, 2012). The participant's role in the research involved describing stories about everyday experiences as a teacher as well as authenticating the detail of the crafted stories taken from the transcript. 39 stories were gathered, 26 were transcribed and 13 of those stories used for deeper analysis, having reached saturation point. Demographics for participants ranged from early 30s to mid 50s. The nature of the data and the gathered stories were both the source and object of the research (van Manen, 1990).

Hermeneutics

The process of hermeneutic interpretation and analysis as described by Giles (2008) was replicated for this research. Stories that were transcribed and verified were seen as crafted which involved minor edits mostly related to the grammar. Hermeneutic circling, a process of revisiting the meaning of a story, was integral to the process of interpretation where the researchers wrote to understand, rather than write their understandings. Writing is combined inextricably into the research activity itself. The technique is so all consuming that Laverly (2003, p.30) stated:

there cannot be a finite set of procedures to structure the interpretative process, because interpretation arises from pre-understandings and a dialectical movement between the parts and the whole of the texts of those involved.

During the interpretative writing about the meanings of stories, the researcher became attuned to the importance of mulling, journaling and asking questions such as: What is the conversation showing? Does the conversation drive the experiences of the teacher or the 'way of being' a teacher? What are some of the ambiguities of the conversation? What view of the conversation has not seen? What is not noticed in the silences of the talk? What is taken for granted in these stories?

"Immersed in a research experience that is lived, the researcher is increasingly attuned to showings of the phenomenon" (Giles, 2008, p. 69). The researcher cannot order how thinking should occur but trusts the hermeneutic technique to reveal something of the phenomenon, so that themes might emerge (Kafle, 2013). In this contemplative frame of mind, phenomenological mega-themes repeatedly appeared: conversation as context; conversation as dialogue, and conversation as 'seeing' intentionality. Later, existential philosophical literature of Heidegger and Gadamer assisted in opening the essence of conversation from the text. As Giles (2008) stated, "the challenge for the thinking in the research continues with the challenge of articulating this" (p. 69).

Findings

This article reports on findings focused on teachers' way of being in conversation and the comportment towards intentionality; looking, noticing and having sensitivity towards others. In the first section, being-intentional is disclosed; a broken conversation reveals practically wise (also referred to as *phronesis*) moments in the teacher's way of being in particular conversations. In the second section, Being-there and Being-with, 'opens' sensibilities towards Others in the world and ways of 'seeing' beyond the physical object.

Practical wisdom (or *phronesis*) in a positive solicitude

This story is about a teacher taking action when pedagogical practices are seen to be challenged by management. It shows what it feels like to be excluded in a conversation about one's practices. The story shows the frustration and indignation when teacher's practices are overlooked by management.

I do think there are groups of people who don't like change that much and they can feel overworked here. I learnt very quickly in my career you have to be completely flexible. If I'm asked to do it generally I am happy to do it unless it something I'm morally and ethically opposed to then, "No! I'm not doing that!". Or if I've been asked to do something and it is a complete waste of my time, and I can't see the value in it; not improving the value of the learning. For example we have a learning management platform that we had to use; it's beautiful so I put all my stuff on there, hours and hours of putting my resources on to *Canvas* [<https://www.canvaslms.com.hk/schools/>].

Then we introduced *Seqta* [another learning management system, <https://seqta.com.au>] and there was a bit of a talk of getting rid of *Canvas*; using *Seqta* and starting all over. I see *Seqta* as really good as a pastoral care organiser but *Canvas* is much better for organising what I'm doing in my classroom. When they were saying there was murmurs of that I was quite vocal in saying actually that's not worth my time getting it to swap to theirs, "it is an inferior product to what I'm currently using and a waste of time". Now that's an example where I kind of went 'umm' but on the whole if I can see that it's useful you just got to be flexible; you just got to kind of roll with it.

In this story the teacher is upset, noticing that management has placed teachers under the radar in terms of valuing their time and commitment to students. Aware of this situation, this teacher has an attentive 'ear and eye' to change. She feels justified in taking action to change thinking, when their actions are seen to have occurred without knowing or caring about teacher's time and hard work. The way of being a teacher is influenced by this felt gap between teachers and management. The seeing and noticing disturbs the teacher who is aware of the disruptive nature of their intentions; the teacher speaks out.

This story also reveals in the tone of the experience, that this teacher speaks out, but not without reading the Other person. There is wisdom in the way leadership is approached and the resoluteness of purpose to have access to such important issues in her work. The teacher sensed leadership could hear teachers. This teacher regardless though, was not going to remain silent, even if management had 'forgotten' to consult teachers, rather than their decisions being an intentional act. While the motive for the absence of

communication is not known, it was painful and caused anxiety and frustration for the teacher. In this story, the Heideggerian notion of leaping ahead reveals a positive mode of Being-with another.

This kind of solicitude pertains essentially to authentic care—that is, to the existence of the Other, not a ‘what’ with which he is concerned; it helps the Other to become transparent to himself in his care (Heidegger, 1973, p. 158).

The teacher leaps ahead when told her current use of technology will be made redundant. She is able to leap ahead because of her seeing *considerateness* and knowing the intentionality of the Other to be able to listen in a way that can receive her perspective on reversing an impending bad decision. This is a strong way to speak out but a way of showing that Others matter to us simply in as far as we lead our own lives, as “solicitude marks one mode of opening oneself up” (Warfield, 2016, p. 75).

The following story looks at student’s ways of being when being graded (or assessed) and a teacher’s way of being in seeing, conversing and caring about the impact of negative self-talk on their learning. The teacher’s experience calls into play a counter-culture speaking about tolerance, relationships, mistakes and ‘growing’ through failure.

I think where I work changes the conversations that happen. I have never seen people so driven and such high expectations. Or such high expectations the students have of themselves, they so want to get an A. They are so driven. There is this kind of competitiveness to get an A and getting a B is almost like failing... The conversations here are sometimes, “it’s enough, that’s fine you need to stop”. These girls in year 7 are doing hours and hours of homework and I say to them, “20 minutes for 3 subjects a night and then you need to stop, if it’s more than that, you are doing too much”.... We have a really lovely respect and I have a really lovely relationship with the girls, feeling really safe with them. They feel really comfortable telling me about their lives which I love but also in asking for help if they need it. They are really quite proactive in asking for help and being open with that.

But here a lot of conversations are oddly enough about saying, “it is ok! it is alright!”. It’s a lot about growth mindset because they are really just thinking that if they don’t get an A they are failures. So I have to talk to them about growth and what growth means and in time you can improve and what you can do to improve... They learn to label themselves good at maths or bad at maths. I kind of talk them through that process, a really important conversation for these girls being perfectionist and highly driven... It’s really about letting them know they can make a mistake and failure is not the end of the world. To fail a maths test in year 7 isn’t really disastrous in their lives. It’s kind of putting things into perspective for these girls... A lot are not parent driven, it’s the culture. This teacher sees in her workplace the influence of competition on student’s ways of being. In the classroom there are disturbing conversations happening and heard by the teacher which makes the teacher feel uncomfortable and upset looking for a new direction to lead the students. There is also conversations sensed sublimely originating outside of the classroom affecting both her way of being and the student’s way of being.

In a competitive culture of high expectations, the teacher notices and feels the pressure placed on and between students. It appears competition shifts the conversation.

Squabbling over grades affects a student's 'way of being' and affects the way of being a teacher. The teacher is concerned about conversations that grow out from students' responses to being graded. There is care, as in compassion and sensitivity in conversations about mistakes made, and seeing a grade as not defining them as 'who they are' as human beings; only a measurement of learning still to come. Teachers have something making them sensitive to the mood, care and concern for the whole child, not just the academics. The teacher's way of responding is to shift the conversation to personal growth and communicating with the student as a whole and embodied person.

The communication of this teacher to students has a caring sensitivity in response to what the teacher was seeing and feeling about the audible and silent conversations between students. In the silence, the teacher listened for confidence, self-worth and self-respect and where these were silent, she speaks out against words of self-pity, failure and fear. The teacher 'hears' the ambiguity of their conversations, the uncertainty of what is expected of them, the fear of failure, and the anxiety that a grade can be a lifelong sentence. The student's way of being is hampered by an imagined perfectionism that has thrown them. The student's way of being is only concerned with the short term; they are unable to see the future.

The teacher appears to be struggling with what she is hearing and seeing; what do I do? The students do not seem to understand how serious their thinking is and the teacher feels giving platitudes about test results is not right, for life has highs and lows. The teacher knows that how the students 'see' and deal with highs or lows in life is really, really important.

In the student's subliminal ways of asking for help; the relational nature of a sensitive, caring teacher addresses the negativity within and beyond the classroom. This teacher's way of being, leaps in, circumspective in 'seeing' with concern, that the system's grading and the students' conversations have a 'life' of their own, burdening the learning and feeding negative thoughts and thinking. The teacher's way of being in the conversation is positive and wise, seeing learning as becoming, not yet realised. The real test in the teacher's caring conversation to the student is overcoming their negative self-talk, releasing their anxieties and self-doubt. There are two ways of being together; safe, personal engagement, alongside a competitive mode.

In the teacher's engagement with assessment responses by students, the students experience the world as always already enmeshed within a framework. The character of Being-lost in the publicness of 'they' belongs to the student thrown in the present world. "In fearing as such, what we have thus characterised as threatening (assessment grades) and allowed to matter to us" (Heidegger, 1973, p. 180). Solitude marks the teacher opening up, leaping in for students, taking over in a monologue seemingly unaware of the to-and-fro dialogue, to care for students lost in the publicness of 'they'; labels based on their test scores. For the teacher, assessment is a social construct from which the students need to see beyond its restrictive boundaries and "fear is a mode of state-of-mind" (Heidegger, 1973, p. 181). In leaping in, Heidegger wrote,

This kind of solicitude takes over for the Other what with which he [sic] is to concern himself. The Other is thrown out of his position; he steps back so that afterwards, when the matter has been attended to, he can either take it over as something finished and at his disposal or disburden himself of it completely.... This kind of solicitude, which leaps in and takes way 'care' is a large extent determinative for Being with one another, and pertains for the most part to our concern with the ready-to-hand. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 158)

The teacher has leapt in, taking responsibility for the student's welfare, noticing the disturbance and anxiety of students, dealing with life, with the intent to shift perceptions that are harmful and restrict learning.

Being-in conversation and 'seeing intentionality'

In conversation and seeing intentionality, what is taken for granted in the conversation is the teacher's willingness to be consumed with the practical nature of teaching in their students' best interests.

I don't think it's certainly not a job, it's a vocation and I think if you want to teach you have to be willing to be consumed much of your life. I think even when you don't want to think about it you go "oogh! that would be really good for my classroom" or you see something on line that could go in your classroom. Or even when home I think it will come into my head about what I could do for my job. It's certainly not a job in which you go for a 9-5 experience; you are really invested in people especially the children. I think about them a lot especially if they aren't having a good time or if they need help.

Being a teacher is not a just a job, it is a way of life. The teacher's daily conversations are ongoing and inseparable to their head and heart. What is taken for granted in conversations is the teacher's willingness to be consumed in their teaching.

The Heideggarian notion of circumspective 'seeing' is a way of being, where the teacher, drawn into 'world' conversations, brings relevance to student's lives (Heidegger, 1973, p. 93). The teacher is a living entity having an authentic and inauthentic way of being-there. In this existence, empathy arises. The authentic comportmental mode of Being towards concern *sees* beyond the present and makes closeness felt in their environment. According to Heidegger, 'circumspection', a special kind of sight, "looks around for a way to get something done" (Heidegger, 1973, p. 98 foot-note 2). Circumspective concern provides a way of looking ahead and looking back (Cerde-Walker, 2014).

The teacher's purposeful seeing and intent is characteristic of their mode of Being. There is always a feeling of living-in a situation; that is my being towards others is "always-already involved in any situation; [having] myself [been] thrown" (Gendlin, 1967, p. 287). The teacher is aware that bringing the world to the students is an act of giving one-self and that this is always at hand. In the stories the intentionality of the teacher's comportment (way of being) towards intentionality shows the teacher noticing 'things'. And they do not just notice. They notice with the view to being intentional. Being-alongside the students, they notice and think of what to do next as they act with intention.

Discussion of the findings

The theme of 'being in conversation as seeing intentionality' has focused on teachers noticing things and thinking of what to do next as they seek to act with intention. It is in the noticing and the disruptive nature of other intentions, that reveals authentic-care. 'How we are' in conversation matters. As professionals and as a human, we need to refine our attunement to noticing, looking and seeing how we are 'in' conversation together. The teacher's actions are open to care and concern as they combat an ideology seeking to fix conversations and standardise the human being through technical controls and management systems (Giles, 2018).

The relational nature of a sensitive, caring teacher addresses negativity through dialogue. Having circumspective concern within a context shifts the conversation. Being intentional attunes teachers to seeing and feeling how the 'Other' is in conversation and to act with practical wisdom. The teacher's way of being is then a relational dialogue, anticipating, giving and sharing.

Letting something be encountered is primarily circumspective; it is not just sensing something or staring at it... It implies circumspective concern, and has the character of being affected in some way; we can see this more precisely from the standpoint of the state-of-mind... Only something which is in the state-of-mind of fearing (or fearlessness) can discover that which is environmentally ready-to-hand is threatening... Dasein's openness to the world is constituted existentially by the attunement of a state-of-mind... Any cognitive determining has its existential-ontological constitution in the state-of-mind if Being-in-the-world; but pointing this out is not to be confused with attempting to surrender science ontically to 'feeling' (Heidegger, 1973, pp. 137-139).

Conversation as 'seeing intentionality' lies in the ability of the teacher to draw on their senses deliberately to bring about wholeness of life to themselves and Others. The teacher's way of being involves hearing ambiguity in conversation, and shifting conversations in ways that open dialogue. Talk can be empty words but a teacher's empathetic way of being presents the Other as important and sees dialogue as something that continues to live between them in ways that can be transforming.

Implications

Findings show conversation is more than talk; it is noticing the way we are together in the world and sensing the shifts in conversation and the use of language. Now is the time to move away from structures and terminology that affronts and hides the Other. Being aware of such tensions will enable continuing conversations that work toward deconstructing those spaces where talk of transparency can be replaced with invitational dialogue, system feedback replaced with strength-based engagements and strategic plans driven by appreciative strategies. This research has shown teacher's noticing and sensing the multiple meanings of words beyond their linguistic expression. This research has identified teachers, whose ways of being in conversation change perceptions.

Researchers in effective schooling literature looking at socially just forms of schooling argue, "classroom interactions are influenced by unconscious forms of oppression" (King,

1991; cited in North, 2006, p. 524). These researchers argue unjust social realities can be changed when teachers critically reflect on their pedagogy (Mills & Gale, 2002). Further phenomenological inquiry could consider stories about teachers' conversations with students in socially diverse classrooms. It would not surprise if the distillation of stories showed ways of being a teacher revealed compassion, love and respect as being central.

Conclusion

The significance of these findings for the practices of teachers and administrators relates to the teachers' noticing of how we are together in conversation. In this way, mind and heart can engage in respectful dialogue which values the Other. The findings also show how teachers' ways of being in conversation can be inspiring and give new understandings of how they are and who they are as practitioners. The humanity of the teacher is shown in a willingness of Being-with, Being-alongside and Being-open to the Other in conversation. This openness changes conversations and sustains the teacher through the challenges and difficulties of being-there and being-available to and for Others.

What has been revealed in this study was that teacher's everyday conversations show the relational nature of education in practice (Giles, 2018). Conversations change and involve the giving or taking of 'life' from the teacher. For these teachers how they treat each other and Others matters. Relationships always matter.

Inspiring teachers are often not consciously aware of how their being is present. For these teachers, conversations show support, wonderment, questioning, empathy towards the Other, and extends to the positive experiential connections of being human. These teachers become experienced in living 'life' and accepting the challenges of being open to Others. These teachers show what is mattering to them through the practical wisdom and sensibilities they feel in relational experiences (Giles, 2018). The teacher's engagement with their stories was important and timely as it recognised and appreciated the tenacity, resilience and strengths of experienced teachers' ways of being within a dominant ideology.

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