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Exploring dialogical spaces of discovery

Josephine Moate
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Eva Vass
Western Sydney University, Australia

Abstract
This paper revisits two teacher-education contexts which we independently researched. Both contexts invested in teacher-professional transformation, presenting unique puzzles in our respective data analyses. Bringing together Bakhtinian dialogic theory and Natural Inclusionality (Rayner, 2017), we return to these puzzles in a reflective dialogue. The paper unpacks two emergent themes. The first theme details our sense-making of the dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow as part of professional development, and the second theme captures our deliberations about the energy-filled spaces of the in-between that form part of teacher development in our contexts. The paper discusses key insights about the nature of teacher-professional transformation and opportunities for mutual enrichment: insights that would not be available to us in our independent analyses. Given the non-conclusive nature of Bakhtinian dialogue, we offer no closure and avoid definitive conclusions that enforce or imply the assimilation and homogeneity of perspectives. Instead, we bring a polyphony of voices – our philosophies, contexts, professional orientations, and empirical puzzles – into a receptive-responsive relationship. We believe that the emerging dialogic problematisation has significant implications for teacher development as well as for ongoing theorisations of education. It responds to the pressing need to rethink the crucial relationship between educational theory and practice.[1]

Keywords: *dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow, interanimation, natural inclusionality, teacher education*

Josephine Moate is an international teacher educator and educational researcher based in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Josephine's research interests include pre- and in-service teacher development, the role of language and culture in education, as well as the philosophical values that underpin the practice, theorization, and research of education.

Eva Vass is a Lecturer in Pedagogy and Learning Design with expertise in observational research and classroom ethnography. Dr. Vass's earlier research includes studies on children's collaborative creativity through analysing classroom talk, and her recent work addresses an embodied aesthetics of the mind with research engaging with the experience-centred music pedagogy of Klara Kokas, how imagination and creative insight emerge from active listening and movement improvisations, and Alan Rayner's Natural Inclusional approach.

[1]Please note that, due to the dialogic nature of the content, the distinction between first and second author is arbitrary, and does not capture our mutual engagement in its development.

1. Introduction

As the Council of the European Union (2014) acknowledge, 'In a fast-changing world, the role of teachers — and the expectations placed upon them - are evolving too, as they face the challenges of new skills requirements, rapid technological developments and increasing social and cultural diversity, and the need to cater for more individualised teaching and special learning needs.' This policy statement, however, does little to convey the grievances of teachers compromised by performative measures (Ball, 2003), the tension between the rigidity of institutional structures and creative, improvisational pedagogies (Sawyer, 2019), the lack of foresight imposed by current policies and practices (Biesta, 2019) or the profoundly dialogic space of teacher development as an environment full of competing voices, visions and experiences (Moate et al., 2015).

There is a pressing need to rethink the profound relationship between educational theory and practice and review our conceptualisations of education as well as ways of acting within education (Biesta, 2019). Educational theorisations need to address how philosophically grounded values transform into and through practice. This involves the empowerment of teachers to be the catalysts of educational change from within their local contexts (Sawyer, 2019) and bring pedagogic expertise back to the centre.

Our theoretical orientation to teacher education is based on the notions of mutually receptive-responsive dialogue and mutual inclusionality. These notions highlight the give-and-take of self-other relationships and recognise you as part of me and I as part of you without assuming that we are the same. This theoretical starting point contrasts with contemporary, efficiency-driven, stratifying approaches and offers a new framing to teacher development as well as refining current understandings of dialogicality. Current reappraisals of educational theory demonstrate that a reconsideration of dialogic principles for education provides an important corollary to the dialectic tendencies of Vygotskian thought (e.g., Wegerif, 2008; Matusov, 2011; White, 2014). A topical issue is whether such dialogic practices should remain essentially instrumental – transforming learning through academically productive dialogue with anticipated aims and outcomes, or whether an ontological dialogic pedagogy is preferable where all educational aims, processes, and outcomes emerge from the collective dialogue, unconstrained by the teacher or the curriculum (Segal & Lefstein, 2016; Matusov & Wegerif, 2014). While instrumental dialogue within teacher education largely predefines what kind of teachers are desirable, ontological dialogue allows participants a level of open-endedness which can be deeply transformative. This paper builds on this problematisation and focuses on higher education (HE) contexts as potential platforms for dialogic transformation generated contingently as participants responsively invest in the development of each other (van Manen, 2016).

Our paper brings together studies from two distinct contexts which resonate in their overarching concern to invest in teacher-professional transformation (see Moate et al., 2019 and Vass, 2019 for details). In this article, we share the puzzles that initiated our collaboration and our professional dialogue concerning opportunities for transformative knowledge-building in our respective research contexts. The puzzles that brought us together include the seemingly premature dialectic closure in Josephine's dataset and the intensity of dialogic encounters in Eva's context.[2] In our initial discussions, these puzzles could be more aptly described as troubles, sore points that called for further attention (Sullivan, 2012). As we shared our troubles and different theoretical starting points, our individual troubles began to transform into researchable problems or shared puzzles that could be explored and better comprehended (Shulman & Elstein, 1975).

Figure 1 maps the timeline and key pieces of our puzzle from our first meeting in 2016. Josephine was in the audience during Eva's conference presentation, in which Eva showed videos of the participants'

[2] Whilst deeply transformative, the carnivalesque nature of these encounters pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable within this educational setting, contrasting the personally transformative with the institutional expectations.

embodied responses to music. Eva shared the dilemma of trying to find a suitable theoretical lens to go beyond language as the sociocultural tool for sense-making, as illustrated in the observed musical encounters. Josephine was working with Bakhtin, seeking a better understanding of dialogism as a moral philosophy that, although often associated with language and discourse, is rooted in an embodied, architectonic self (Emerson, 1995). In our initial conversations, we seemed to share a frustration with existing theorisations and a thirst to go deeper. The 'sore points' in our individual datasets provided us with concrete starting points to enter a shared dialogue. From our interest in embodiment, we began to question what it meant to be a community, to mutually enrich, but not be the same (e.g., Bakhtin, 1986, p.7). As international researchers based on different continents, much of a dialogue sporadically continued via email. Annual conferences gave new impetus as we submitted co-authored papers that required us to explicate our ideas, share our sources, return to our respective datasets and receive feedback from educational researchers. Over the years, we have shared the responsibility for moving forward with our dialogic exploration, leading and encouraging one another in turn, co-authoring this study across a significant amount of space and time.

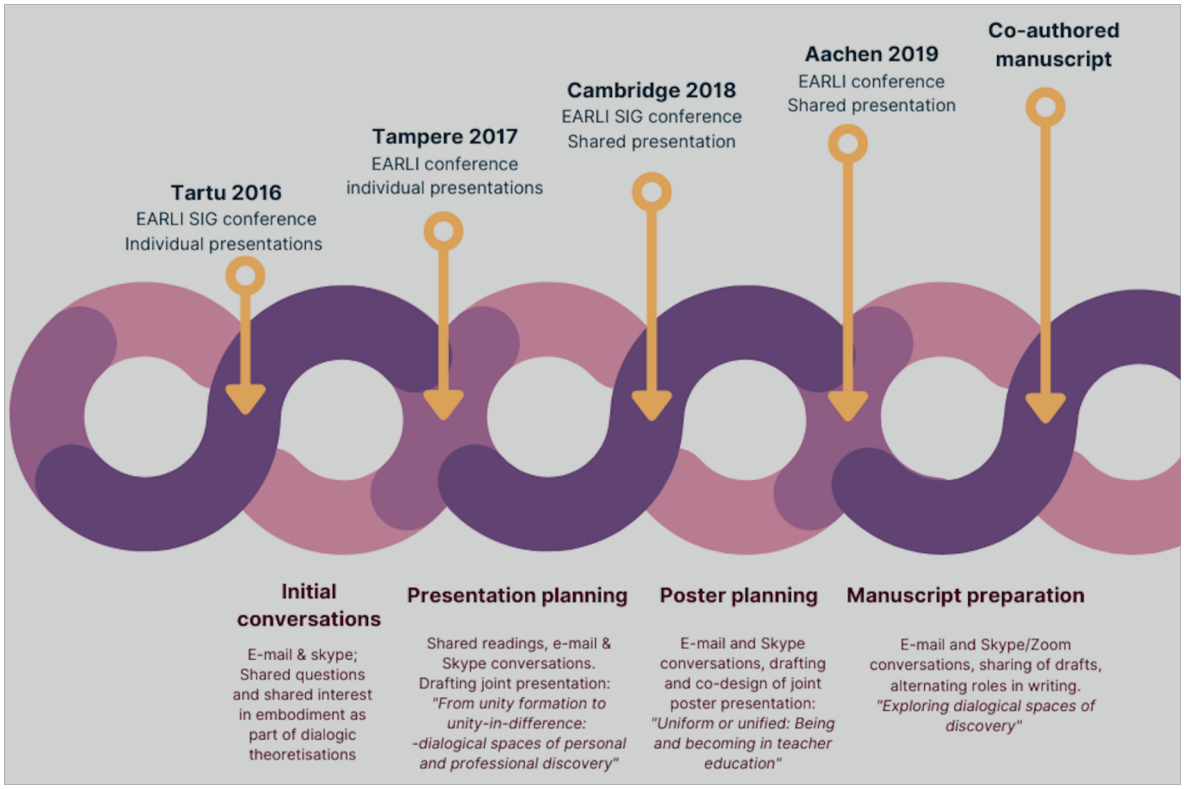

Figure 1: The timeline and key pieces of our shared puzzles

Our shared exploration of these puzzles enabled us to go beyond individual meaning-making to approach teacher professional transformation as a receptive-responsive dialogue and an opportunity for mutual enrichment. We hope that sharing the insights from our exploration helps pave the way towards the change we seek in teacher education and teacher professional development. We offer no closure and avoid definitive conclusions that enforce or imply the assimilation and homogeneity of perspectives. Instead, we bring a polyphony of voices – our philosophies, research contexts, professional orientations, and empirical puzzles – into a receptive-responsive relationship. The paper represents a momentary 'narrative knot' in

our dialogic encounters[3], with themes and voices 'crossing paths to follow in the future' (Holdus, 2019, p. 244). We begin by outlining the dialogue between our philosophical orientations.

2 The dialogue of philosophical orientations

Through cycles of exchanges, we gradually brought dialogic theory (e.g., Bakhtin, 1986, 1993) and Natural Inclusionality (Rayner, 2017) together as our philosophical framing. Although from different disciplinary fields, these philosophical approaches resonate in their commitment to the being and becoming of life (human, cultural, natural) as essentially co-creative and interanimated (White, 2014). The following section outlines the key points of resonance, leading us towards a philosophical reframing of dialogic education.

2.1 Philosophical reframing

Dialogic encounters challenge participants to reorient to the 'space of the in-between' (Buber, 1956). Dialogic pedagogies build on the knowledge and experience of the 'other' and promote a collective, but not assimilative, journey towards complexity. Wegerif's (2013) discussion of the phenomenological roots of dialogism emphasizes that no real dialogue or learning is possible without a shared space of mutual resonance. However, we need to develop a more nuanced understanding of how this dialogic space opens and expands to avoid over-shadowing materiality and embodied dialogue or reducing dialogue to talk as a tool for developing expertise (White, 2014; Vass et al., 2014). For Bakhtin, the fundamental self-other relationship is based on a rich conceptualisation of dialogue (Brandist et al., 2017) that, in addition to language, includes materiality (Bakhtin, 1990), embodiment (Bakhtin, 1984a) and temporality (Bakhtin, 1986). Bakhtin's later manuscripts orient towards unpacking the role and nature of discourse, nevertheless continuing with, and enriching more embodied and experiential notions of dialogism (Holquist, 1990; White, 2014).

Inspiration for Bakhtin's dialogic theorisations came from art, literature, and the natural sciences (Bakhtin, 1981; Holquist, 1983). We suggest that Natural Inclusionality (NI), Rayner's (2017) contemporary philosophical and methodological approach to the study of nature, can similarly inspire dialogic theorisations. Natural Inclusionality is based on the understanding of Natural Inclusion – the *natural attunement* between self and habitat – as a fundamental evolutionary process. Whilst the binary logic of objectivistic science perceives the natural world as a world of definitive, static boundaries, NI proposes natural continuity instead. This continuity can be illustrated by redefining a tree as a 'solar powered fountain' with water drawn into and bursting from it through its natural relational habitat (Rayner, 2011). NI perceives receptive-responsive relationships as the source of continuity between distinct entities, not (dis)connections between discrete or separate bodies. Thus, boundaries do not isolate one from another but afford *mutual inclusivity*. Simply put, we are not all the same, but we include each one in the other. NI works with this mutual inclusivity and receptive-responsive relationship to reframe evolution as the *sustainability of the fitting* in a 'natural neighbourhood' (Rayner, 2011).

This explanation is remarkably similar to the dialogic perspective in which binary oppositions of, for example, inside-outside are recognised as simultaneous, inclusive also/and relationships (Bakhtin, 1993; Holquist, 1990). From a dialogic perspective, boundaries are understood as places of encounter, not separation (e.g., Bakhtin, 1981; Emerson, 1996). What these two philosophical orientations (dialogicality & NI) share is, therefore, the understanding of these fluid boundaries as a source of mutual enrichment. Yet,

[3] The Bakhtinian chronotope can be conceived as a narrative 'knot' or 'spatiotemporal matrix' for the situatedness of human action; making visible that which is often assumed or taken-for-granted and better understanding the formative potential of a historical moment. This 'formally constitutive category' or 'form-shaping ideology' suggests any change that takes place occurs within an already ongoing relationship. It draws on past experiences, voices, and authorities to anticipate appropriate action and development, whilst continually sensing, surmising, and responding to the immediate environment.

NI goes beyond dialogic conceptualisations to boundaries as continuities between distinct bodies. The unpacking of the inside-outside relationships and the more nuanced explorations of the *space in between* have become central to our discussion and guided the structuring of this paper.

2.2 From intersubjectivity to interanimation

Research in artistic-improvisative contexts is rich in explorations of co-creativity, working with concepts such as empathetic attunement (Seddon, 2004), collective entrainment (Clayton, 2007) or group flow (Sawyer, 2007). Jazz musicians, for instance, model this Buberian depiction of the *space of the in-between* as they tune into one another and achieve a level of interactional synchrony that has a distinct form and yet remains unpredictable, even ambiguous (Sawyer, 2005). This kind of profound responsivity involves constant listening and monitoring in anticipation of the slightest change that requires a different kind of answer (Holquist, 1983). The emergent co-creativity is more than the mainstream instrumentalist take on the Vygotskian notion of intersubjectivity. Emergent co-creativity is better described as a form of interanimation, the sharing of breath, as something new with no finalizable outcome is created through this process (White, 2014). This is closer to the Bakhtinian notion of polyphonic discourse (1981), 'always containing both the old and the new and being forever in motion due to the strengthening or fading of forces…' (Holdus, 2019, p. 249)[4].

Within this process, *the other* is of profound importance, for it is through the presence of others that a dialogical opening unfolds (Bakhtin, 1986; 1990). Dialogic openness, however, does not entail absolute submission or assimilation (Bakhtin, 1981; 1986; Emerson, 1996). Instead, it signifies a collective journey towards complexity, whereby the dialogic space of knowing constitutes a burgeoning web of connectivity and potential (Segal & Lefstein, 2016; Matusov & Wegerif, 2014). The inherent dynamism of NI concretises these dialogic ideals as natural phenomena central to ecological sustainability. This can be observed in the receptive-responsive essence of the natural world that underpins healthy relationships within thriving communities (Rayner & Järvilehto, 2008).

2.3 Dialectic closure or dialogic expansion

This theoretical reframing can help us better understand the negative effect of authoritative pedagogical approaches which insist on the wholesale acceptance of a given way of thinking. It also urges us to challenge the narrow understandings of dialogicality as the means to unify and homogenise participants' thinking, aligning it with, for instance, curricular objectives or expectations or opening up to the carnivalesque of ethical relativism (Emerson, 1995). These narrow understandings short-cut the expansive process of mutual enrichment and prompt the premature closure of the dialogue: the undue finalising (or death) of the other (Bakhtin, 1990). Instead, Bakhtin's phenomenological approach sees the mind in perpetual, receptive-responsive dialogue with its particular physical, social or cultural environment (Brandist et al. 2017). Encounters with alterity, with a polyphony of voices coming together, involve creative struggle as new ideas and potential understandings are formed. The polyphony of voices avoids an artificial separation between truth as lived experience and truth as theorisation (Bakhtin, 1993).

This philosophical problematisation highlights the tension between dialectic closure and dialogic expansion. As Josephine's research data provoked us to consider, we must attend to the dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow to allow the expansive, mutually receptive-responsive relationships to unfold. This flow grants us moments of resolve, yet also anticipates the infinite, perpetual expansion of understanding (see Figure 2) without a predetermined point of ultimate closure. Dialectic resolve that fails to provoke further dialogue

[4] In musical terminology, polyphonic musical texture combines more than one independent melody. Harmonies emerge as a consequence, and not as the driving principle for the composition (Vass, 2019).

and manifests in uniformity that ascribes little value to alternative perspectives will ultimately undermine this enriching and, in biological terms, life-giving, perpetual process.

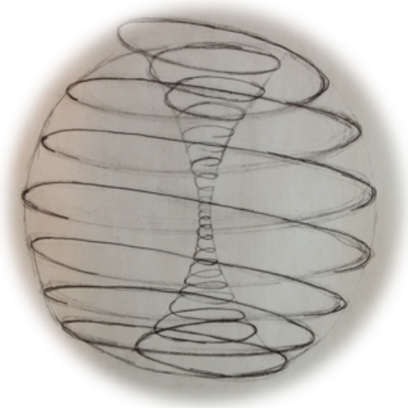

Figure 2: The vortex of dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow (drawing by Roy Reynolds, used with permission)

In our shared reflections on our respective research contexts, this tension between the perceived pedagogical need for a dialectic resolve and the ultimate pedagogical goal to maintain the dialogic expansion recurred regularly, to finally become a central theme in this paper. The unique, distinct experiences in our respective research contexts prompted us to jointly explore further. In our conversations around our data, we gravitated towards the following guiding questions:

- How does the dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow form part of professional development?
- What kind of energy-filled spaces of the in-between are part of teacher development?

As noted, these concerns are not purely philosophically driven. They have emerged from our professional dialogue about our key findings and puzzles in our research localities, which, in turn, we are using as platforms for the current dialogic explorations. We address the above questions through data from the two contexts before turning to the future vistas of the theory and practice of teacher education.

3. Two teacher education contexts

3.1 Context 1 – An international, intensive programme (IP) on cultural diversity

This context is an ERASMUS+ 10-day intensive programme (IP) for pre-service teachers annually run for 3 years. The IP aimed to provide participants with opportunities to develop intercultural understanding and broader pedagogical repertoires in response to the increasing cultural diversity of European education. Each IP involved 32 students from eight European universities with 1-2 accompanying staff members. The students included early childhood educators, primary school teachers, subject and language teachers, as well as drama and free-time educators. The IP included interdisciplinary lecture-based sessions, readings, and arts-based pedagogies to create spaces for intuitive and creative responses, as well as critical and intellectual thinking (e.g., Holtham & Owens, 2011) to explore notions of insideness and outsideness. In addition to studying together, the students stayed together in a hostel.

The data include self-selected extracts from reflective sketchbooks (completed during the IP), video recordings of small-group presentations at the conclusion of the IP and written assignments submitted following the IP. The three subsets of data document participants' reflections on the IP across time. The subsequent studies have primarily used a dialogical approach to qualitative analysis (Sullivan, 2012) to explore the reflective sketchbooks as a place for reflection on and creative responsiveness to their IP

experience (Moate et al. 2019), and study students' emergent pedagogical thinking as presented by small groups (Moate, 2018) and in individual written assignments (Moate, 2023). The findings highlight how students develop an understanding of notions of insideness and outsideness through embodied, material, social and intellectual experiences and resources. Moreover, the multimodal dataset provides insights into participants' experience, understanding and pedagogical development.

3.2 Context 2 - Music teacher education Master's Unit

This HE context is an elective Master's unit of a music teacher education programme on the *Kokas pedagogy*, an experience-centred approach for the early and primary years. The aim of the unit is to immerse Master students in pedagogy, making its core principles accessible through direct experiences (see Figure 2). The sessions combine collective experiencing (active music listening) and shared reflection. The educational provocation is to depart from a language-based modality, to go beyond the science of music (students' technical expertise of a musical instrument), and reopen to music somatically, with anticipated enrichment of the Master's students' musicianship and music pedagogy.

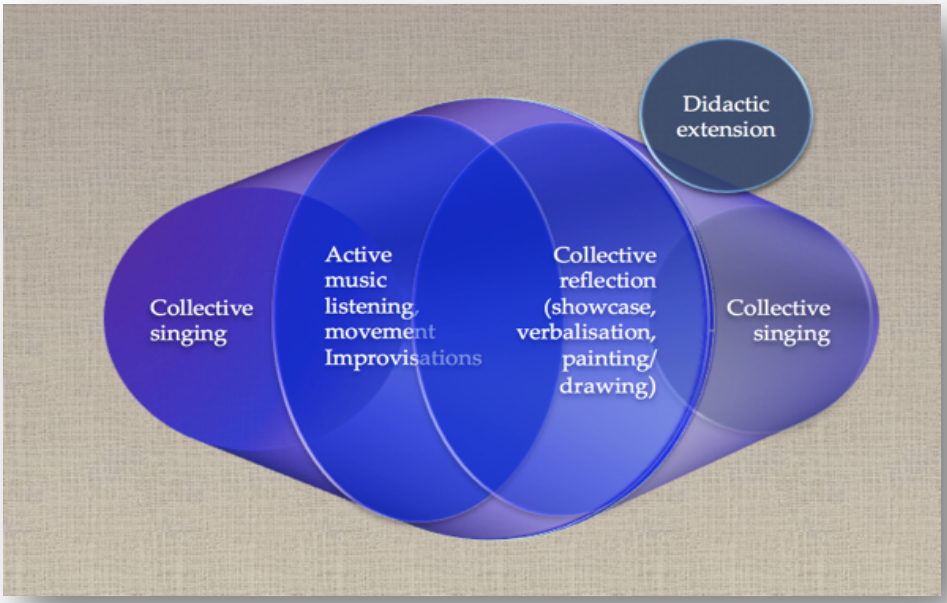

Figure 3: The architecture of the Kokas sessions

The initial research explored the nature and significance of this pedagogy in music teacher education (Vass, 2016). Further research focused on the emergence of new, creative forms of perceiving, knowing and relating, and the transformative potential of students' experiences personally, professionally and pedagogically (Vass, 2019). Our joint paper revisits the data from the third cohort: ten students with diverse specialisations in violin, cello, accordion, folk music, folk singing, singing, opera, and musicology. The data includes observation notes and video recordings of nine 3-hour sessions, visual documentation of creative products (paintings, drawings) and students' self-reflective compositions. The video recordings were used for movement analysis (based on Pasztor 2016, 2003). Complementing this, constructivist narrative analysis (e.g., Silverman, 2006) of spoken and written reflections was used to study students' inner experiences as well as their outward-looking observations of what they witnessed around them.

As noted earlier, this paper is a dialogue between the philosophical orientations we bring together, between our two distinct contexts and between us as researchers of these contexts (see Figure 4). In our presentation of this complex dialogue, we focus on the unique dynamics of personal and professional transformation.

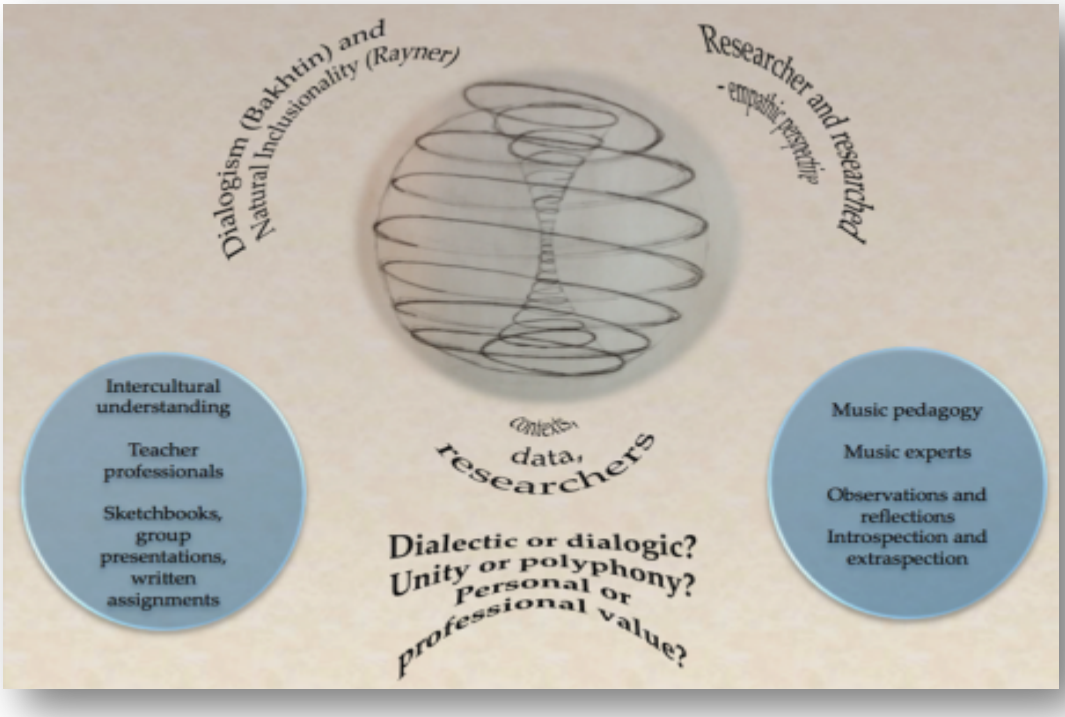

Figure 4: Framing our joint paper as receptive-responsive dialogue (Image of the vortex by Roy Reynolds)

These complex dynamics have provoked us to distinguish between the notions of unity formation (dialectical unity), which we suggest is the underlying dynamic of historical and current educational systems, and dialogic polyphony (dialogical communion), a potentially transformative approach to education. Our shared reflections took us towards a more complex understandings of this distinction (including considerations of different forms of dialectic resolve) and our explorations of the complexity of dialogue-dialectic-dialogue flow.

4 Exploring the puzzles: The Erasmus project on intercultural understanding

4.1 The dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow

In the context of the Erasmus+ project on cultural diversity and intercultural understanding, the three subsets of data are a witness to the range of thinking, experiences and reflections that belong to the IP. Each subset highlights different forms of development. The sketchbooks developed by the pre-service student participants provided key insight with regard to transformative potentials. The entries point to the pedagogical thoughtfulness that had been part of the ongoing dialogue through the programme. In Figure 5, pages from three sketchbooks provide examples of student reflections taking shape through motifs. Motifs include ongoing exchanges between statements and questions (ALL IS ONE? Is all one?), geographical metaphors forming mindscapes (Mainland, what I bring, water what I hope to gain; pedagogy walking with someone), eyes emphasizing the importance of re-viewing education and established

understanding. With these motifs, the participants are not reproducing but personally intoning, taking what has been and what is and allowing this to interanimate their own evolving intercultural and pedagogical understanding. The generative relationship, the dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow, is shaped through the highlights and illustrations as participants listen to different voices, make choices about what to include, pause to develop and respond to ideas, and make connections and additions.

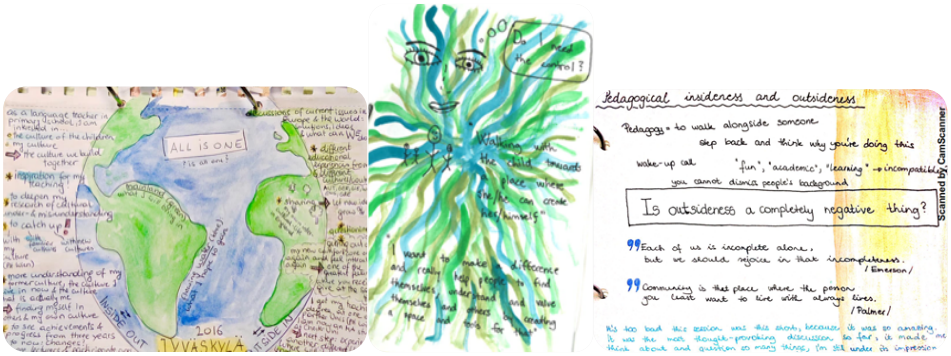

Figure 5: Example pages from reflective sketchbooks (Context 1) used with permission

In the data based on sketchbooks, the dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow seems most active as new questions arise and the participants look forward as well as back (reflecting on their intercultural understanding, especially notions of insideness and outsideness.) Future pedagogical action, however, seems far removed in the sketchbooks, almost wistful as noted on the right-hand page, 'I want to make a difference and really help people to find themselves…'. This wistful intonation perhaps indicates the challenge of converting pedagogical thoughtfulness into pedagogical resourcefulness, a pregnant moment of the in-between.

The transformative nature of the programme experience is further highlighted in the small group presentations and final written assignments. The aim of the presentations was to share what participants (student teachers) had taken from the course and what they hoped to put into pedagogical practice. These presentations on small groups' explorations and expressions of intercultural understanding and its pedagogic relevance most closely resemble pedagogical practice. As discussed elsewhere (Moate, 2018), some groups invited contributions from the audience, anticipating particular words or actions in response. Given the instrumentalist nature of the dialogue they planned for and anticipated, these groups struggled to weave different responses into a richer, multidimensional narrative. Other groups managed to create space for contributions, and layers of meaning were added to the unfolding dialogue. The difference between the groups illustrates the challenge of transforming experience into pedagogical resourcefulness. They also show different orientations to the space of the in-between. Groups trying to control responses seem to assume that the IP experience has a meaning for all in the same way, leading to homogenous thinking and the premature closure of the dialogic-dialectic flow. Groups, however, that dared to risk exposure by sharing what had been personally meaningful, including what they still feared and valued, allowed the dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow to continue provoking others (in the audience) to also risk re-thinking and re-viewing their experiences and expectations.

The third dataset (final reflective assignments, Moate, 2023) required participants to re-view their pre-IP reflections and to consider their hopes for future practice. Many participants shared surprise when re-visiting their notes which depict insideness as safe and comfortable and outsideness as uncomfortable and undesirable. Through their journeys in the IP, participants questioned the security of insideness and the threat of outsideness and began to point to the generative, valuable nature of different positions. These

reflections illustrate the unfolding dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow as participants engaged with different ways of seeing, thinking and being and experienced moments of dialectic resolve as their understanding begins to take shape. The need for moments of dialectic resolve is highlighted by the reports of several participants that when they returned home, they were aware something significant had changed. Participant 16 explains, '… I didn't really feel like home anymore… part of me had change, and I'd learned and experienced things with people who weren't surrounding me anymore, and this made me feel a bit as an outsider. This really confused me.' These comments indicate a reorientation to the space of the in-between as established habits and assumptions are challenged and seen through fresh eyes. These experiences suggest an openness to dialogue, as well as the discomfort of genuine change (e.g., Biesta, 2005).

The pedagogical challenge of converting pedagogical thoughtfulness into pedagogical resourcefulness is most strikingly present in the closing statements of many of the written assignments. Many of these statements espoused the view that their classrooms would create communities in which all are welcome. This view in itself is not problematic, but what is problematic is the way in which the earlier richness and complexity of thought (expressed in the sketchbooks especially) seem to disappear as they draw their pedagogical conclusion. It is unclear whether this is the dialectics that silences dissenting voices or the dialogue that temporarily resolves before again giving rise to questions. The missional tone of the declarations, however, rather seems to suggest a dialectic that closes down, perhaps as the students struggle to transform their own transformative experience into pedagogically useful understanding. It is as though they desire a positive outcome for their own students without the discomfort or disorientation of the experience.

4.2 Yearning for a safe place

Therefore, a key overarching question is whether these student teachers were able to use these transformative experiences to develop their own pedagogical repertoires. This conundrum can be investigated further by looking at the participants' relational experiences. The new relationships and community that formed through the IP was highly significant for many participants. Whilst the sketchbooks acknowledged the value of seeing from others' perspectives, the small group presentations and final written assignments were more public declarations of the value of the emergent community. In the group presentations, the participants acknowledged their insecurities regarding the future, but their newly established, yet deeply meaningful relationships provided a reassuring counterweight, a newly found treasure (Fig. 6). In the written assignments, several participants wrote about the value of these newfound friendships and the importance of having a network that went beyond their immediate surroundings.

However, I (Josephine) wonder whether the emotional bounding of the group was potentially problematic – had former loyalties to the conventional school system been replaced by a new loyalty to idealized vision of education? And why has the experience of unity formation become so central to the participants of a programme about diversity and acceptance of/working with otherness? This puzzle can perhaps be usefully framed as whether the new relationships with others fed into the ongoing dialogue or prematurely brought it to a dialectical close by stripping out different voices (Bakhtin, 1981).

Figure 6: A treasure box circulated at the end of a small group presentation (Context 1) [The mirror reflecting back the newly found treasure of community members]

It may be that the experiences from the programme highlight the way in which dialogic activity can be vulnerable to the overriding strictures of conventional teacher education. Perhaps the participants' idealized notion of what kind of teacher they wish to be, closed down the new dialogue of what it means to engage with difference. Perhaps the emphasis on community-building during the programme also overlooked the need to acknowledge the discomfort of dialogic engagement. The sketchbook reflections illustrate that the participants are able to challenge perspectives and develop personally intoned responses, yet this is a personal space with no preconceived ideal or specific instruction. Here theoretical contributions and activities, as well as the voices and presence of others, are equal participants in an unfolding dialogue. If this dialogic approach can become part of the community dialogue, perhaps personal transformation can become a pedagogical resource.

4.3 The spaces of the in-between

In Context 1, several energy-filled spaces of the in-between are identifiable. One space is seemingly within the self – who I have been, am now and hope to be. This personal space brims with assumptions, reflections, questions, and experiences animated by the individual self and the experiences of others. As the participants listen, look for other perspectives, and consider the experiences of others, they are moved – energised – to think afresh and to respond. This is a dialogic interanimation across the permeable boundary of self and other. Another energy-filled space is between the individual participants and the community formed through the IP. This community space seemed to constitute a safe space to ask questions in the present as well as an energy reserve to draw on in the future when as new teachers, they may encounter educational communities with different values and visions. The participants' reflections describing a transformed relationship with their home environment suggest that the experience of the IP could be far-reaching, although to what extent cannot be said.

A potentially problematic space, however, was between the participants and their future students. In their closing words, several participants express missional statements for their future development: 'I wish to establish such an atmosphere in my classes where students feel [g]ood, whether they are more comfortable on the inside or the outside' (Participant 3), and 'Should not be the school a place where each

student gets the chance to consciously feel inside and home? I personally think so. That means our school system has to change dramatically. … Our mission is to do anything to include them and make them feel inside' (Participant 29). These statements are, perhaps again, premature dialectic closures too distant from the concrete, social reality for the dialogue to continue with all its richness and struggle. These espoused visions of communities suggest over-energised spaces with little opportunity to be translated into and nourished by pedagogical action and experience.

Recognising these different energy-filled spaces of the in-between (past, present, and potential) brings a significant difference between the biological and social world to the fore as the human mind is able to transcend its immediate environment. On the other hand, this point also highlights the challenge of translating personal catharsis into pedagogical transformation. Prior to this study with Eva, I (Josephine) had been concerned that the emotional bond of the new community undermined the dialogic struggles of engaging with alterity (Bakhtin, 1986). Having listened more closely to the voices of the participants, looked from different theoretical perspectives and considered the experiences Eva shares, I see the dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow and the energy-filled spaces of the in-between in a different light. Whereas Context 1 highlights the challenge of premature dialectic closure, however, Context 2 provides a different unfolding of the dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow and the spaces of the in-between through the polyphony of movement and imagination.

5 Exploring puzzles in the music education context

5.1 Dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow

As I, (Eva) followed Josephine's discussion about the potentially premature dialectic closure (the voice of homogeneity as a safe space) I was struck by the contrast between our contexts. I witnessed a very different journey of professional development in the music education context I was researching. One of the most perplexing aspects of the sessions I observed was and intensity and complexity of the dialogic encounters (Vass, 2019). The multimodal dataset effectively captures a uniquely embodied route into dialogic expansion. As reported elsewhere (Vass 2019), this cohort felt an immediate, deep other-orientation amongst participants as captured in the movement data and manifested in verbalised reflections.

Figure 7: Deep cohesion in movement (Context 2)

> *I loved the beginning of the first session, focusing on getting attuned to each other. I think this is valid for all the sessions, and I believe that everybody who functions in groups (is engaged in group-based endeavours) would need games like these. They reveal a lot about a person, both holistically/generally and about their mood/state of mind in the present moment.* (Szilvi - Reflective essay)
>
> *During the first few sessions I felt that people were a bit tentative, checking each other out from the corner of their eyes. After a few weeks, everything became more simple. In fact, sometimes it was enough just to think about particular people, and they came to partner up with me. There were more regular partnerships, but also, depending on the task, there were also other connections between people. Once I knew my peers better, I tried to choose people whose character resonated with the qualities and the mood of the music we were given on the day.* (Norbert, reflective essay)

The mutual attunement evidenced in the research was more than a social bonding process, rather a deliberate but unforced, systematic yet intuitive opening between the person and their learning environment. The body, bodymind, was central in this process. As a form of dialogic communion, participants learnt to relate to each other through musical encounters and built somatic musical knowledge through these evolving relationships.

Participants' action, imagination and reflection intertwined within and across sessions; exploring and managing differences was key. Participants often formed smaller groups, developing their own unique movement repertoire and narrative. These emergent subplots were often manifested in the nuances of movement and verbalised in the reflective phases. The images in Figure 8 show the movement repertoire of smaller groups in a particular session, which were spontaneously formed. Each group took a unique direction in action and imagination, whilst seemingly connected to other groups in fluid movement synchrony.

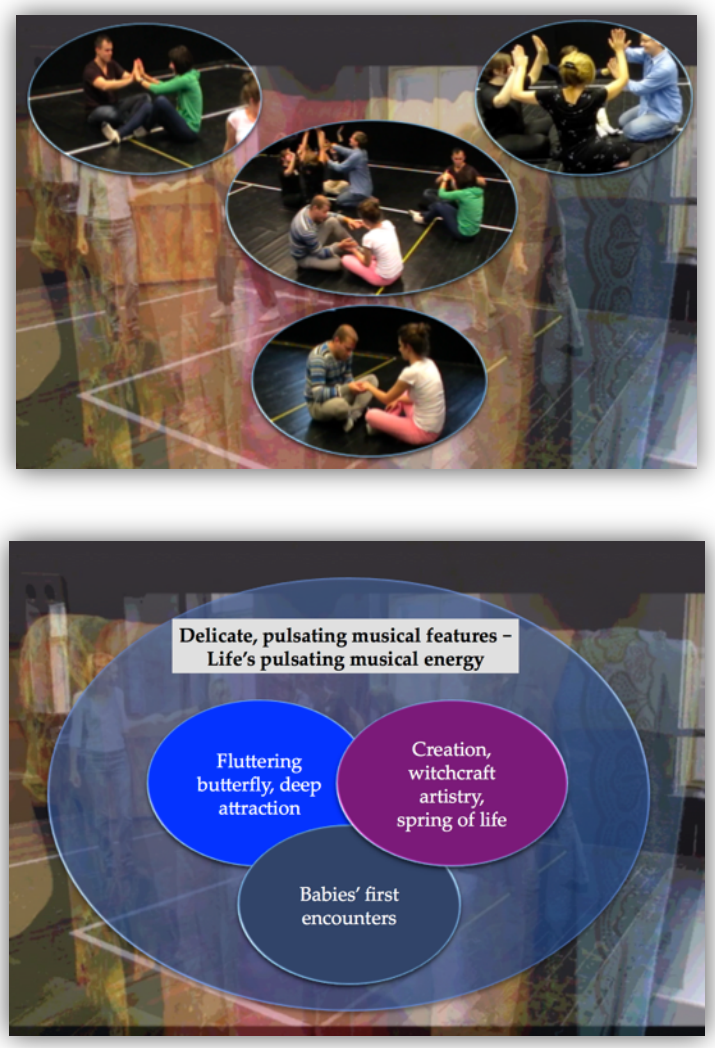

Figure 8: Kokas session building on Scarlatti's Sonata in F minor (466) (Context 2)

As the righthand side panel of Figure 8 illustrates, participants' reflections evidence where and how the narratives diverged and converged, ranging from a story about a fluttering butterfly and a flower to the dreamworld of newborn babies' first encounters with each other or the mystical, magical experience of collective creation and artistry. Participants' reflections revealed how through musically-inspired movement patterns, they gravitated towards deep, overarching existential themes. The polyphony of movement afforded individual layers or dimensions of the shared imagination, which combined seamlessly into a cohesive story as students shared their reflections. Participants' expertise in musical polyphony may, to a certain extent, explain their openness towards (and pleasure in) seeking the difference and delving into the otherness of others. In this sense, their social encounters were embodied forms of dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow, which both invited and responded to difference.

Whilst movement patterns in the sessions showed increasingly fluid synchronicity (e.g. movement-coordination, mirroring, invitation-response sequences), students' reflections revealed their recurring experiences of tension between the self and the other (or between the self and the collective). Participants explained this tension with competing desires – the push-and-pull between following one's own dreamworld

and joining in with others – or with falling out of synchrony with partners, or with a personality clash, the sense of rubbing against each other. Nevertheless, both immediate and written-up reflections systematically identify this tension as a fundamental aspect of their learning. There is an almost stubborn insistence in students' reflections on dismissing any need for assimilation or homogeneity in the cohort. Instead, the reflections acknowledge these moments of tension as meaningful, legitimate, natural dimensions of the collective experience. They openly reject the necessity of consensus (to have the same ideas) or the value of homogeneous imagination (e.g., the categorical interpretation of the collective experience in one particular way or another). The pain of working with the more eccentric others is reflected on as an essential and paradoxically rewarding part of the journey: the tension becoming a source of energy, the initial point of a dialogic opening. At the same time, the sessions are rich in dialectic closures when we look at the abundant moments of profound togetherness, as signified in the closing gestures of communion in Figure 8.

I, (Eva) interpret this as a subtle, perpetual movement between dialectical closure and dialogic opening: a dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow. As I look back at Josephine's example, what I see distinct here is the evidence of ongoing, perpetual tension. Participants' immersion in collective being and becoming in the moment is balanced with the open acceptance of the idiosyncrasies and individual distinctness of creative, felt musical experience. Students' reflections document this fluctuation between momentary dialectic resolve and dialogic tension and capture the constant shift between the first-person perspective (introspection, focusing on their own inner sensations and feelings) and a third-person perspective (looking outside, observing and interpreting the other's actions and reactions). One could see the polyphony of movement and imagination as emerging from this dynamic interplay between the inner and the outer of the experience (see Vass, 2019 for details). Therefore, Context 2 provides an embodied example of the dialogic unfolding exemplified by Bakhtin (1984b), where the dialogic author is surprised by the contributions of characters in the development of a novel. In the music sessions, the polyphony is visually detectable and openly reflected upon. Through the richness of imagination, inner sensing and outer explorations contribute to the dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow, a flow arguably dependent on the energy-filled spaces of the in-between. Importantly, students in the cohort perceived their experiences of these musical encounters as deeply cathartic and fundamental for their musicianship and for their music pedagogy.

When revisiting our respective research contexts, we see two distinct journeys into dialogical opening. These contexts afforded opportunities and spaces for dialectical resolve, with one a safe place (unity formation as central to the continued inner dialogue) and the other as a place for mutually receptive-responsive encounters which embrace and openly build on the eccentricity of distinctness. The pedagogic foundations and processes in the two contexts incorporate dialogic tensions differently, which may explain our insights and reflections on participants' journeys towards complexity.

5.2 The spaces of the in-between

Research on the Kokas pedagogy in HE notes the occasional incongruence between participants' personal and professional sense-making (Vass, 2016). For some music-expert participants, immersion in the pedagogy as learners can be limited due to perceived personal barriers. In such stories of ambivalence, participants discuss their growing pedagogic appreciation of experience-centred learning but express difficulties with 'learning to learn differently'. The dialogic tension between the personal and the professional, carefully articulated by these participants, is a rich source of critical self-inquiry. Nevertheless, ultimately in such cases of ambivalence, it does not result in a shift in these participants' music pedagogy (Vass, 2016).

The cohort in focus did not present such personal challenges. As discussed by Vass (2019), the participants' readiness to play, their childlike inquisitiveness, and their curiosity surprised us (session

leaders and researchers). Their immediate and retrospective reflections evidenced a deep congruence between the personal and the professional. The data from this cohort follow their transition from initial tentativeness towards a sense of freedom, manifested in experiences of ecstasy and collective trance. Their movement data capture their boisterous bodily expression of collectivity towards the end of the semester, including hugging and wrestling. In contrast to Context 1, in which the emerging safe environment generated questions, in Context 2, openness to engage with the other seemingly allowed the space of the in-between to flood with an energy sufficient to animate new forms and expression of relationships between participants and to subvert the norms of the HE context.

Figure 9: Carnivalesque (Context 2)

During the final session, students appeared to become unruly, madcap, rampageous kids. Like in a medieval trance, their movement and action were an enactment of the carnivalesque of Bakhtin (1984a) in which communities (temporarily) reform and subvert societal roles and relationships. Students depicted this experience as a form of avalanche: a sense of overwhelming, overflowing joy and excitedness. Their deep desire appeared to burst to the surface: the irresistible yearning to be a child. In this session, the boundaries between self and other, pedagogic hopes and expectations, the community and the HE context seemed to dissolve in response to the condensed, energy-filled space of the in-between (see Figure 9 for illustration).

The teachers did not interfere during the session, although they openly reflected on their sense of risk in the follow up conversation. They linked their conflicted experience of the session to the fundamental pedagogic dilemma of structure vs freedom or safety vs. constraint. For the teachers the collapsed boundaries were less conducive to learning and teaching as expected in formal educational settings. The participating Master's students, however, were unanimous in their perception of this experience as a natural, conclusive experience in their learning. These student participants understood this avalanche as the rightful, well-earned culmination point. They saw their celebratory madness as a legitimate response in a learning context which set clear educational provocations for them: a response to 'being invited to play' and given the licence for freedom from more didactic and confined forms of learning. Also evidenced in their reflections was the cathartic experience yearned for personally: the musically-inspired dreamworld of becoming the child, gathering and playing around a Christmas tree.

The different responses of the teachers and students suggest that, as the space in-between the student participants, the music and pedagogy was filled with energy, so the distance between the students and the teachers expanded. The dynamic nature of these spaces raises significant questions regarding the role of teacher educators in sustaining the dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow and managing the spaces of the in-between. From my (Eva's) camera angle, however, new questions began to take shape: Has the music become a backdrop to uninhibited play instead of a mediating force? The different positions (that of the teacher-participants, the student-participants, and the observer-researcher) remind us of the inherent contradictions between the underlying philosophy of these sessions and the institutional framing.

6 Conclusion – expanding the dialogue

This paper was inspired by puzzles in our studies of teacher development and the need to find a philosophical lens that resonates with education invested in the being and becoming of individuals and communities (Biesta, 2017; 2019). Our theoretical frame draws on Bakhtin's phenomenological approach to dialogism in which the self is in an unceasing, receptive-responsive dialogue with its physical, social, or cultural environment (e.g., Bakhtin, 1986). We found this further enriched by Rayner's (2017) Natural Inclusionality, which recognises the vital presence of the 'excluded middle' and the natural, mutual inclusionality of self and other (or self and context). This inspirational fusion offered us a rich space from which dialogue between us, researchers, between our research contexts, and between our research puzzles could arise. The emergent questions explored in this paper were: How does the dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow form a part of professional development? and, What kind of energy-filled spaces of the in-between are part of teacher development? We believe that the dialogic problematisation presented in the paper has significant implications for teacher development as well as for ongoing theorisations of education.

An important insight gained was how our two contexts elucidate the dialogic-dialectic relationship (Wegerif, 2008; Matusov, 2011; White, 2014) in different ways. In Context 1, the safe environment generates meaningful questions and reflections from participants to the extent that the relationship with home communities is transformed. Many participants, however, struggled to translate this personally

transformative experience into pedagogical envisioning, seemingly stymied by a premature dialectic closure, rather than allowing new questions to arise (Bakhtin, 1986). Context 2, on the other hand, illustrates the potentially generative dynamic of encounters with the eccentricity of difference. The extreme positioning of the dialogic in this context, gradually gravitating towards the carnivalesque, was a concern as the student teachers struggled to critique the power unleashed (Bakhtin, 1984a; Emerson, 1996).

Our joint deliberation of these distinct features of the dynamics helped us recognise that both contexts, in effect, embody different forms of dialectic resolve. We suggest that assimilation and the intense, unbridled outward expansion of space are limiting and potentially destructive. To frame this problematisation in Bakhtinian terms, both centripetal and centrifugal forces are needed to temper each other (Bakhtin, 1981). In his breakthrough Natural Inclusional approach, Rayner also reverses our ways of thinking about the dynamics of mutual enrichment through mutual inclusion. Moving the emphasis away from the centrifugal motion, Rayner reverses the flow and makes the centripetal, inward-moving spiral central: inviting the presence in, to the centre. In Context 2, further questions follow from this, such as: What distinguishes collective flow (e.g., a collective rave or trance) and the complete unravelling of a shared experience? How to manage the incongruence between personally/professionally transformative learning experiences for the self and the institutional/cultural expectations and norms about what learning is? How to embed or legitimise carnivalesque learning opportunities in the context of institutional education? And how can students and educators manage the intensity of cathartic experiences, which may include the deep discomfort of liminal space and conflict?

It is at this point that we turn to the HE environment and theorisations of education, where our shared unpacking of the dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow provided further insights. The pedagogic foundations and processes of our two contexts are built on dialogic tensions differently. This may explain our insights and reflections on the extent of participants' journeys towards complexity. Both contexts, however, emphasize the generative nature of the dialogic-dialectic-dialogic flow and the spaces of the in-between as a mediating presence for personal transformation. Nevertheless, further puzzles remain, such as what is prioritised in formal educational contexts and how this prioritising potentially limits the dialogic expansion of knowledge. The converging forces of technical education and governance through tests (Sharples, Taylor & Vavoula, 2007) force participants to a form of dialectic resolve that silences other voices and resists the generation of new questions (Bakhtin, 1986). We recognise that promoting dialogic approaches to education is no easy alternative, although we contend with others that it is worthwhile (Wegerif, 2008; White, 2014; Brandist et al., 2017). Pertinent questions about the inherent contradictions between the underlying philosophy of these sessions and the institutional framing need to be addressed.

It is fundamental questions, however, that emerge from lived experience that call for richer theorisations of education (Brandist et al., 2017). In this paper, we have outlined what we believe to be a richly generative coupling between dialogic theory and Natural Inclusionality. Natural Inclusionality provides a concrete instance of a healthy biological community based on diversity and responsive-receptivity espoused in dialogic theorisations (Vass & Rayner 2022) The social nature of human communities, the transcendence of time and space through imagination and creativity, the complexity of cultural environments as well as the dynamic nature of individuals-in-relationships requires the dialogue to continue. Bringing our studies together, however, with our multimodal datasets and the courage to face disconcerting puzzles, opens up new vistas and possibilities for further exploration. Whilst this contribution can be considered as a momentary dialectic closure, we look forward to the continuation of the dialogue on a higher level as more voices enter in.

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