EXPLORING THE USE OF CLINICAL INTERVIEWS IN TEACHER DEVELOPMENT
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Many consider records of practice a powerful means for not only promoting teacher growth but for assessing teacher growth as well. Video or audio-recordings of clinical interviews are one such record of practice. This discussion group will provide an opportunity to consider the value of records of clinical interviews for teacher educators and researchers. We hope that colleagues who have used other records of practice will join us in exploring the ways in which records of clinical interviews differ from and augment other records of practice as a research instrument and a professional development tool.

One-on-one clinical interviews with students have most typically been promoted for helping teachers understand how children think about mathematics (Buschman, 2001; Ginsburg, Jacobs, & Lopez, 1998; Long & Ben-Hur, 1991; Schorr & Lesh, 1998). We believe that interviews can also help teachers develop the expertise needed to respond to that thinking and implement the kind of instructional practices called for by reform documents. Specifically, interviews provide teachers with opportunities to practice eliciting and building on children’s thinking by engaging them in discussions of problems. Because the development of this expertise takes time, videotapes or audiotapes of interviews can provide windows into teachers’ developing practices thus making interviews a promising context for assessing teacher change, and, in particular, the degree to which their practices align with reform recommendations. When interviews are used by researchers as a means to promote and assess teachers’ growth, analytical frameworks are required to examine them.

The organizers of this discussion group have been developing analytic frameworks for evaluating teacher-conducted interviews in separate projects (Crespo & Nicol, 2003, Haydar, 2003, Jacobs & Ambrose, 2003, Moyer & Milewicz, 2002). While the teachers in the projects differ according to teaching experience (preservice vs. in-service teachers) and geographic location (U.S., Canada, & Lebanon), we have identified similar phenomena in teacher interviews through our informal discussions and by studying one another’s writing. For example, we have all noticed that the way in which teachers ask questions and the order in which they ask such questions during clinical interviews can tell us a great deal about teachers' thinking and their approach to interacting with students. However, our characterizations differ, and we are interested in comparing and contrasting our frameworks in greater depth. We propose to apply each framework to the same interviews as a way to illuminate the similarities and differences between the frameworks and begin to identify the critical characteristics of useful frameworks. We hope that all who participate in the group will jointly consider the kinds of distinctions that should be captured in an analytic framework.

Each of our frameworks contrasts interactions in which teachers elicit and build on student thinking from those in which teachers focus on answers and/or direct students’
work. We provide the following two examples to illustrate the kinds of interactions we consider and to provide a glimpse of the types of issues we address in our frameworks.

Example One:
T1: I have six gel pens. Two of them are blue. The rest are red. How many are red?
C1: Eight are blue?
T1: I have six gel pens. Two of them are blue. The rest are red. How many are red?
C1: [takes out four red cubes and two blue cubes] Four.
T1: How did you figure that out?
C1: Because I did it with linker cubes again.
T1: You like those linker cubes. Alright.

Example Two:
A kindergartner solved this problem: There were 4 robots and each robot had 2 eyes. How many eyes were there altogether? The child answered "8" after drawing 4 boxes (robot heads) with 2 dots (eyes) in each and counting each eye one by one.
T2: How did you do that?
C2: With the whiteboard.
T2: Ok, what did you draw there?
C2: Robots.
T2: How many robots did you draw?
C2: Four.
T2: And then what did you do?
C2: Put eyes on them.
T2: How many eyes did you put on each one?
C2: Two.
T2: Ok. And then what did you do?
C2: And then I counted all the eyes.
T2: Ok, and how many did you have?
C2: Eight.
T2: Super job.

Crespo and Nicol (2003) would refer to the first example as “evaluative” because the teacher’s orientation was to focus on the product. They would refer to the second example as “inquiry” because the interviewer questioned the child in order to better understand his thinking. Moyer and Milewicz (2002) would characterize the first example as “checklisting” because the teacher relied on a script to conduct the interview. She posed the question, asked how the child solved it and then proceeded on without ever finding out how the child knew that four pens would be red. They would characterize the second teacher as “probing” because she followed up the child’s work with questions in order “to get the child to expound on the answer and think about it further” (p. 306). Jacobs and Ambrose (2003) would categorize the first example as an “observational” interaction because the teacher played a passive role in the interview and failed to clarify how the child had solved the problem. They would categorize the second interaction as “responsive” because the teacher engaged the child in a conversation about his work in an effort to foster reflection. Haydar’s (2003) approach to analyzing the interview would focus on the kinds of questions the teachers asked in each case. He would note that the first teacher only asked one question which attempted to elicit information and the second teacher asked several questions which pressed for reflection.
The brief analysis offered above reflects the similarities and differences among the frameworks. More in-depth discussions of these types of examples will enable us to better understand each framework and its advantages and constraints. We also plan to discuss the dual role of clinical interviews as stimuli for teacher learning and as measures of teacher growth. This group session will help to begin the development of a common vocabulary for characterizing teacher/student interactions which should prove useful to researchers and teacher educators.

In the discussions we will explore the following questions:

- What might teachers learn by observing and conducting interviews and how does it differ from what they learn from analyzing other records of practice?
- Are interviews reasonable proxies for the kinds of interactions teachers have in their classrooms?
- What are the benefits and limitations of using interviews as a means of assessing teacher learning?
- How do video or audio-recordings of interviews differ from other records of practices as measures of teachers’ practice?
- What are the benefits and liabilities of each of the frameworks?
- Can the frameworks shared by the organizers be used for novice and experienced teachers?
- Can these frameworks be used across mathematics content areas and tasks?
- How can these frameworks help promote teachers’ growth?
- How should these frameworks be modified, expanded, or integrated?

In our first session we will:

- Share experiences with using clinical interviews with teachers
- Discuss ways that teachers’ work in interviews might be assessed
- Share our frameworks considering similarities and differences between them

In our second session we will:

- Watch 3 videoclips of problem solving interviews
- Analyze the interviews based on our first session’s discussion of the frameworks
- Consider the possibility of integrating and/or expanding the frameworks

References


