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Suggested Reference

Davies, M. J., & Sinclair, A. (2011). Talking Allowed!. Poster session presented at the meeting of ULearn11. Rotorua, New Zealand.

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Talking Allowed!

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Aim:

This study aimed to show the impact of an on-line discussion on the depth of students' patterns of interaction and the cognitive complexity of these discussions during asynchronous discussions (on-line) as a means of preparation for a Paideia Seminar (face-to-face discussion). The study was conducted in 12 experimental classrooms and 12 control classrooms across six schools (ages 11-13) of varying socioeconomic groups in Auckland, New Zealand.

Methodology:

The data for the study was collected at three points for both the control and experimental classrooms. Data was collected for normal classroom discussions from the control classrooms. Data was collected for the experimental classrooms from a normative class discussion which was at the beginning of the unit study, (T1), Moodle discussions on-line (mid-point of the unit study), (T2) and a final face-to-face Paideia Seminar (end of the unit study), (T3). The timeframe varied slightly across the schools but predominately were over a 12-week period. The transcripts from both the experimental and control classrooms were analysed using the five stages of SOLO (the Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes) taxonomy developed by Biggs and Collis (1992).



The Paideia Method

The Paideia Method offers adolescents increased opportunities to purposively "argue" in a more democratic environment; not dominated by a teacher. It utilises three stages of instruction:



1

1. Didactic – the acquisition of organised knowledge

Delivery of factual, 'must-know' information to the students, through a variety of resources. 10-15% of instructional time.



2

2. Coaching – development of intellectual skills

Guidance through modelling and questioning techniques, such as Socratic Questioning. Practise sessions on-line with moodle. 60-70% of time.

3



3. Seminar – increased understanding of ideas and values

Collaborative, intellectual student-led dialogue based on primary sources. 15-20% of time.

Results:

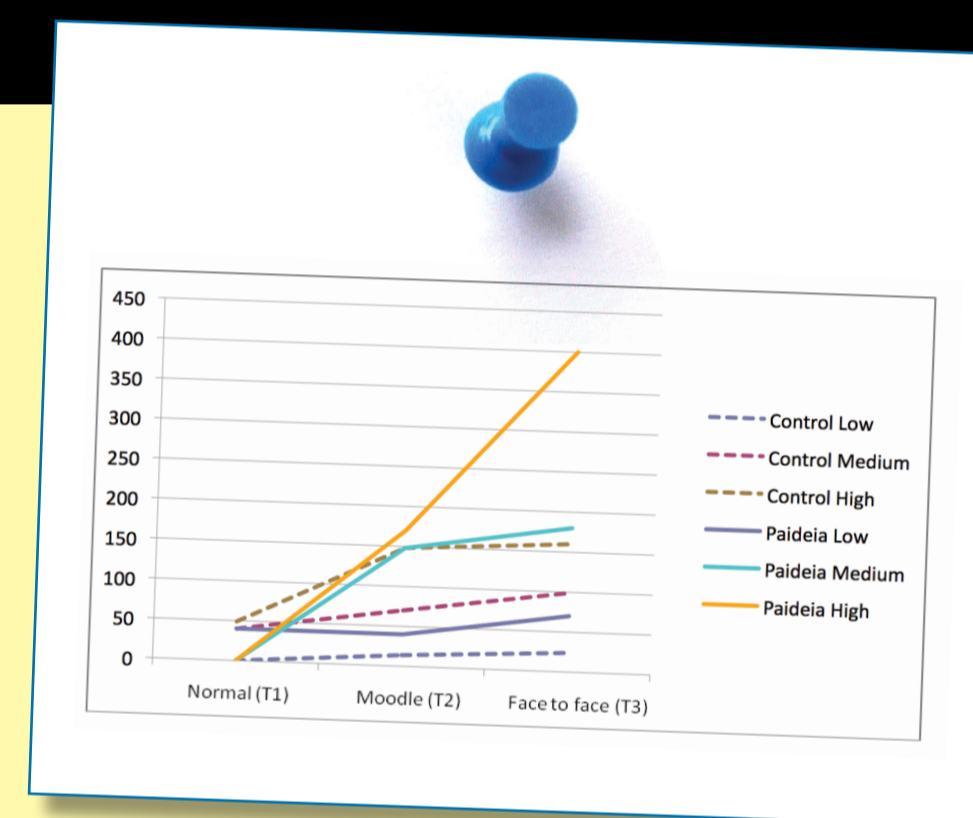


Figure 1: Change in interaction focus as a function of group and socioeconomics over time (student-student interaction)

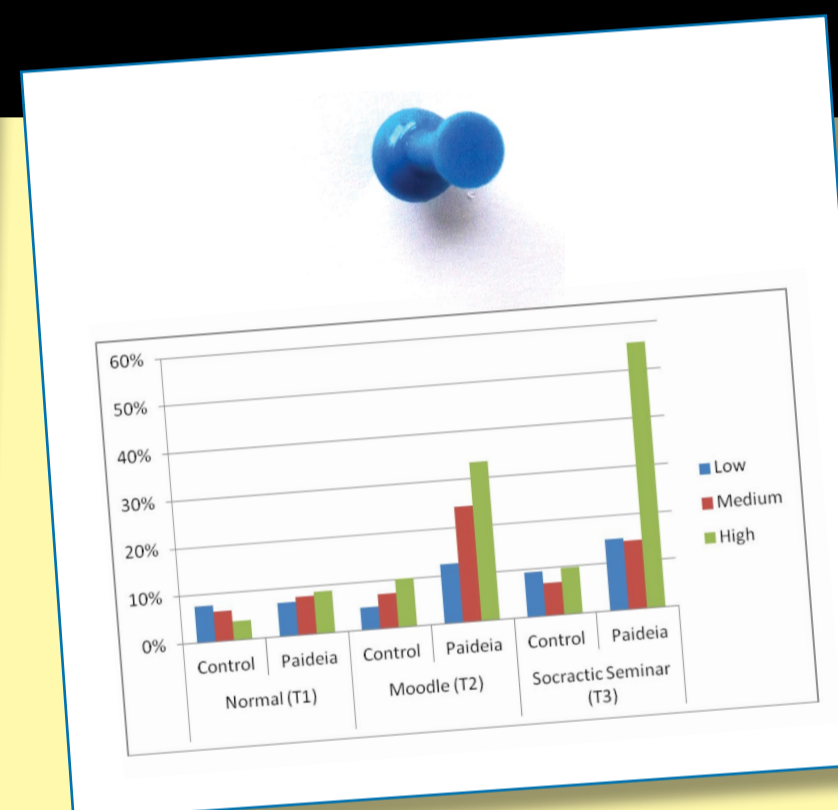


Table 1: Shifts in level of complexity of ideas across the three time frames for control and experimental groups

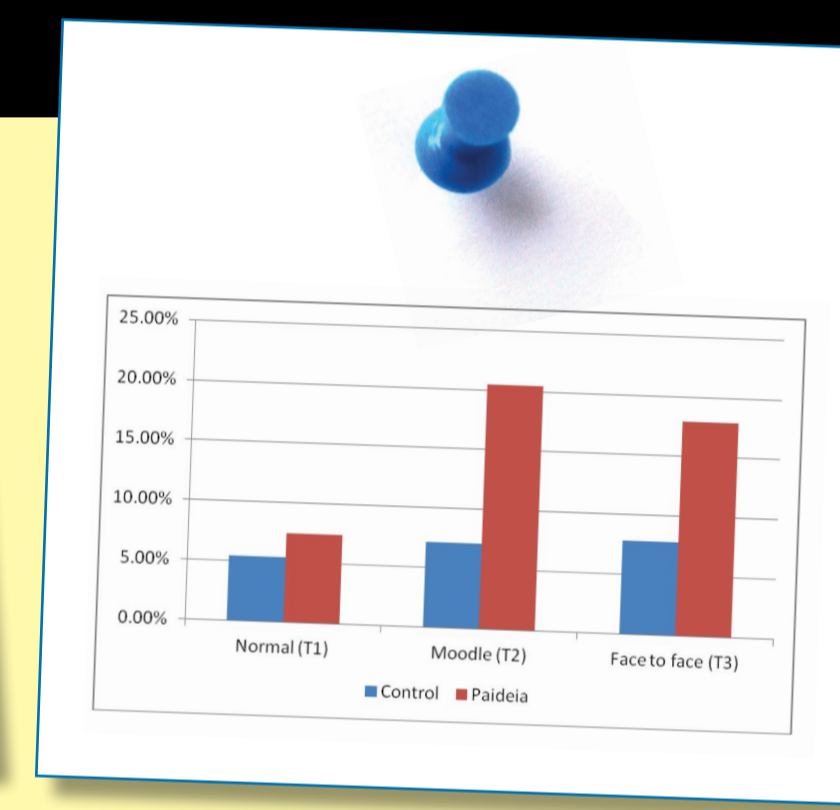


Table 2: Percentages of surface comments compared to deep comments across the three time frames between the control and experimental groups

Conclusion:

Results show that the experimental group increased in student-to-student initiated discussions and in their complexity of discourse for both the on-line discussions and the Paideia Seminars. These gains were statistically significant for mid/high students. Although the low decile students made a higher level of deep responses in the final seminar Paideia classes than the traditional classes, the difference did not achieve statistical significance. However it was apparent that these low decile students did increase their level of deep responses in the final seminar, relative to the level shown in the initial seminar. This study suggests that the intervention of the on-line discussions did have a significant impact on the complexity of the discussions during a face-to-face Paideia Seminar, and thus make this method more accessible to other teachers.

Watch:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSKLRX3jqHM>
 DVD "Classroom Discussions: using the Paideia Method to engage students in higher order thinking and talking."
 email CEDD@auckland.ac.nz to purchase a copy

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