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Dilemmas and the teaching of mathematics: a conversation of commitments, obligations, and ambivalence.

Phakeng, Mamokgethi (ed.) et al., Mathematics education in a context of inequity, poverty and language diversity. Giving direction and advancing the field. Cham: Springer (ISBN 978-3-319-38823-6/hbk; 978-3-319-38824-3/ebook). 19-31 (2016).

Summary: This chapter comprises a conversation between the two authors focused on half-a-dozen core words concerned with teaching and their mutual interaction: dilemmas, tensions, commitments, obligations, ambivalence and, indirectly, technique. Additionally, we engage Jill Adler in an indirect conversation through her writing on the dilemmas teachers face in multilingual mathematics classrooms – the dilemmas of language transparency, of mediation, and of code-switching. We conceptualize dilemmas as endemic to teaching, rather than as solely involving the particular experiences of individuals, and we explore dilemmas as the result of clashes of obligations that one has as a teacher, instead of as arising from clashes of personal commitments. As we do so, we examine the centrality of language to the dilemmas that Jill describes and are drawn into an exploration of classroom 'meta-commenting', where an utterance itself (in some aspect) becomes the overt object of attention and talk (usually initiated by the teacher), rather than the meaning it is intended to convey.

Classification: C50 C70

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