Getting Started with Key Concepts

Benefits of Key Concepts - Transcript

Interviewee

Dr Liz Taylor
University of Cambridge

What are the benefits for teachers of using key concepts?

So I think a key benefit of using key concepts for teachers is that it actually just involves a professional dialogue about their subject. So just starting to think and reflect individually and perhaps as a department team, um, about the concepts in your subject, which of those might be key and about how you're planning for children to get better at understanding those concepts over time. It's just a really useful professional dialogue to be involved in. It helps you reflect on what's important in your subject and therefore what's important in your teaching.

What are the challenges for teachers of using key concepts?

So I think one particular challenge of using key concepts is actually to think what are the key concepts in my discipline, how to decide on those? Um, and ... but this is a good challenge but it involves you in that professional dialogue and thinking about the construction of your subject. And how it's appropriate to teach that subject within your particular context and for the age group that you're working with. Um, so it can be a challenge because you might ... different people might think there should be different sets of concepts, um, but just engaging in that dialogue is I think actually a really worthwhile thing to do.

What one piece of advice would you give to a teacher wanting to use them for the first time?

So in terms of advice for teachers using key concepts for the first time, I think as with anything actually in education which involves change is to take small steps. So perhaps an initial thing to do might be just to reflect on your own understanding of your subject, perhaps think back through how you learnt it, think about the teaching and learning you're doing in your particular context now, and consider what the key concepts are. So perhaps first what the concepts are and then what are the key concepts do you think?

It's great if you can actually read about that within your subject, perhaps in a professional journal. And then I think if you're able to discuss it, perhaps as your department team, share ideas or to discuss it within another network that you're engaged with. And just to be thinking about your subject and the teaching of that within your particular context, how you plan for children's development. So just start slowly, there might be one perhaps particular key concept that you want to prioritise initially, look at the medium and long term planning, how do you address that concept, how do you think that children get better at it? But start slowly, don't try to do too much at once.