

Cambridge University Press

0521544920 - Beyond Communities of Practice: Language, Power and Social Context

Edited by David Barton and Karin Tusting

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Beyond Communities of Practice

The concept of “communities of practice” has become an influential one in education, management and social sciences in recent years. This book consists of a series of studies by linguists and educational researchers, examining and developing aspects of the concept which have remained relatively unexplored. Framings provided by theories of language-in-use, literacy practices and discourse extend the concept, bringing to light issues around conflict, power and the significance of the broader social context which have been overlooked. Chapters assess the relationship between communities of practice and other theories, including literacy studies, critical language studies, the ethnography of communication, sociocultural activity theory and sociological theories of risk. Domains of empirical research reported include schools, police stations, adult basic education, higher education and multilingual settings. The book highlights the need to incorporate thinking around language-in-use, power and conflict and social context into communities of practice.

David Barton is Professor of Language and Literacy in the Department of Linguistics at Lancaster University. He is Director of the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre. His main work has been concerned with carrying out detailed studies of literacy practices in different domains of life and with rethinking the nature of literacy in contemporary society.

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Series Foreword

This series for Cambridge University Press is becoming widely known as an international forum for studies of situated learning and cognition.

Innovative contributions are being made by anthropology; by cognitive, developmental and cultural psychology; by computer science; by education and by social theory. These contributions are providing the basis for new ways of understanding the social, historical and contextual nature of learning, thinking and practice that emerges from human activity. The empirical settings of these research enquiries range from the classroom to the workplace, to the high-technology office and to learning in the streets and in other communities of practice. The situated nature of learning and remembering through activity is a central fact. It may appear obvious that human minds develop in social situations and extend their sphere of activity and communicative competencies. But cognitive theories of knowledge representation and learning alone have not provided sufficient insight into these relationships. This series was born of the conviction that new and exciting interdisciplinary syntheses are under way as scholars and practitioners from diverse fields seek to develop theory and empirical investigations adequate for characterising the complex relations of social and mental life, and for understanding successful learning wherever it occurs. The series invites contributions that advance our understanding of these seminal issues.

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