

The importance of argument in education

An inaugural professorial lecture by Richard Andrews

Institute of Education
 20 Bedford Way
 London
 WC1H 0AL

www.ioe.ac.uk/publications

In The importance of argument in education Richard Andrews draws on his practice and research of over 20 years. He begins his lecture with definitions of 'argument' and 'argumentation'. He justifies the overall focus on argument by first looking at its function in the social and political spheres and then moving on to a theoretical consideration of argument via the thinking of Vygotsky and Habermas.

Professor Andrews applies these insights to both school- and university-level contexts. He examines three cases of argumentation in education: that of a group of 6-year-old children in discussion; an essay by an undergraduate literature student; and a dissertation by an engineering student. In a further section, he turns to the question of visual and multimodal argumentation through consideration of a still image, an advertisement and a sequence of images. The lecture concludes that argument is important to education because it allows articulation of thought; engagement with personal, social and political issues; and enfranchisement within a democratic society.

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