Abstract and pages from ‘An enquiry into different forms of special school organization,

pedagogic practice and pupil discrimination’

Harry Richard John Daniels

1987

Thesis submitted for the Ph.D. Degree to the

University of London Institute of Education, Supervised by Dr Peter Evans and Professor Basil Bernstein.

Abstract

This study focusses upon special schools which make educational

provision for children with moderate learning difficulties and the

transmission of some of the criteria of competence within these

organizations. The intention is to demonstrate how different school

contexts generate different criteria of competence and to develop

measures of these differences.

In that special educational need is now viewed in terms of the

educational input required for a child to make progress, the importance

of an interactional approach is outlined. On the basis of a selective

review of the literature on the psychology of children with learning

difficulties, an argument is advanced in support of research which

acknowledges the importance of the context of children's learning. The

work of Vygotsky and his followers, with its emphasis on the semiotic

mediation of sociocultural factors, is discussed in detail and its place

as psychological analogue of a theory of pedagogic transmission is

discussed.

A model of organizational, transmission and acquisitional contexts and

practices is derived from the theory and used to describe four schools

and predict the teachers' pedagogic practices and pupils' acquisition,

specifically in the teaching and acquiring of competences in Maths!

Science and Art.

Briefly, the basic hypothesis related boundary features of the

organization, pedagogic practice and contexts of different schools to

pupils' ability to recognize differences between subjects and realize

these differences in subject specific talk acceptable to teachers.

Further, the marking behaviours of teachers and pupils were also

considered to vary according to the organization, pedagogic practice

and contexts of different schools. A study was also made of the

visual presentation and meaning of displays of art work, and

expectations of school differences were derived from the basic

hypothesis. As a crucial test of the relation between boundary

features and pupil competences, a case study of the results of a pupil

changing school was carried out.

The study suggests that there is indeed a relation between forms of

school organisation, pedagogic practice and discriminations of

children. The implications of these findings are discussed with

respect to issues in the organization and teaching in special schools.

Page 3 -4

The tendency of psychology to look to individual explanations and

sociology to look to societal explanations remains a major theoretical

problem for research concerned to investigate a phenomenon which

appears to require the insights of both disciplines, the obdurate

problem being as to how these insights are to be integrated. Despite

the valuable contribution of the Vygotskian school, it has failed to

account for social processes with anything but the broadest of

theoretical brushes and experimentally has almost entirely concentrated

on face to face interactional processes. Thus whilst it has accounted

for the internalized process at one level, it has failed to theorize

3

social structures at another. A fundamental concern of this thesis is

with the influence of socio-institutional organization on individual

functioning.

A review of attempts to forge and investigate links between individual

functioning and social organization is undertaken from both

psychological and sociological perspectives. It is argued that the

theory of educational transmission being developed by Basil Bernstein

has the potential to both describe and account for the influence of

social factors. A model of description of schools is developed on the

basis of this work and is applied to the special schools involved in

the project. Following the emphasis in his model o1 the social

division of labour and social relations within organizations, the

thesis proceeds to investigate the extent to which certain crucial

boundaries are distinguishable by children within institutions on the

basis of the competences they practice.

Page 61-62

The fact that Bernstein has utilized Mead and Vygotsky in the

formulation allows for the exploration of interpersonal relations at

the face to face level in the classroom. Thus many of the symbolic

interactionist and Vygotskian inspired insights noted above can be

subsumed into his model which affords the wider social dimension a

central place in a general thesis. The implications of the micro-.

sociological, social psychological and psychological studies at times

require reformulation in the light of this extended social perspective.

In that wider social institutional factors will have been reduced to

lower levels of explanation, there is the potential within such studies

for the distortion of results. In the same way psychological studies

of learning which ignored contextual constraints confounded and

confused interpretation of results.

A consideration with respect to Bernstein's relation to structuralist

theory is raised by Atkinson:-

"Given the structuralist character of his thought, it is perhaps

odd that in the development (under developed though it is) of the

psychological analogues of the sociology, Bernstein explicitly

acknowledges no great debt to Piaget; this despite the fact that

Piaget's project is itself structuralist."

Atkinson (1985) p.59

Page 64

Bernstein's work is certainly compatible with the activity based

psychology which has developed from Vygotsky's original formulations,

which in turn were influential on Bernstein's own development.

It has been shown that Vygotsky's approach lacks that which Bernstein

explicitly has set out. to provide - a theoretical framework for the

description and analysis of the changing forms of 'cultural

transmissions':

"I wanted to develop a different approach which placed at the

centre of the analysis the principles of transmission and their

embodiment in structures of social relationships."

Bernstein (1977) p.3

64

Page 68:

Bernstein subsumed the structural and interactional level under the

regulation of the concept of code and thus brought the approach to the

study of the school in line with the approach to the study of the

family. In the same way that in the family the orientation to

restricted/elaborated meanings could differ in their realization

according to positional/personal modes of control, giving rise to

positional/personal, elaborated/restricted codes, so in the school its

fundamental elaborated orientation (according to Bernstein) could be

realized differently through different modes of control.

Thus orientation plus realization is required to define codes and these

in turn, when acquired, control recognition rules and realization rules;

different codes lead to different recognition and realization rules.

However, this is an advance of the progression of the exposition.

68

The solution to linking the structural and interactional levels in such

a way that these levels up to a point are in relation of free variation

was to distinguish in the school three message systems: curriculum,

pedagogy (practice) and evaluation. Curriculum referred to what

counted as legitimate knowledge and the latter was a function of the

organization of subjects (fields), modules or other basic units to be

acquired; pedagogy (practice) referred to the local pedagogic context

of teacher and taught and regulated what counted as a legitimate

transmission of the knowledge; evaluation referred to what counted as a

valid realization of the knowledge on the part of the acquirer.

Evaluation was given no separate analysis (until much later) and it was

considered to be dependent on the organization of the curriculum and

the form of pedagogic practice. Curriculum was to be analyzed not in

terms of contents but in terms of relation between its categories

(subjects and units). Pedagogic practice again was not to be analyzed

in terms of its contents but in terms of the control over the

selection, sequencing, pacing and criteria of communication in the

transmitter/acquirer relation. It is apparent that the curriculum is

regarded as an example of a social division of labour and pedagogic

practice as its constituent social relations through which the

specialization of that social division (subjects, units of the

curriculum) are transmitted and expected to be acquired. Bernstein uses

the concept of classification to determine the underlying principle of

a social division of labour and the concept of framing to determine the

principle of its social relations and in this way to integrate

structural and interactional levels of analysis in such a way that, up

to a point, both levels may vary independently of each other.

69

classification

Classification is defined at the most general level as the relation

between categories. The relation between categories is given by their

degree of insulation. Thus where there is strong insulation between

categories, each category is sharply distinguished, explicitly bounded

and having its own distinctive specialization. When there is weak

insulation then the categories are less specialized and therefore their

distinctiveness is reduced. In the former case, Bernstein speaks of

strong classification and in the latter case Bernstein speaks of weak

classification. From this point of view the principle of the

classification is given by the degree of insulation. If the insulation

changes its strength, then the principle of the classification has

changed. The crucial question then becomes what creates, legitimizes,

maintains and reproduces insulation and therefore the principle of

classification.

Attempts to change the insulation will evoke the power relations which

viii attempt to restore the principle of classification. Thus power

relations are linked and relayed by the principle of classification.

Bernstein gives many examples of strong and weak classification.

Gender relations may be more or less specialized and therefore differ

in their classificatory principle. School subjects may be more or less

specialized and therefore differ in their classificatory principle and

so in their social division of labour. The agents of the mode of

production may be more or less specialized to discrete functions and

therefore differ in their classificatory principle and so the relations

between these agents *may* also be analyzed in terms of a classificatory

principle. Therefore the principle of the classification is realized

70

in the relation between the categories of any social division of

*labour,* whether its categories are categories of discourse, categories

of practice, categories of agents or categories of agencies. In this

*way,* Bernstein makes the link between the distribution of power, the

principles of classification and the social division of labour.

Framing

Framing refers to the regulation of communication in the social

relations through which the social division of labour is enacted. The

social relations generally, in the analyses, are those between parents/

children, teachers/pupils, doctors/patients, social workers/clients,

but the analysis can be extended to include the social relations of the

work contexts of industry or commerce. Bernstein considers that from

his point of view all these relations can be regarded as pedagogic

relations through which cultural reproductions occur. Two features of

the pedagogic relation are distinguished: an interactional feature and

a locationary feature.

Interaction refers to the selection, organization (sequencing), pacing

and criteria of communication - oral/written/visual - together with the

position, posture and dress of communicants.

Location refers to the physical location and the form of its

realization (i.e. the range of objects and their attributes, their

relation to each other and the space in which they are constituted).

Framing at the most general level refers to the locus of control over

the interactional and locationary features. Where framing is strong the

locus of control lies with the transmitter. Where It is weak the

acquirer has greater control over these two features. Strong and weak

71

framing are designated i-F/-F and the *+1-* are considered as the values of

the framing.

A further distinction is made between the internal values of the framing

i e i

(F ) and the external values (F ). ***F*** refers to the controls within

e

the pedagogic relation/context (teacher-pupil-classroom) and *F* refers

to the controls regulating what communications from outside the

context/school may legitimately enter the pedagogic context/school from,

for example, the family, peer groups, community or media. The framing

regulates pedagogic practices and their contexts and so the principles

of communication.

"Framing refers to the control on communicative practices

(selection, sequencing, pacing and criteria) in pedagogical

relations, be they relations of parents and children or

teacher/pupils. Where framing is strong the transmitter

explicitly regulates the distinguishing features of the

interactional and locational principle which constitute the

communicative context ... Where framing is weak, the acquirer

is accorded more control over the regulation.

Framing regulates what counts as legitimate communication in the

pedagogical relation and thus what counts as legitimate

practices."

Bernstein (1981) p.345

In this system change can come about In two ways.

Change generated from below

Any progressive weakening of framing by either transmitter or acquirer,

or both, will at some point challenge the principle of classification

and the insulations it regulates for communications/practices will be

e

realized at variance with **legitimate expectation. Weakening of F may**

**lead to illegitimate community contents, media contents, political**

**i**

contents entering the pedagogic context. Weakening of *F* may lead to

pupils having too great a control over subjects/units and putting

72

together that which, according to the principle of classification,

should be kept apart (e.g. an illegitimate integration of subjects/

units).

Change imposed from above

Change may be imposed, for example, by the state or LEAs. Hence

Bernstein hypothesised that in general, in times of economic prosperity

classification and framing would tend to weaken, whereas they would

strengthen in times of severe unemployment. This point of view, then,

predicts the current move to introduce an emphasis on basic skills,

clearly defined criteria and periodic evaluation of teacher and taught,

together with the substitution of applied skills for academic skills.

On the basis of classification and framing concepts, their values (+1-)

and the distinction between internal and external, a variety of

pedagogic structures may be generated according to their organizing

principle, that is, in terms of their underlying code. Further, it

becomes possible to see how a given distribution of power through its

classificatory principle and principles of control through its framing

are made substantive in agencies of cultural reproduction, e.g.

families/schools. The form of the code (its modality) contains

principles for distinguishing between contexts (recognition rules) and

for the creation and production of specialized communication within

contexts (realization rules).

"Through defining educational codes in terms of the relationship

between classification and framing, these two components are built

into the analysis at all levels. It then becomes possible in

one framework to derive a typology of educational codes, to show

the inter-relationships between organizational and knowledge

properties to move from macro- to micro-levels of analysis, to

relate the patterns internal to educational institutions to the

external social antecedents of such patterns, and to consider

questions of maintenance and change."

Bernstein (1977) p.112.

73

Forms of Framing and Forms of Pedagogic Practice

For the purposes of this thesis it is useful to include an exposition of

two forms of pedagogic practice which are produced by the extremes of

ie ie

framing (^f , -f ), for these analyses point to the later analysis of

the nature of pedagogic discourse which will only briefly be touched on

here.

In the definition of the forms of pedagogic practice the inter-actional

features of framing are highlighted and it is clear that the locational

features are considered subordinate to the interactional. Within the

interactional features two (framing) levels are distinguished:

1) Hierarchical

2) Discursive

The Hierarchical level (and its rules) refer to the power relations

between teacher and taught as these determine position, conduct,

character and manner of the acquirer. The hierarchical rules establish

and regulate the form of the social order and thus the regulative

discourse of the pedagogic relation.

The Discursive level (and its rules) refer to the transmission!

acquisition of the instructional practices and their relation to each

other. The discursive rules refer to the sequencing, pacing (rate of

expected acquisition) and the criteria of the instructional practie.

(Selection is assumed in this analysis.) See Footnote 1.

Footnote 1

It can be seen that in this distinction there are echoes of instrumental!

expressive orders from the analysis of the school, Bernstein et al

(1966), instructional, regulative, socializing contexts in the family,

Bernstein (1967), and, as will be shown, positional/personal forms of

family control, Bernstein (1962).

74