Applying the ideas of Bernstein in the context of in--company management education.

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Abstract

Ideas drawn from the sociology of education have had surprisingly little impact on debates on organisational learning. This article takes ideas drawn from the sociology of education and applies them to a subset of organisational learning, the rapidly growing in--company management programmes supplied by higher education institutions. It is argued that such programmes are often populated by participants who traditionally might not have engaged in higher education, making the explanatory frameworks of Bourdieu and Bernstein (with their central focus on education and class) relevant. An application of the concepts of Bernstein points to a need to make the notion of 'relevance' in education problematic and to reasons why some participants might find the realisation of a competent performance difficult.

Introduction

In their review of debates in the field of organisational learning, Easterby--Smith, Snell and Gherardi (1998) point to six main contributing disciplines: psychology and OD, management science, organisation theory, strategy, production management, and cultural anthropology. They recognise that this is a dynamic and emergent field and so new contributing fields continue to join, but the absence of education in this list might come as something of a surprise. As a discipline that is centrally concerned with learning, one would have thought that it ought to have something useful to say in this area. A recent discussion of managing knowledge suggests two things (Prichard, Hull,

Chumer and Willmott, 2000). One is that when we talk about managing knowledge we would in many cases be more effective if we framed it as learning. The second is that there is a need for a more sociological understanding of learning. This paper contributes to this second area by considering potential contributions from one field of educational discourse, the sociology of education. It makes these contributions material by using examples drawn from an one area which might be felt to be part of the organisational learning discourse, the rapidly growing one of in--company business and management education (Prince and Stewart, 2000). In doing this, the aim is 'to ground theoretical debates in the material practices of everyday life' rather than to seek to generalise to all instances of such education (Raghuram and Hardill, 1998). Clearly, the ideas presented here, as in any case study, would require further empirical investigation (Sayer, 1992). However, such investigations are rather more common in undergraduate education than in the postgraduate and post--experience arena and the concepts elaborated here might be helpful for others approaching this fast growing area. An awareness of the concerns addressed in the work of sociologists of education such as Basil Bernstein can stimulate new ways of thinking about areas such as the provision of in--company education.

The article begins by considering why it is that the sociology of education has had so little apparent impact on the organisational learning discourse. Whilst the role of academic boundaries is recognised, attention is also played to the conditions under which the ideas of thinkers such as Basil Bernstein and Pierre Bourdieu have developed. Their focus on the nature of cultural reproduction and the development of durable patterns of thought has led, it is argued, to an understandable focus on the early stages of education, notably in primary schools. However, changes in the nature of higher education, of which in--company programmes are a notable example, should

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perhaps force a re--appraisal. That is, such programmes make higher education, with all its assumptions, available to some who exited the formal education system at an early age. One of the concerns of Bourdieu and Bernstein was the way in which success in education depended on awareness, conscious or otherwise, of the 'rules of the game'. A failure to be aware of such rules, often acquired implicitly through family background, meant a failure to produce the required performances. Might the same insights apply to those who now get a second chance through vehicles such as in--company education? To explore this possibility the article then provides a brief summary of the main features of Bernstein's work, with a particular focus on his explication of the modalities of elaborated codes. The importance of the related concepts of classification and framing and their consequences for rules of recognition and realisation is then discussed.

This allows us to explore these concepts in the context of the provision of in--company business and management education. It is easy to make the assertion that in--company management education is a growing part of the educational system, but much harder to provide any concrete evidence. This is a commercially sensitive area for many institutions, struggling as they are to find new income streams to supplement declining incomes in more traditional areas of endeavour. What is being referred to here is the provision of business and management education, typically at the first two levels (Certificate and Diploma) of the MBA, to a cohort consisting of those drawn from a specific company (or, in some cases, consortia of companies) with the granting of a recognised award bearing the name of the academic institution. Such courses are typically negotiated with the client, but are usually variants of existing programmes. The participants on such programmes are selected through a joint process that usually lays stress on the managerial experience of the participants, rather than their formal

educational credentials. The main argument here is that the weakening of boundaries between work and education may give rise to problems of recognition and realisation that affect participants from different backgrounds in different ways. The consequence might be that educators on such programmes need to think more carefully about the explicitness with which they make basic assumptions clear. The paper concludes by considering how ideas drawn from the sociology of education can be used to further the debate about the nature and effectiveness of management education.

Organisational learning and the sociology of education.

In this section, it is argued that the discourse on organisational learning has not been heavily influenced by ideas drawn from the sociology of education because these ideas in their turn have had little impact on the study of higher education. We need to consider why this might be. Counting citations is something of a crude way of testing the influence of particular ideas, but it might give us an initial feel. When considering the potential impact of authors in the field of the sociology of education, two authors stand out in terms of influence and depth of development. Pierre Bourdieu is a major social theorist who has written extensively on a range of topics, but who has paid particular attention to the role of education in cultural reproduction. This attention has included higher education in its scope. Basil Bernstein, whose work has some intriguing parallels with (but also points of departure from) that of Bourdieu, is a thinker whose work has been more closely confined to the sociology of education. Both operate with concepts of pedagogic work that see its scope as much wider than

formal systems of education, and both are concerned to explore the social constitution of education in the broader context of cultural reproduction. However, in an analysis of 82 articles published in *Management Learning* between 1996 and 1999 we find four references to Bourdieu and none to Bernstein. This is only a crude indicator, but it is suggestive. It might be compared to 33 references to Weick, a figure that might suggest part of the answer.

This is not to argue that the influence has been absent entirely, but that it has been poorly developed. Bourdieu and his concept of habitus are mentioned in passing in Lave and Wenger's (1991) *Situated Learning* and completely misunderstood in Von Krogh, Ichijo and Nonaka's (2000) *Enabling Knowledge Creation*. However, mentions of Bernstein are much harder to find. One suggestive combination of the two thinkers is in the work by Savage, Barlow and Dickens (1992) on middle class formation. They use Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital to argue for divisions within the middle class. Of particular relevance to the present discussion is their examination of differences between managers and professionals. Whilst this distinction is sometimes ambiguous in their treatment, the former group can be conceived of as consisting of occupations such as works and production managers. This group, it is argued, rely heavily on their exploitation of organisation assets, possessing few of the cultural assets developed by professional groupings. Such cultural assets are often marked by formal educational qualifications, but also include ways of behaving and consuming that are inculcated in family settings. Savage et al make use of Bernstein's distinction between invisible and visible pedagogies, explored further below, to examine the different educational performances of managers and professionals in educational eras dominated by grammar and comprehensive school systems. They conclude that the children of managers fared much better in the more structured and

disciplined environment of the grammar school. Their use of Bernstein in this way suggests that the same point might apply to other educational settings, such as in-- company education.

The organisational learning discourse tends to have developed somewhat in opposition to institutional systems of education. Its emphasis is on situated learning, on learning in practice, on experiential learning. In this, of course, it draws upon the continuing debate as to whether management, for example, can be taught or whether it needs to be acquired (Mintzberg, 1989; Watson and Harris, 1999). Such debates reflect the focus of attention on process that marks not only debates on organisational learning and the nature of learning, but also broader intellectual trends. Bernstein terms this the intellectual focus on competence. This focus, based on figures such as Chomsky and Piaget, stresses, he argues, 'an in--built procedural democracy, an in-- built creativity, an in--built virtuous self--regulation. And if it is not in--built, the procedures arise out of, and contribute to social practice, with a creative potential' (Bernstein, 1996: 58). The problem with such approaches is, however, that we pay 'the price of abstracting the individual from the analysis of distributions of power and principles of control which selectively specialize modes of acquisition and realizations'(Bernstein, 1996: 58). That is, the processes that we examine take place in structured social situations in which all participants might not be equal. When Bernstein talks of 'modes of acquisition and realizations', he is referring to the notion that not all participants in a pedagogic process share the same access to the tools required for success. This unequal access is primarily a *social* fact. This would be the shared ground of both Bourdieu and Bernstein, but it could be argued that their views have had little influence on the sociology of higher education.

Higher education is important here because of the significant overlaps between it and organisational learning. Even if only to provide the model of what organisational learning should *not be*, then higher education provides an important backdrop to the debates. The study of learning within it forms a resource that those examining organizational learning might be able to draw upon. When that organisational learning is in part constituted through the provision of award bearing programmes from higher education institutions then the desire to draw comparisons might be stronger. However, research on higher education has tended to be relatively under--developed, for a number of reasons. (Not least of which is the continuing focus on subject--based research as the key priority). When we examine the material on higher education, it would be fair to argue that consideration of the social is relatively under--developed. Much of the literature draws upon psychological assumptions, with a focus on individual learning styles and personality types (Ramsden, 1992). In a sense this is explicable in the context of an elite higher education model, in which those who can jump the high entry barriers can be assumed to share common characteristics, even if approaches to study vary. Bourdieu and Paseron point to the 'survivor' issue when looking at class and higher education. They observe that

> ...at every stage in their school career, individuals of the same social class
> who survive in the system exhibit less and less the career characteristics
> which have eliminated the other members of their category, depending on the
> severity of the selection to which their class is subject and the level of
> education at which the synchronic cross--section is taken (Bourdieu and
> Paseron, 1977; 82).

In other words, relating performance to class background can be deeply misleading, as the 'survivors' are there precisely because they can produce the required performance. Indeed, they may well be able to produce it better than others, because of the hurdles that they have had to overcome. Chief amongst these hurdles has been, according to Bourdieu and Paseron, the dominant patterns of thought that their social class background tends to produce. For them, patterns of thought are not questions of psychological development, but are intimately linked to the place of particular groups within the social division of labour. This position produces a characteristic 'habitus', a tacitly acquired set of dispositions that are durable and transferable across different contexts. Thus, they argue,

> a practical mastery oriented towards the manipulation of things, with the correlative relation to words, is less favourable to theoretic mastery of the rules of literate verbalization than a practical mastery directed towards the manipulation of words and towards the relation to words and things which is fostered by the primacy of word manipulation (Bourdieu and Paseron, 1977, 49).

Because such a habitus is crucially formed by early experiences, notably in the family, the focus of those who are looking for the social roots of learning has been on these early sites of acquisition. Their influence on the study of higher education has been relatively slight because their theories have pointed them in other directions. However, the expansion of higher education into areas such as corporate management development means that we might now not be dealing with just the 'survivors', but

also with those who are re--entering the educational system. The ideas developed by Bourdieu and, more particularly, Bernstein, might have a renewed applicability.

From codes to modalities

The reason for a tighter focus on the work of Bernstein is the rather more worked through and precise fashion in which he has specified a number of his key concepts. Whilst habitus is, to use Bernstein's terms, an appealing concept to think with, it is vague and difficult to operationalise (Delamont, Nash and Apple, 1996; Reay, 1995). Bernstein, by contrast, has spent much of his time elaborating his basic conceptual scheme.[1] In this section, we look at these ideas in three stages. We start, as Bernstein started, with the notion of restricted versus elaborated codes. This leads to a discussion of the differences or 'modalities' of elaborated codes, explained by differing strengths of classification and framing. In turn, this raises the issue of invisible and visible pedagogies, closely related to the issue of rules of recognition and realisation.

Bernstein's work in the East End of London started with his search for a reason for the poor performance of lower working class children at school. His initial contention was that there existed restricted and elaborated codes for the production of performances, whether these be speech, text or other forms (Bernstein, 1971). The restricted code was local in orientation, heavily dependent on context and producing performances that rested on common shared assumptions. It should be noted that this does not necessarily produce impoverished performances; fluent and complex texts can be produced by the combination of stock elements within prescribed frameworks. However, what such a code hinders is innovation, as items cannot be combined to

form new relationships. In order to do this, meanings have to be explicit and defined apart from the context in which they are used. Such is the property of the elaborated code, which presupposes a universalistic orientation towards meaning, in which assumptions are made explicit. Bernstein, as with Bourdieu and Paseron, made explicit links between the code adopted and the role in the social division of labour. A direct relationship to a material base, he argued, would tend to produce localised, highly specific meanings. As the division of labour changed, so too would there be a requirement for more elaborated orientations. That is, certain forms of work require highly contextualised knowledge, often embedded in bodily action. Such work would tend to require and in turn produce an efficient and compressed local code of thought that rested on shared assumptions. Work which involves the abstract manipulation of symbols, of a form which it is argued characterises the 'information age' (Castells, 2000), demands universal modes of thought in which terms can be combined and recombined to produce new performances. There is some difficulty with the notion of the restricted code. It should not be associated with a lack of abstraction, for Bernstein recognises that all communication requires some form of abstraction. Douglas (1996) seems to argue that a restricted code is appropriate to societies based on the observance of ritual, that is, that any codes in an 'advanced' society would of necessity be elaborated to some degree. Clearly, too, recent work on tacit knowledge alerts us to the continuing importance of local patterns of knowledge. However, whether the restricted code is an absolute or a relative measure, Bernstein's focus shifted towards the school and the influences on the production of elaborated codes (Bernstein, 1977). This matches his concern with developments in the division of labour, particularly the rise of the 'new middle class'.

Bernstein's early focus was on the family as the primary site of the acquisition of the orientation towards meaning, and this focus has been continued by others who have shown strong social class influences (Hasan, 1995). That is, the particular patterns of language used in the home, which are in turn conditioned by the social division of labour, reproduce patterns of thought. However, these are also influenced by schooling and Bernstein subsequently moved to look at the way in which schooling, especially primary schooling, influenced the acquisition of orientations to meaning. He sought to argue that there was a range of modalities that the elaborated code could assume and that such modalities were influenced by the relative strength of classification and framing. In his later formulation, 'A code is a regulative principle, tacitly acquired, which selects and integrates: (a) relevant meanings (b) forms of their realization (c) evoking contexts' (1990: 14). Such a code will be carried through life and influence other learning situations. Without necessarily being aware (as it is 'tacitly acquired') the code will condition the way in which we approach particular discourses and whether we realise that a situation calls for a particular response. Further, without recognising that different contexts call for different performances, and without being able to distinguish such contexts, we will be in danger of producing inappropriate performances. Crudely, we will not have recognised the 'rules of the game'. The ability to avoid such failures, however, might not have been explicitly taught and so it is important that we consider the factors that condition such orientations to meaning. These are written by Bernstein as follows:

$$\frac{O}{+/-C^{ie} \; +/-F^{ie}}$$

In this diagram the 'O' stands for orientation. Values of classification and framing can be either strong ('+') or weak ('-') and they may be either related to internal or external factors. Drawing upon Douglas, Bernstein sees a central part of human existence as involving the classification of forms of experience into categories. Classification, then, relates to the boundaries between key parts of the process under consideration and for Bernstein is the mechanism by which power enters the process. That is, power is expressed through the ability to make classifications, to render some experiences and phenomena unthinkable and to privilege others. Externally, this could be the boundary between education and work, at a macro level, or between the school and the local community, at a more meso--level. Within the British context, for example, the educational system historically placed a strong emphasis on the merits of a classical education in the training of the elite and tended to devalue vocational education, in turn reflecting a strong division between education and work. *Within* the process of education, classification might relate to the strength of subject or discipline boundaries. Framing refers to the pacing of performances within these boundaries and is related by Bernstein to the problem of *control*. Strong external framing might relate, for example, to the imposition of a national curriculum that imposes the methods for evaluation. Internal framing relates to the degree of control which the learner might have over the pedagogic encounter, which includes aspects such as location and selection of material. Bernstein argues that two types of pedagogy, which he termed visible and invisible pedagogies, became associated with different modalities. In visible pedagogies, there is strong classification and framing. Subject boundaries are clear and enforced, outcomes are clearly laid down and control is firmly in the hands of the teacher. We might, as Savage et al (1992) did, relate this in the British context to traditional grammar school education in which targets for

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attainment were clearly set out and delivered within clear subjects to a specially selected group of students. In invisible pedagogies, boundaries become blurred and the focus shifts to the individual development of the learner. Whilst this might appear to weaken the control of the teacher, they are actually the only ones who can interpret what performances mean, as there are no clearly published standards. Invisible pedagogies, however, have become associated with what is broadly called 'progressive education'. It is Bernstein's argument that invisible pedagogy can be related to struggles within the middle class and is especially associated with that fraction chiefly concerned with 'symbolic control' That is, professionals in education and social welfare tend to espouse views of education which favour mixed ability, cross--subject teaching in which the focus is on unique individual development rather than the attaining of common standards. We might see some parallels here in debates about independent learning in which the learner manages her own development and has responsibility for determining needs, in turn related to cross--functional process--based forms of working.

What is important about this distinction is that those who can recognise what is expected are privileged in being able to produce the performances required. Bernstein argues that this recognition can be a tacit one, formed by experiences in the home. Those who come from such backgrounds share many of the often--unstated assumptions that underlie invisible pedagogies and so are better able to benefit from them. The importance of recognition and realisation has been demonstrated empirically by the work of Morais, Fontinhas and Neve (1992) and Daniels (1995). For example, Daniels (1995) looked at the production of Art and Maths statements across a number of schools with different classification and framing rules (that is, some made a strong distinction between subjects, others did not; some exercised

strong control over what was to be learned when, others were weaker). Some pupils could not recognise that the different subjects required a different sort of performance. Others could recognise that something different was required, but lacked the means to produce a competent performance. In these terms they lacked knowledge of the realisation rules. Other pupils could both recognise the nature of the context and produce the appropriate performance. The nature of the pedagogic process seemed to have an influence over the possession of realisation rules, but recognition rules seemed to come from outside the classroom. Similarly, Morais, Foninhas and Neves (1992) found that for those pupils who could recognise different contexts, changes in pedagogic practice could make a difference, but the possession of recognition rules was strongly related to class and race (with a weaker relation to gender). One problem is that changes designed to make realisation more effective might confound matters by making recognition harder. So, for example, the introduction of realistic, everyday settings in mathematics tests (influenced, no doubt, by the work on everyday cognition) has been found to make matters harder for some pupils who have been unable to recognise that the context demands the application of academic, rather than everyday, rules to produce the performance required (Cooper and Dunne, 1998)[2].

There are a number of problems with these formulations that we need to consider before attempting to apply them to the example of in--company management education. These are, briefly, issues of change, agency and system. The general problem that has been identified with the work of both Bourdieu and Bernstein is the sealed, circular nature of their concepts. If dispositions are tacitly acquired which reproduce existing situations in their very patterns of language and thought, how is change to occur? Douglas (1996:160) comments on Bernstein, 'If pressed on the matter, presumably Bernstein would be gloomy about the prospects of ever mastering

the codes and being free of their restraints. On his view we can only hope for fortunate shifts in the social structure to introduce change.' For Bernstein, the potential for change is written into the very structure of classification, which tries to regulate the boundary between the thinkable and the unthinkable. In doing so it creates the possibility of articulating the unthinkable --- if we possess the right tools. Even here, however, he draws gloomy conclusions:

> When children fail at school, drop out, repeat, they are likely to be positioned in a factual world tied to simple operations, where knowledge is impermeable. The successful have access to the general principle, and some of these --- a small number who are going to produce the discourse --- will become aware that the mystery of discourse is not order, but disorder, incoherence, the possibility of the unthinkable. But the long socialization into the pedagogic code can remove the danger of the unthinkable, and of alternative realities (Bernstein, 1996, 26).

So we have here at once the importance and the limitations of higher education. Access to the seductive calls of the 'long socialization' can only be resisted, it seems, by a few. There is a danger of elitism here, with the mysteries of the code being available only those who, by some process which is not specified, have the key to unlock it.

We seem condemned at a macro and a micro level to a situation of reproduction of the existing state of things. However, Bernstein would argue that changes in productive practices hold the potential for changes in education. He points to the importance of continuing learning in such changes:

This 'something', which is crucial to the survival of the actor, the economy and

presumably the society, is the ability to be taught, the ability to respond

effectively to concurrent, subsequent, intermittent pedagogies. Cognitive and

social processes are to be specially developed for such a pedagogized future

(Bernstein, 1996:73).

His concern is that such moves will be highjacked by the competency movement and

the concept of trainability, thus causing education to lose its critical edge. Clearly, this

is an issue for consideration under the rubric of in--company programmes. However,

for now there is another criticism to be considered. Archer (1983) argues that both

Bourdieu and Bernstein make a crucial and erroneous assumption about what she calls

the 'penetrability' of the educational system. That is, she argues, both thinkers assume

that changes and demands from the production system will be reproduced in a direct

and simple way in the education system. This ignores the potential for conflict,

resistance and mediation. Such potential might also be found in those who are on the

receiving end of the process. For it is possible that those who recognise the context

clearly and are capable of realising performances might choose otherwise. This was

the case for some of the working class boys studied by Willis for his *Learning to*

Labour (1971). For Willis, some acts of rejection were conscious acts of resistance,

drawing upon alternative models of the world. In his case, this was a model which

valorised manual labour and denigrated all forms of mental labour, at work and in

education. The double--edged nature of this rejection was clearly demonstrated by

Willis --- the preservation of a strong self--identity, but the accompanying self--denial

of access to the tools of deeper critique. However, this should draw our attention to

the crucial role of agency in the consideration of responses to education. It is to a consideration of the scope and nature of in--company management education that we turn next.

In--company management education

There is a limited amount of literature on such programmes, much of it dedicated to describing existing programmes and to policy prescriptions (Blackburn and Fryer, 1996; Moss, 1991; Simpson and Lyydon, 1995; Cockerill, 1994, Prince, 2000). Whilst we can glean some issues from this material, its main value is to confirm the existence of in--company programmes. A more critical note is struck by Macfarlane and Lomas (1995), who raise a number of tensions about the content and delivery, with a particular focus on issues of academic freedom. Some of the issues, of course, are similar to those in management education more generally, particularly when related to the pedagogic issues. However, the following account focuses on those issues, such as participant background, which might be more germane to corporate settings. The account is conjectural in that it is based on practical experience and empirical work with participants on one such programme. This programme was based on a standard coupling of a Certificate and Diploma in Management to give a two--year programme that was contextualised to the particular needs of the company. The company was a multi--divisional manufacturing one, operating in a number of markets characterised by tight margins and mature products. Participants were chosen by the company on the basis of internal records and perceived future prospects, with internal support in the form of mentors. Assessment on the programme was through work--based assignments, usually involving individual reports, but with some elements of group

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activity. Such programmes were delivered to a range of different companies, generally to junior and middle managers. Clearly some of the dynamics would vary from company to company, with some courses containing a different mix of participants to those discussed below. However, the examples are used to give material form to the concepts being developed rather than as indicating any form of representativeness. If the concepts developed here are found to be of value then further empirical work might suggest the extent to which they might be generalised.

We have already suggested that it is likely that participants in such programmes might tend be from backgrounds with relatively low levels of formal education (Moss, 1991). To give a little more concrete detail, (whilst recognising that this is an area in which more empirical work is needed), in one cohort on the company programme outlined above half of the fourteen respondents had qualifications at GCSE or apprenticeship level, with all but one of these being in the areas of production, engineering and logistics.[3] The self--reports of respondents placed 10 of them as being from clerical (2) skilled manual (4) or unskilled manual (4) backgrounds. All of those from a managerial /professional background had A levels or above. The clear majority of participants from production, engineering and logistics (seven out of eleven) were from the skilled or unskilled manual categories. It is likely, therefore, that a number of the participants will have rather distant memories of formal education. In other words, we may here have an answer to the survivor problem, as these participants will not have gone through the hurdles observed by Bourdieu and Paseron. Clearly, it could be argued that they have 'survived' in another sense, that of being selected (and having self selected) for management. However, we also need to be sensitive to different patterns into management, especially in the production area. Here, the ability to do the work and to supervise in often difficult conditions might be

key features, features which we might expect to tie these participants more closely to the world that Willis describes of action centred, local discourses. A key question might be how such participants make the transition to a more universalistic form of discourse. This is where we will use Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing to seek an answer.

The strongest classification that Bernstein identifies is that between education and work. He traces this back to the medieval universities, where he sees the formation of an institutionalised distinction between manual and mental labour. Manual labour was left to its own pedagogic systems, notably the apprenticeship, and so devalued. This divorce leads to formalised systems of knowledge in the universities with little purchase on the problems of productive work and a training, competency based approach in the field of productive activities. His argument is that it would take a radical change of social system to overcome this boundary and that the prospects for this are not encouraging. His earlier work (Bernstein, 1977, 193) points, rather naively to developments in Romania and China; later work concludes that:

> However, in societies dedicated to a change in the mode of production, few
> indeed have even attempted to institutionalize a weakening of the
> classificatory relation between education and production. On the contrary,
> such societies are as preoccupied with the systemic relations between
> education and production as are class societies (Bernstein, 1990: 43--4)

We might, of course, want to dispute the nature and definition of such societies, but the irony here is that the greatest shifts towards a weakening of the boundaries are coming from the motors of capitalist development. In--company programmes are part

of this move, as are the erecting of corporate 'universities'. We may be sceptical about the content of such moves, but one could argue that in--company programmes have relatively weak external classification. That is, the sheer fact of being joint programmes tends to blur the lines between work and education. Of course the degree of such blurring depends on the specificity of the programmes and, following Archer, we would want to bring in institutional arrangements. In some cases, the higher education institution accredits work already done within the company whereas in others it retains full control over delivery. It would be useful to have more evidence of the range of arrangements used in practice, although the gathering of such evidence might run up against barriers of confidentiality. However, it seems reasonable to argue that at the level of the course participant there is relatively weak classification resulting in some blurring of the distinctions between work and education. This might be particularly important when participants compare their experiences to those on internal training programmes.

At the internal level, business and management education is an example of what Bernstein argues is the 'regionalisation' of higher education, with a shift away from single--discipline based views of knowledge to inter--disciplinary endeavours. It is disappointing here that he does not draw upon the other work done in this area, such as that by Whitley (1984) and Gibbons and his collaborators (1994). However, what this all points to is the relatively weak internal classification between subjects. This is likely to be emphasised by the growth of processual--relational thinking in management generally, which places an emphasis on process rather than content (Watson and Harris, 1999). This gels with trends in higher education more broadly: with the focus, for example, by the Institute for Learning and Teaching on 'active learning'.

When we turn to framing, which is concerned with the pacing of the learning encounter, there are some external influences on the nature of the curriculum. Some institutions have based their programmes round the competence--based approach represented by the Management Charter Initiative. However, this has been roundly criticised by a number of commentators and for a variety of reasons is likely to be resisted. The desire to have programmes meet the standards of an external body, such as AMBA (the Association of MBAs) might also have some influence, but most providers of part--time education at the levels we are discussing are likely to resist this pressure. It is likely, therefore, that providers will adhere to a generally accepted framework, especially at the Certificate in Management stage, but will have considerable autonomy in deciding the content that is to be taught (Moss, 1991; Simpson and Lyydon, 1995). This autonomy over content makes the provision of standard texts, one way of imposing strong framing, difficult.

These external influences can have shadowy influence over internal framing, particularly around assessments. The focus of AMBA, for example, on examinations, could impose a stronger form of control over the learning experience. However, it is likely that most programmes will make much of the opportunity for work based learning. This is influenced by the inter--related moves towards work--based learning and action research (Willmott, 1994). Contact sessions often take place out of traditional academic centres – in company training centres, in hotels, on works premises. The form of assessment is likely work--based and frequently involves submission of a report, mirroring what is perceived to be work practice (Simpson and Lyydon, 1995).

Whilst this analysis is conjectural to some extent (although founded on considerable practical experience), it does suggest a general weakening of both

classification and framing. We noted above that this typified what Bernstein called an 'invisible' pedagogy, and that this might privilege some participants, notably that fraction of the new middle class concerned with symbolic control. In organisations, we might take this to be functions like sales, marketing and human resource management. Returning to the arguments presented by Savage et al (1992), those participants drawn from traditional management roles might feel more comfortable with a visible pedagogy, in which the focus is on explicit instruction (Moss, 1991; Macfarlane and Lomas, 1995) The implications for the ability to produce competent performances might be summarised as follows (drawing upon our discussion of both Bernstein and Willis, and recognising the work of Gee (1996)):

Lack recognition rules	Fail to recognise what the context requires
Recognition rules but not realisation rules	Recognise the context, but lack the tools to produce the required performance
Recognition and realisation rules	Produce a competent performance which fails to go further
	Can produce a competent performance, but reject the 'rules of the game'
	Produce a competent performance by playing the rules of the game
	Produce a competent performance and criticise both the context and the rules of performance

We can look at this on a number of dimensions. One argument might be that the weakening of both classification and framing produces difficulties for some participants in producing what is required. The drive towards 'relevance' makes it difficult for participants to see the distinction, and in particular to see the value of 'academic' work. A focus on the direct relevance of their studies to their immediate work context can be misleading and demoralising when it fails to materialise. Other participants may recognise what is being asked for, but find it hard to produce. Again, the issue of the report might be suggestive here. The report is often preferred as a form of assessment because of its parallels with work practices. However, this might be to grossly over--estimate the nature and importance of the report in many participants' working environments. A failure to make it clear that this is a *different* form of performance might cause problems. It is from the ranks of these two groups that failure to complete might be drawn. Of course, this analysis neglects the material factors – lack of time, lack of support, work environment – which might also contribute. It is of interest to note that all the participants who dropped out of the programme discussed above came from production functions, where a combination of these factors might be at work. Most participants do, however, succeed in producing the performances required. The analysis above draws a distinction between what we might mean by 'success' here. An observation might be that participants can produce the performance required, but this is at a surface level (echoing the terms widely used in research on higher education of surface, deep and strategic learning (Ramsden, 1992)). Others might be more concerned about the rules of the game. Reflecting, possibly, a cynicism drawn from a need to combat the vagaries of management fashions at work, these participants learn to produce work that conforms to the rules, but only in order to get through (Watson, 1996). Others reject the rules of the game,

but with nothing to put in its place. One might suggest that a key aim of those involved in 'critical management studies' is (or ought to be) to provide the resources to complete a competent performance that at the same time is fully aware of and critical of the rules governing both the context and the performance. This returns us to Macfarlane and Lomas' (1995) concerns about the extent to which this is possible in in--company programmes.

Conclusion

Much of the work on the experience of learning in both higher education and work has been based on predominantly psychological approaches, concerned with individual learning styles and strategies. The discussion in this paper has attempted to suggest a sociological approach. The work of Bourdieu and Bernstein is useful here in providing us with concepts to frame our inquiries. The analysis presented of in--company management education could be developed much further. The suggestions above are tentative and could usefully be linked to a more detailed analysis of assessment performance drawing on a bigger sample. However, the framework outlined might offer a structure for more detailed empirical work. This might not only provide more detail on how such programmes are delivered and received, but could also be of wider significance. The predictions of many social theorists are based on long--term trends towards the 'knowledge economy'. These claims are often based on broad assumptions about the levels of skill and knowledge required for effective performance. By the same token, these same broad assumptions are then made to support recommendations about the content and delivery of higher education. Central to such recommendations is often the cry for relevance. However, it might be that too

much relevance actually defeats the objects that are being put forward. It certainly may continue to privilege certain groups over others.

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[1] Over-elaborating it in the view of some critics: Bernstein's work is notoriously complex and difficult to follow. Even sympathetic observers can get exasperated. "While Bernstein is an inspirational theorist," contends Delamont (1996), "he has never managed to write a clear, straightforward introduction to his ideas and is fiercely resistant to everyone else's attempts to produce one for him. We all hate being misrepresented and oversimplified, but we all owe a duty to those outside our elite discourses which can only be discharged by providing accessible routes into our theories. Once again Bernstein has totally failed to provide such a route"

[2] For example, in response to a question about the likelihood that a lorry would be the next to pass based on a series of observations, one pupil responded 'Outside of school, more parents would come to like collect a child in a car than they would in a lorry'. In other words, he reasoned from knowledge of concrete everyday life rather than from abstract rules of probability because he had failed to recognise the context and so had realised an inappropriate (for this context) performance.

[3] References to this data are based on a questionnaire distributed to a cohort on an in-company award-bearing programme in 1998.