

Re-centring the curricular market: Pedagogic identities in IB Diploma programs in Australia.

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Bernstein's last book (2000) laid the foundations for a theory of how curricular orientations projected pedagogic identities for both teachers and students. This paper will use his typology of curricular orientation and concept of pedagogic identity to understand the growing phenomenon of schools offering the International Baccalaureate Diploma as an alternative senior schooling curriculum in Australia. Such an internal curricular market takes the responsibility off the broader social order to politically negotiate and shape a singular curriculum for all citizens (as is notionally the case of the proposed national curriculum), and gives it to the individual to choose between the different curricular products on offer, matching both capacities and aspirations to the pedagogic identities projected by the curricular product. This ecology of neo-liberal choice, it is suggested, will highlight the discursive production of reputations and branding, expressed through ideal types of graduates and their dispositions, that is, the pedagogic identities invoked.

Despite the isomorphism of subject lists, school curricula are not the same, but are expressions of different underlying principles of selection and of what counts as knowledge. Labaree's (1997, p. 41) review of curricular reform in the US distinguishes three core principles that have competed for dominance in curricular politics over time: 'democratic equality (schools should focus on preparing citizens), social efficiency (they should focus on training workers), and social mobility (they should prepare individuals to compete for social positions)'. Labaree points out that under the first two principles, knowledge is essentially a public good; but under the third it becomes a private good. Marginson (1997) similarly argues educational markets convert knowledge from a public good with use value to a positional good with exchange value. When there is just one curriculum on offer, these three principles have to arrive at some settlement in terms of relative strength and priority in the reform underway. If however, the school can offer a menu of curricula, then in theory, diversity can flourish, and consumers can 'choose their own adventure' so to speak. Curricular politics is then played out through the marketing of curricular brands and recruitment of students. In this vein, Labaree goes on to argue that the social mobility perspective has come to generate the following policy effects in the US:

- increasingly hierarchical stratification of educational credentials;
- increasing stratification of educational institutions by reputation; and,
- increasing stratification of offerings within educational institutions to distinguish the individual from others.

This paper will explore how this last point is also the case in Australia with reference to the relations between curricular offerings within the institution.

Historically, each state and territory in Australia has developed and governed its own local curriculum. Since the spread of comprehensive secondary schooling in the 1950s whereby all students notionally achieved access to the same curriculum (Campbell, 2005), there has

been gradual (re-)growth in curricular choice and/or curricular streaming in Australian schools. Across the 90s, a vocational education stream with a modular nationally accredited curriculum was reinstated in as an alternative in many Australian schools to address higher school retention rates and growing youth unemployment (Connell, 1985; Teese & Polesel, 2003). This curriculum sits below the 'competitive academic curriculum' (Connell, 1985) in the internal hierarchy of offerings, pitched to a different set of students and their aspirations. A national curriculum is due to commence in four key subjects from 2012, but whether this will ultimately replace the spread of state curricula or sits alongside as an additional option is yet to be made clear (see Australian Council for Educational Research, 2006 for initial vision as additional choice). The Victorian government has recently welcomed alternative curricula such as Steiner and Montessori into some government schools alongside the local curriculum to accommodate parent preferences (O'Connor, 2007). Meanwhile, the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD), a curriculum developed and governed by a non-profit organisation based in Geneva, was first offered in an Australian school in 1978. The IBD and its associated middle years and primary years curricula, is becoming more popular, now offered in both government and private (fee-paying) schools (Doherty, 2009). In 2009, the IBD was offered in 11 government schoolsⁱ, and 49 independent schoolsⁱⁱ, with more undergoing accreditation. Few IBD schools offer just the IBD, thus it is more typically found as one choice of senior secondary schooling certifications offered within a school. This curriculum competes directly with the local competitive academic curriculum for the 'high' end in the hierarchy of offerings, so has to send out different messages about 'who' should do the IBD 'why' to recruit students. The head-to-head competition is fertile ground for the production and circulation of pedagogic identities.

For Apple (2001), the trend towards neoliberal choice in educational policy developments exists in contradictory but symbiotic relationship with resurgent neo-conservative attitudes, which favour more nostalgic, traditional values for what counts in school curriculum. Buras (1996) unpacks the core assumptions of this 'neo-conservative vision' across the work of its strongest US advocate, E.D. Hirsch. These include the valuing of traditional didactic practice over child-centred or process oriented pedagogy; a search for coherence in unproblematic universal knowledge and a common cultural induction as formative nationalism/citizenship. In Australia this same agenda has been led by *The Australian* newspaper, which has consistently championed the public discourse around 'crises' in schooling. This paper will use Bernstein's concepts to understand how this ironic marriage of neoliberalism (divesting power from the centre to the market) and neo-conservatism (re-asserting centralised power) is both thinkable and doable, and how the IB Diploma thrives in this ideological space.

Bernstein distinguished various curriculum codes (collection/integrated, singular/region/generic), and pedagogies (competence/performance, visible/invisible) whose regulative discourses were produced in different political, economic and ideological contexts, and which in turn, produced different identity positions for their students. As Muller (2000p. 109) explains:

The moral of the story is ... that recontextualizing fields, both official and pedagogic, are fields of contest with various social fractions with different degrees of social power sponsoring pedagogic regimes which, despite some similarities of rhetoric, will have quite different policy implications and, more to the point here, will construct different teachers and learners.

For Bernstein, a **pedagogic identity** is the identity position projected for both students and teachers in the larger discourse(s) shaping pedagogic practice. Such discourses would include

a curricular framework and the messages associated with its branding in the public imaginary. In other words, a pedagogic identity is produced in the relation forged between the learner /teacher and the socially constituted body of knowledge, and will reflect the distinctness of that body of knowledge from others, relations within the knowledge community, and its relation to the broader economic context. Thus, the International Baccalaureate will offer particular identities for its students and teachers flowing from their membership in the community convened around the curriculum and its relational positioning in the hierarchy of offerings. It may also be a source of identity due to the material rewards, forms of distinction or cultural capital flowing from the exchange value of its credential.

Bernstein (2000, p. 205) identifies four curricular orientations ‘for designing and distributing pedagogic identities’– retrospective, prospective, therapeutic, and market orientations. Each of these orientations attempts ‘to construct in teachers and students a particular moral disposition, motivation and aspiration, embedded in particular performances and practices’ (Bernstein, 2000, p. 65). To explore how and what pedagogic identities are projected in Australian curricular markets, the paper will draw on observational and interview data collected in qualitative case studies of three schools offering the IBD as well as a local senior curriculum. The case study sites were selected to include: both public and private school settings; different states thus relations to different local curriculum; and different histories in offering the IBD. Each site was visited by the same researcher over two separate weeks across 2009.

The analysis will explore firstly how school managers accounted for their school’s strategy in offering the IBD. Their different game plans will be mapped back to Bernstein’s curricular orientations to suggest the ‘official’ pedagogic identities to be projected. Then the analysis will explore how teachers and students, both involved in the IBD and not, understood ‘who’ should do the IBD ‘why’, and thus the qualities of the pedagogic identity projected informally by the IBD through its consumption in that particular site. Their accounts will be read against the school managers’ accounts to reveal how curricular offerings and the identities they project can be reinterpreted from different vantage points. The contrast between the formal and informal versions reveals how the combination of a re-centring prospective orientation and a de-centring market orientation becomes thinkable and doable.

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ⁱ 2 in South Australia, 6 in Queensland and 3 in the Australian Capital Territory.

ⁱⁱ 7 in South Australia, 15 in New South Wales, 16 in Victoria, 5 in Queensland, 1 in the Northern Territory, 1 in Tasmania and 4 in Western Australia.