

# **Therapeutic identities in imaginary spaces: leading the enactment of wicked policy reform.**

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This paper looks at how the work of Basil Bernstein can inform critical analyses of policy. Many policies are concerned with wicked policy problems, problems that call for transdisciplinary analyses. Wicked policy problems are problems that are tough to describe because their roots are complex & tangled, occurring in a complex social context that makes them difficult to manage (Camillus, 2008). As such, wicked policy problems require 'clumsy solutions' (Logue, 2009) that entail a transdisciplinary approach, which addresses the complexity both of the problem and the social context in which it is grounded, and the need for diverse solutions (MacKay, 1990). The paper argues that concepts drawn from Bernstein's work and from critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides a framework for the transdisciplinary analysis of wicked policy problems.

Bernstein's (2000) work and critical discourse analysis share many common features. Language has a central position in both theories, which share an orientation towards social change and foreground language in processes of change. Both Bernstein and CDA have developed a theory of discourse. As critical theories, both Bernstein's work and CDA trace social practices within power relations and are concerned with the potential for social transformation (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Chouralaki and Fairclough note also a shared concern with the dialect between structure and agency and the focus on language as social practice within this dialectic. Both theories connect language analysis with sociological analysis.

Further, critical discourse analysis has been demonstrated to be a valuable tool for policy analysis (Bacchi, 2000; Taylor, 2004; Thomas, 2005). In an analysis of educational policy documents on teacher quality, Thomas (2005) showed CDA to be more than a linguistic method of analysis. CDA was established as a complex model that drew on an ensemble of social science techniques that was particularly suited to transdisciplinary analysis. Fairclough (2004) has noted the need for the transdisciplinary analysis of political texts, noting that these texts, including policy documents, create imaginaries that move towards changed realities. Policy discourses, therefore, work to construct imaginary spaces for governance as they 'construct/imagine "frameworks for action", procedures which network social practices (activities) in particular ways' (Fairclough, 2005, p. 59). Thus, a critical discourse of policy documents can trace the construction both of imaginary spaces for governance and of the social practices within a particular set of social relations.

Bernstein's (2000) work on official knowledge and pedagogic identities can further the analyses of social practices gained through such CDA. Bernstein understands official knowledge to be 'the educational knowledge which the state constructs and distributes in educational institutions' (p. 65). This official knowledge, which can be shaped by policy discourses, constructs particular pedagogic identities for teachers and students. Bernstein identifies four positions that represent different approaches to regulating and managing change and that project particular pedagogic identities through the processes of educational reform. An analysis of the pedagogic identities constructed through the enactment of a particular educational reform, will extend the analysis of the construction of teacher identities within particular power relations that have been traced through a critical discourse analysis of policy documents.

This paper will investigate one recent education policy that has been designed to address the wicked

policy problem of skills shortages and vocational skills training in Australian secondary schools (Garrick, forthcoming). The policy outlines a program for the introduction of Trade Centres into secondary schools (Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008). Trade centres were identified as a means to produce young people capable of helping Australia maintain a human capital advantage in the competitive and globalised world of today, and thus to address the very real skills shortage in the country (Rudd & Smith, 2007). Thus, the policy is concerned with effecting social change through changes to the secondary schooling experiences through the introduction of Trade Training Centres.

The study that is reported in this paper involved interviews with the leaders of four schools who received funding in the first stage of the program. The paper utilises a framework that draws on Bernstein's work and Fairclough's CDA to conduct a transdisciplinary analysis of the initial roll out of the Trade Centres policy. In particular, Bernstein's concepts of pedagogic identities and Fairclough's concepts of imaginary space and frameworks for action (Fairclough, 2004, 2005) work together in an analysis of the construction of leaders' identities during the initial stages of the implementation of the Trade Centres program.

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