

Pedagogy and Development: what could Bernstein's concepts bring to understanding 'quality' education in developing country contexts?

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Over the last two decades, national and global agendas concerned with the *'quality'* of Education For All (EFA) have brought focus to the qualitative dimensions of school processes in developing country contexts. This has identified pedagogy in particular as a priority for development reforms. The proliferation of various 'learner-centred' reform programmes across the global South have drawn attention to interactive, contextually embedded processes of learning. Despite the rhetoric of relational and learner-specific education put forward by many pedagogic reforms, there has been a strengthening of development discourses around standardised benchmarks and outcomes of schooling. Time-bound targets for the universalisation of elementary education have provided states and agencies further impetus to invest in system-wide evaluations and reporting of school 'quality', intending to identify progress and gaps for policy planning and resource allocation. These exercises of supposed accountability have been concerned largely with indicators and measures based on problematic conceptualisations of pedagogy. As Alexander (2008:7-8) observed of EFA discourses on development:

Pedagogy is defined as a controllable input rather than as a process whose dynamic reflects the unique circumstances of each classroom and which is therefore variable and unpredictable; and the only aspects of pedagogy which are admitted as 'inputs' are those which can be measured. The whole exercise becomes impossibly reductionist, and the educational endeavour itself is as a consequence trivialised.

Reflecting on this problem, this paper examines how Bernstein's theories of pedagogy could contribute to a more complex understanding of pedagogy in EFA contexts. Bernstein has offered a detailed descriptive and analytic language which many researchers of western schooling systems have found useful, particularly in uncovering the implicit social codes of pedagogic relay (cf. Sadovnik, 1995; Morais et al., 2001; Muller et al., 2004; Moore et al., 2006; Arnot & Reay, 2007). This paper reviews some of the recent applications of Bernstein's framework in developing country contexts (cf. Hoadley, 2008; Nyambe and Wilmot, 2008; Barrett, 2007). I begin by discussing the conceptualisation of 'quality' in EFA discourses and its implications for educational research and evaluation. If 'quality' needs to be measured by states and development agencies, how might the complexities of pedagogic interaction be better captured? How can the selectiveness and limits of such evaluative exercises be acknowledged, and in ways which urge us to consider carefully the relationship between pedagogy and 'development'? I consider how Bernstein's pedagogic framework may enrich analyses of schooling and discuss the limitations of his theories in non-western education and social systems. The paper then moves to examine the ways Bernstein's ideas on classification and framing informed my own study of learner-centred pedagogic reforms in rural Indian primary schools. I work through the methodological process (and tensions) of employing Bernstein's theories in the analysis of pedagogy in low-income, under-resourced school settings. Drawing on this discussion, the paper concludes by reflecting on the possibilities for

more complex descriptive and analytic approaches to understanding educational 'development'.

Paper Outline:

1. 'Quality' Education for All and implications for research.
2. Bernstein's theories of pedagogy: possibilities and limitations in development contexts
3. Analysing learner-centred reforms in rural Indian primary school: methodological reflections.
4. Understanding and evaluating 'development': towards a more complex descriptive and analytic approach.

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