

## **Pedagogising the new science of education: comparing the experiences of school leaders**

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Drawing on Basil Bernstein's (1996, 1999) analysis, Whitty and Furlong (2017) identify two academic knowledge traditions in the study of education. Singulars include hermeneutic-philosophical German educational thought, whilst an example of a regional is the new science of education (NSE) which promises to find out 'what works' through the application of rigorous research, typically in the form of randomised controlled trials and systematic reviews. Academic traditions contrast with practical traditions, amongst them the 'competencies and standards' model ascendant under neoliberalism and integrated traditions which try to bring the academic and the practical together. Both singular and regional academic knowledge traditions are more distant from practice than practical or integrated ones. In this study, we apply Bernstein's (1990, 1996) account of the pedagogic device to the pedagogising of academic knowledge, by which it is selected and adapted by various intermediaries or brokers to allow different actors to learn from it, in order to improve education practice and student outcomes. Brokers may include international organisations, commercial or philanthropic bodies, universities or government agencies. Although their users might include education policy makers, advisors, trainers, commentators, inspectors, managers or, indeed, practitioners, our focus here is senior managers in schools, primarily head teachers and principals. Distributive rules account for the privileging of some knowledge traditions - in most cases, the NSE - and their associated discourses, over others when selected for brokerage. Distributive rules thereby regulate the power relationships between social groups identifying with and benefitting from or against and marginalised by each of these traditions. Recontextualising rules for 'delocating a discourse, for relocating it, for refocusing it' (Bernstein, 1996: 47) regulate the formation of specific pedagogic discourses, aimed at school senior managers and practitioners. Through brokerage, NSE knowledge set within its associated discourses is related to other discourses, rendering it suitable for instructing schools about and regulating their attempts at particular versions of school improvement. This recontextualised discourse differs from the original because it has been pedagogised. Finally, evaluative rules discern that which is legitimate and valid in both content and form. Instructions that help school managers support practitioners in improving student outcomes are considered legitimate. But the commodification of knowledge by brokers also leads to the market regulation of school improvement, with wider consequences. This paper is set within a bigger study exploring the process and implications for practice of how brokerage selects, privileges, re-fashions and re-interprets education knowledge, in three contrasting national contexts; England, Germany and Scotland. The national educational research discourse in Anglo-Saxon countries shows a long tradition of evidence-based approaches and discussions (Lawn & Furlong, 2010: 8), and a number of established brokerage agencies exist, including the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information (EPPI) Centre since 1993 and Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) since 2008. The Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) Teaching and Learning Toolkit has been available to schools in England since 2011. In Scotland, the devolved government has recently championed the use of evidence to improve academic standards amongst low achieving groups, and the EEF's Scottish Learning and Teaching Toolkit was launched in 2017. Knowledge brokers and associated arguments about evidence are less dominant in Germany, and although no national brokerage agencies exist there at present, there are 'functional equivalents' offering guidance on evidence to policy makers but not practitioners; the DIPF (Leibniz Institute for Research and Information in Education), for example, is state funded but not based at a university. With

emerging neoliberalism and output orientations in Germany, no doubt brokerage will become more influential in time. Method This is an education policy research collaboration, initially between researchers from England, Germany and Scotland, but with the intention of engaging central and southern European partners in the future. Our aim is to contrast the experiences of school leaders in diverse European neoliberal education policy contexts, ranging from established to emergent. To maintain appropriate cultural awareness and sensitivity, insider researchers, fluent in the national language, and familiar with both the broader policy context and local circumstances, conducted interviews with school principals and undertook their initial analysis. The research team then brought their various perspectives and experiences, both as insiders and outsiders, together in a process of comparative data analysis. Whilst the study in which this paper sits contrasts distributive, recontextualising and evaluative rules across national contexts, here we focus only on analysing the relationship school leaders have with brokered education knowledge to discern the evaluation rules for each context. To elicit the evaluation rules from the perspective of school leaders in each context, semi structured Interviews were conducted with five principals from a range of education contexts in each of England, Germany and Scotland. These focussed on principals' understanding of academic education knowledge, particularly NSE recontextualised as 'evidence', and their experiences of using it including its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and limitations in its relation to practice. Consideration was also given to their schools' implementation of 'evidence-informed' agendas, approaches and initiatives. Expected Outcomes As well as identifying specific areas of education knowledge that principals in each national context found more or less useful and the ways in which these had been employed, preferred approaches to 'informing practice' were also discussed. However, this was set within a broader context, where ideas were more often regarded as commodities in established neoliberal reform contexts dominated by high stakes testing than in more emergent neoliberal contexts. This results in the reframing of academic knowledge as instrumental techniques, subject to fashion and soon abandoned if not quickly effective. Furthermore, some leaders appear possessive and reluctant to share that education knowledge which they regard as affording a market advantage over their perceived competitors.

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Keywords: new science of education, educational research, policy and practice

Kelly, P., Hofbauer, S., & Beck, A. (Accepted/In press). *Pedagogising the new science of education: comparing the experiences of school leaders*. Abstract from ECER 2019, Hamburg, Germany.