

Interrogating the Social Class Assumptions and Classroom Implications of Bernstein's Pedagogic Discourse of Visible and Invisible Pedagogies

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ABSTRACT Herein the argument that there are social class assumptions and classroom implications for Bernstein's pedagogic discourses of visible and invisible pedagogies is advanced. The paper unpacks the assumptions implicit in Bernstein's conceptual framework of visible and invisible pedagogies in relation to the educational experiences and outcomes of pupils from the middle and working class backgrounds. The paper's thesis is that Bernstein's work on pedagogic discourse offers important insights for classroom practices, for educators in their production, distribution and reproduction of official knowledge and how that knowledge is related to structurally determined power relations. The argument in this paper does not only show how Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse is concerned with the description of the production and transmission of knowledge but also how it unravels consequences for such knowledge for different social groups in society. In doing this, the paper looks at the process and content of what happens inside schools and classrooms to unmask the effects of the various rules of pedagogic discourse and how they affect the content's transmission (pedagogy) by acting selectively on pupils from the different social class backgrounds. It is for these reasons that the social class assumptions and consequences of forms of pedagogic practices, visible and invisible pedagogies are examined. The paper thus unfolds with a brief overview of Bernstein's socio-linguistic code theory and the theory of pedagogic discourse before examining the distinction between visible and invisible pedagogies and the social class assumptions implicit in each of these pedagogies.