A case study of how marketisation is defining professional knowledge in teacher education


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**Introduction**

My paper introduces you to the Norwegian context of higher education (HE) and the discursive construction of the current policy of HE in action. In the paper I explore ways in which market mode of operation, marketisation (Marginsson, 1999, 2007; Fairclough, 1995), and the dynamics in the HE market may affect the pedagogical discourse (Bernstein, 1996) which regulated the production of knowledge and education values in the local programs of study. I present a case study of Norwegian Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) degree courses based on bachelor degrees in Sport Sciences 180 credits in the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and a 60 credit ECTS course, equivalent to the Post Graduate Certificate of Education. Analyzing qualitative data collected at three regional university colleges I explore the way in which the configurations of these programs of study are being adapted in order to appeal to the latest whims of the ‘student consumer’, rather than due to critical, analytical reflection about the pedagogical challenges of contemporary teaching Physical Education (PE), and the intellectual and professional requirements of teachers in meeting pupils’ learning needs in the contemporary social contexts of schooling.

**Background to the topic**

Throughout Europe, during the last decade the intentions and principles embedded in the Bologna process, the ‘Bologna discourse’ (Tomusk, 2004, 2007; Keeling, 2004; Saarinen, 2007), in particular the ECTS and the easy readable degree system have been the major reference in the policy for restructuring of the HE system. In the 2003 Norwegian HE project, with the rhetorical title ‘The Quality Reform’ (UFD, 2000-2001; KD, 2005), the Bologna discourse ideologically and structurally were the major reference although Norway is not a member of the European Union, but an associated member in the EU’s projects and processes. Nevertheless, changing governments have aimed to position Norway as a loyal, rapidly responding participant in the Bologna-process. Pointed at by Gornitzka (2007) the Bologna declaration’s degree and credit system in the Norwegian reform process became the major reference with a special aim also to meet national struggles and challenges related to the different kinds of HE institutions national and regional roles and identities. At the undergraduate level it intentionally aimed to play down the differences between the universities (7), the special universities (5) and the university colleges (23) in terms of privileges, status and recruitment and provide a deregulated system for development of programs of study and collaboration between the different institutions. In this national context the 2003 reform of HE deregulated the ‘artistic and academic freedom’, and the regional university colleges became new providers of the ‘easy readable’ bachelor degree defined by the number of 180 ECTS and the traditional university teacher education model based on the Bachelor Degree + PGCE (the 3 + 1 year model).

The ideological and structural changes formed part of the partial dissolution of old dividing lines between state and the market (Marginson, 1999) allowing HE, like the public sector in the decades before, to create ‘markets regulated by the State, or quasi-markets’ (Whitty, 2002; Selwyn & Brown, 2007). Within dominant discourses of the welfare state (Lundahl, 2007), (local) democratic rights and social justice, in Norway the regulated education market is woven into a multi-layered policy discourse of ‘district policy’ and decentralization, and the quasi-market act as a facilitator and regulator to ensure that HE markets flourish in all the regions of the country. In this mixed geographical, economical and social context the roles of the regional university colleges, which are located in all parts of the country, are crucial in the
national system of HE (Kyvik, 2002). In the multi-layered policy discourses of ‘quality reform’, Bologna – process and international discourses of life-long learning underpinned by national notions of equality between institutions, the HE system is aimed to meet both educational, democratic and social needs in all parts of the country. In a mixture of ‘former decades’ mainly social democratic ideological discourses of education and the last decades accommodation to global neo-liberal market ideology (Aasen, 2003), the Norwegian HE institutions responding to the governmental system of funding, like elsewhere, articulate and produce what Ball (2006, 121) refers to as ‘economy of the students’ worth’. Like the neo-liberal ideology underpinning of recent reforms in HE in the Western world (Apple, 2003; Ball, 2006; Lingard and Ozga, 2007), HE in Norway the last decade has experienced a significant increase in the competitiveness between the institutions to recruit students in the marketplace and to keep them in their programs of study. In the Norwegian HE market, which related to the population (4.8 mill.) and compared to many other countries is artificially large, the competition to ‘get hold of’ students framed within the national policy rhetoric of access to HE in all parts of the country as a significant social value, the last couple of years has affected the institutions’ development of flexible degree programs to meet trends and interests in the youth culture (Kårhus, in press). At present about 20 institutions are providers of bachelor degrees in sport sciences and a greater number of institutions are providers of 30 and 60 ECTS courses compatible to the bachelor degrees defined and regulated by 180 ECTS.

Compared to the system of HE in many other countries, a distinguishing feature of the Norwegian system is that students are not required to start and complete a bachelor or PETE degree at one and the same institution. Framed within the ECTS discourse the HE system encourages students to combine units/modules/credits from several institutions. In this policy of deregulation and flexibility, several institutions around in the country can be involved in providing and ‘producing’ the students’ ECTS to form part of degrees certified at the institution where the students gain the number of ECTS needed. Illustrating the ECTS discourse of flexibility in action some of the regional university colleges provide ‘The bachelor degree of the candidates own choosing’ (Kårhus, in press a).

Focus of inquiry, analytical framework and methodology

Within this context of HE in Norway the paper through analysis of data from in-depth interviews with Deans and administrative heads of programs in departments of Sport Science and PETE at regional university colleges, critically explore the national Bologna discourse in action. The focus of inquiry is how local Norwegian on-site solutions, which in the way Keeling (2004, 19) puts it ‘are both Bologna –compatible and responsive to local needs and constraints’. I explore how local Norwegian interpretations of the ECTS and the easy readable degree system directly and indirectly are drawn upon to justify local ideological and pragmatic interests, pedagogical values and practices that are involved in shaping local configurations of courses and bachelor programs of study in sport sciences and PE.

Exploring the local effects of marketisation, the ECTS- discourse, and the competition in the HE market by using the case of 3+ 1 year model Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) degree courses based on a bachelor degree, I have used Bernstein’s (1996) theory of the pedagogic discourse as a lens for analyzing educational values and perspectives in the ways Deans and heads of programs at departments of sport and PETE read the reform policy as surrounding text and rationalize the development of their sport and PETE degrees through the last five years of Bologna and quality discourses.
According to Bernstein’s theoretical framework ‘pedagogic discourse’ is a principle for transmission, de-locating and re-locating knowledge, values and other ways of knowing between sites and educational settings. Bernstein (1996, 46) defines pedagogic discourse “as a rule which embeds two discourses: a discourse of skills of various kinds and their relations to each other, and a discourse of social order” The former is called ‘instructional discourse’ and the latter ‘regulative discourse’. The regulative discourse is “the moral discourse which creates order, relations and identity” (Bernstein, 1996, 46) and Bernstein argues that “the whole order within pedagogical discourse is constituted by regulative discourse” and “there is no instructional discourse which is not regulated by regulated by the regulative discourse” (p.49). Pedagogic discourse is the rule that leads to the embedding of instructional discourse in the regulative discourse and thus creates one discourse. My analysis emphasizes that the regulative discourse is formed by an array of discursive practices that are not necessarily specific to subjects or degrees in the field of sport, physical education or outdoor pursuits. The discursive practices are situated and in the policy of the HE reform underpinned by the deregulation and market dynamics. In this context the readings of the changes in the HE policy and market dynamics form the ‘raw material’ which constitutes regulative discourse. In my analysis of how local sport sciences and PETE degree programs of study are recontextualized in the context of incentives in the governmental system of funding and trends in the market, in Bernstein’s analytical framework I have emphasized that

The recontextualizing principle not only recontextualized the what of pedagogic discourse, what discourse is to become subject and content of pedagogic practice. It also recontextualizes the how; that is the theory of instruction. This is crucial, because the selection of the theory of instruction is not entirely instrumental. The theory of instruction also belongs to the regulative discourse, and contains within itself a model of the learner and the teacher and the relation. The model of the learner is never wholly utilitarian; it contains ideological elements (Bernstein 1996, 49).

These ideological elements are embedded in regulative discourse being the regulator of order, relations and identity constituted by local readings of the surrounding (con)text within which local providers of degrees, courses and ECTS in sport sciences, outdoor pursuits and PE are responding to the ‘Quality reform’ and the national recontextualization of the Bologna process in action.

Language use and the construction of pedagogical discourse

Embedded in ways of seeing informed by the recent development in HE, language use as a situated mode of action, constitutive in the local pedagogical discourse which regulates the constructions of bachelor and PETE degrees. Using critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995; Luke, 1995; Baker and Galasinski, 2001) assuming that language as discourse is socially shaped, but also socially shaping, enables an analysis of the discourses that constitute language users' knowledge of social situations, the roles their play, and their identities and relations with other groups. Fairclough (1995, 131) argues that language is always simultaneously constitutive of social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and beliefs. Texts of everyday life, pointed at by Luke (1995, 15), “are all tied closely to particular social actions and interests in contexts of particular social institutions. Just as discourses develop to articulate particular fields of knowledge and beliefs, texts develop to serve institutional purposes and projects”. The connection between language, text and social and educational practice is mediated by discourse practice which in this paper both creates and reflects pedagogic discourse (Bernstein, 1996). In my enquiry, language use and transcribed interviews as texts rationalizing local systems of knowledge and beliefs regarding sport, outdoor pursuits and PE, are analyzed as the medium to understand how regulative and
instructional discourses operate to create the particular pedagogical discourse that recontextualizes knowledge and education values in the local bachelor and PETE degrees. In a critical analysis of social institutions, "particular ways of talking are based on particular ways of seeing" (Fairclough 1995, 38). Using CDA I have emphasized that the Deans and administrative heads of programs (HoP) in their regional universities’ departments of sports and PETE, both are holders of powerful institutional positions and language users communicating within social and educational contexts that manifest their institutions ‘particular ways of seeing’. In analyzing education policy texts, discourses and ways of seeing, Penny and Evans (1999:25) emphasize the significance of ‘surrounding texts’ and the discursive fields within which texts arise and are responded to. In my analysis I have located regional university colleges as knowledge producers and agencies in the social configuring, and reconfiguring, of knowledge production and consumption framed within the 2003 ‘Quality reform’ and its recontextualization processes of the Bologna process in action.

**Data collection**

Using purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990), three regional university colleges (Juniper UC, Rock Face UC and Pine UC) were chosen as useful and appropriate sources of information. Each of them is significant national providers of sport science and PETE degrees through the number of students in their different programs of study in the field of sport and PE. Data were collected by in-depth interviews with the three Deans of the departments of sport and PE (all men), and the three head of programs (HoP) in the same three departments (two men, one woman). Informed consent was sought from the Deans, HoPs and the Norwegian Social Science Data Services. All names and institutions used in this paper are pseudonyms.

On the basis of the theoretical framework presented above, an interview guide (Mason, 1996) served as the basis for the semi-structured interviews which I personally conducted. Each interview lasted from 1.5 to 2 hours. They were recorded and then transcribed verbatim by myself (4) and a research assistant (2). Each interviewee received a copy of the respective transcribed text with invitation to give their comments, corrections and/or elaborations. I got only positive responses after the interviews, no corrections or elaborations in the transcribed texts were suggested. The data were coded and analyzed by content analysis in which themes, language use and ways of seeing related to them were identified in relation to how regulative and instructional discourses form one discourse, the pedagogical discourse, in the local configurations of the sport and PETE degrees.

In addition to the data collected by in-depth interviews with the Deans and HoPs, analysis and discussion was generated from national and institutional policy documents, program guides and curriculum documents. The documents were accessed myself from the university college websites.

**Analysis of data**

In what follows I briefly present a selection of data using three titles which in my data analysis illuminate general ways of talking and general ways of seeing the role and identity as providers of HE programs of study. The data presented reflect the raw material and the values in the departments’ regulative discourse which creates order and regulates the local university college’s ‘packages of credits’ (Tomusk, 2004) in the market. The titles are: ‘Reading and explaining the surrounding text’, ‘Language, ordering of objects and what counts’ and ‘The content? Not strict at all, and that’s a pity’.
Reading and explaining the surrounding text

The HoP at Juniper UC, Curt, illuminates his university colleges’ reading of the education policy context to which they are responding, and then, the local order of discourse which constitutes the raw material of the regulative discourse that creates order, relations and identity:

‘Actually, we are all taken by the competition in the education market. The institutions need to get hold of…. I mean, we all have to recruit the number of students needed to maintain budget status. And we do so, too. Consequently, the challenge is to offer programs of study that the students find attractive.’

The wording ‘taken by the competition’ combined with the oral expression ‘to get hold of students’ to rationalize the ‘need to maintain the budget status’, reflects the institutions ‘particular way of seeing’ the significant message in the surrounding text to which they are responding. Curt illuminates how marketisation, and the managerial discourses implied by it, form part of the ‘raw material’ of the departments’ regulative discourse. The aim in focus is ‘to offer programs of study that students find attractive’ which in particular underpins the regulative discourse which creates local ‘order, relations and identity’’s (Bernstein, 1996, 46)

The Dean at Rock Face UC, David, stresses he read the surrounding text according to a top-down policy demand. In the following passage, Dean David exemplifies how programs in the field of sport and physical activity locally are regulated by the discourse of ‘student production’ as a matter of business, and then, how the logic of supply and demand in the market constitute the ‘raw material’ by which the regulative discourse is shaped:

‘When it comes down to the autonomy and the ability to compete and all that in the latest reform of higher education, it’s quite clear that our owner, the Ministry of Knowledge, want us to offer programs of study which are attractive in the market. You know, nowadays, the policy of funding are based on production and results, right?

In this context, yes, we really have had a prosperity of bachelor programs of study. You know, now the development and approval of courses and credits are taken care of by the regional university itself. And to us, it has been very stimulating to combine our courses with the new system of credits in our bachelor degree programs of study.

And the fact is that all the physical activity programs of studies do recruit many students to our university college. No doubt, these sport studies contribute very positive to our university college! Therefore, institutionally they have been allowed to develop. This illustrates how popularity and recruitment rule in the development of the university colleges, as we all know…. Actually, the nation needs young people with degrees in math, science, and those things, right? However, that’s no good business to us. Sport, outdoor pursuits and physical education have much better recruitment, and indeed, that’s good business!’

In David’s way of seeing the message from the politicians, any critical social, academic or professional perspectives in the local configurations of courses and credits seem subordinated to what counts in relation to student recruitment. However, he is aware of how markets dynamics affect the balance between different subjects and fields of knowledge in the national HE, but he plays the game doing his best to recruit as many students as possible to his local university college. Concerning the rules that in Bernstein’s framework (Bernstein, 1996, 46) underpin the principle for relocating ‘values and other ways of knowing’ related to readings of the surrounding texts, the Dean at Juniper UC directly explains to me the dominant logic of his department as |providers of sport, outdoor education and PE in the HE marketplace:
‘Listen - nowadays it’s the customers’ market, right? It’s the customer who is interested in outdoor pursuits-- and then, that’s our focus. The students want modules and credits so they can build a Bachelor Degree, and the fundamental thing in our department is: We have to find a balance between what the students prefer and our resources to meet them, right?’

Language, ordering of objects and what counts

Following Foucault (1972, 48–49) language use is closely linked to the ordering of objects, being ‘practices which systematically form the object of which they speak’. The following analysis of language use and ordering of objects reflects how the reform provides new roles in the HE market challenging the professional identities of the local institutions. Using the language of promotion and marketisation (Fairclough, 1995), Mary, HoP at Pine UC, illuminates how the values that underpins the identity of her department most of all mirrors what the students in the market enjoy and want:

‘After all, our university college is an institution in the service sector. Our programs of study shall meet the interests of our students, right? To us that’s crucial. In our department our concern is to be service minded, although we don’t like the words ‘service’ or ‘service minded’. However, that’s what it’s all about. Accordingly, we have to think untraditionally and alternatively knowing that in the education market the students are shopping things they enjoy, and particularly, and in particular our students fancy sport activities.’

Adding to me, who was her PE teacher educator some 25 years ago, Mary continued: ‘Remember, times have changed! Nowadays the students afford to choose activities and shop the courses they want leaving behind, or rather put on hold, all thoughts of “what do I become” and “what kind of profession do I have in sight”’. Then, at Pine University College’s ‘Department of sport, health and PE’ the aim is to service the market in which students are treated as customers and consumers of courses and credits rather than learners overlooking how this difference might impact upon knowledge production and notions of quality in HE (Morley, 2003). The raw material constituting the local regulative discourse seems underpinned by language use and logic of the market, and the mantra embedded in pedagogic discourse reflects that ‘the university college has to be service minded’. Although the staff does not like the words, they see the need to offer the student consumers the courses of sport and physical activity they enjoy- and afford to buy. Through the HE leaders’ language use, ways of seeing and ordering of objects, the transcribed text illuminates how the university college here operates, pointed at by Fairclough (1995, 141) as ‘if they were ordinary businesses competing to sell their products to the consumers’. Pointing at their university colleges’ collaboration with one of the two commercial enterprises that are active providers of 30 and 60 ECTS courses in sport and leisure activities located at exotic destinations, here named ‘Hideaway College’, Mary, the HoP rationalizes that:

‘Our collaboration with ’Hideaway College’ is a consequence of the market situation. We would not have studies at Bali if not the students absolutely wanted to go to Bali! But at present exotic activities and places are popular, and therefore we decided to offer this exotic 30 ECTS program of sport at Bali’ (italics = stressed by the HoP)

Using Bernstein’s (1996) framework as a lens, Mary’s text exemplifies how the local instructional discourse, embedded in the local regulative discourse of marketisation, puts on hold, or rather sets aside, significant relations of skills and knowledge, in the courses that students choose to form part of their 3+1 PETE program. Through the partnership with the
commercial education enterprise providing courses based on sport activities, recreation thrills and lifetime experiences, the ECTS modules offered by the regional university colleges in Norway illuminates how, as pointed at by Tomusk (2004, 88), “product developers” are working on transforming European higher education into marketable products and packaging. Following Bernstein (1996) the recontextualization of education the current ‘products and packaging’ illuminates transformation of knowledge by relocating ways of knowing between sites and settings. None of my informants framed the courses in exotic places within discourses of knowledge in contexts of either their role to meet specific education needs in the region or professional qualifications crucial to PETE. On the contrary, Mary’s Dean at Pine UC, Paul, reinforces that the discourses of marketisation, easy transferable credits, degrees and economical management pervade the local pedagogic discourse: ‘Our program of study in collaborate with “Hideaway College” at Bali is a strategic move in the market. Indeed, to us it pays’. Indicated by the selection of interview data in this presentation, language use traditionally associated with trade, industry and economic life is used to explain and legitimate academic and professional programs of study and the local bachelor degrees. Generally, the production and reproduction of this ordering of objects through language use as ways of seeing in my data, according to Marginson, (1999, 233) way of putting it "itself conditions educational practices and shapes the horizon of the possible".

We are not strict at all… and that’s a pity

Two decades ago Evans and Davies (1986, 14) argued that ‘The most significant single notion produced to date within the sociology of education, namely that the *form* and *content* of educational practice *both* matter greatly’. According to my analysis of the in-depth interview data, the local providers’ academic or professional considerations of form and content in their departments educational practices seems to matter far less than the number of students recruited to their programs. The analysis illuminates how the constructions of the bachelor degree in sport sciences and the 3+1 year model PETE degree at three regional university colleges are conforming to notions of what matters among consumers in the market, and thus enable the institution in effective ways to meet the incentives in the governmental funding system. Although Paul, the Dean at PineUC, reflecting upon their local policy points at what seems to be unfortunate, or rather a pity:

‘Of course, our department has to approve all units that form part of our Bachelor Degrees and the PETE degree. However, I have to say that we are quite liberal in our bachelors in terms of curriculum content. I can’t say we are strict at all…… There should have been better steering, because quite often the students choose the easy way, or the most enjoyable concerning physical activities and sports. Actually, quite often the easy way and enjoyable is the same… and that’s a pity (italics = stressed by the Dean).

Within the market discourse that constitutes the surrounding text for the institutional pedagogic discourse and regulates the HE identity promoted in the marketplace, the Dean plays the part of an outside commentator to his own management of program of study, enjoyable activities, education values and degrees.

Concluding comments

Framed within the current Norwegian reform policy of HE’s ‘surrounding text’ (Penney and Evans, 1999), in which Bologna discourses have been the major reference to meet national challenges (Gornitzka, 2007), the paper have explored how trends to self-regulation and choice making, in accordance with global trends pointed at by Marginson (1999, 231), have
‘become annexed to the market project, so that “choice” and “markets” become treated as one and the same’.

Using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Luke, 1995) anchored in the assumption that language discourse is socially shaped and socially shaping in constituting the language users’ identities and the roles they play, data has been collected by in-depth interviews with Deans and administrative heads of program at the department of sport and PE at three regional university colleges. In content analysis (Mason, 1996) of the transcribed interviews the interviewees by language use revealed ways of seeing their mission to be service minded providers of courses and programs of study attractive to the students. The students are their customers and consumers and the courses and the curricula packages of credits are commodities given general values in terms of the ECTS. The analysis illuminates how choices of the education consumers underpinned by discourses of liberal individualism have soaked into the raw material creating discourses of what counts in areas of HE where institutions struggle to position themselves responding to the incentives in the system of governmental funding. Rather than focusing on the needs of the students as potential learner and HE standards, the analysis illuminates how educational values by ECTS and en easy readable degree system are being supplanted by value for money, and in the context of autonomy and marketisation, pointed at by Maton (2005, 599) knowledge thereby increasingly detached from the knower and commodified such that it can ‘flow like money to wherever it can create advantage and profit’.

In the analysis applying Bernstein’s (1996) theoretical framework of pedagogic discourse, production and the transmission of knowledge, this paper reveals how dynamics in the HE market regulated by the State and the institutions’ market mode of operations in the recruitment of students, inform the instructional discourse embedded in regulative discourse. Following Bernstein the regulative discourse formed by dominant discourses in the reform policy as ‘raw material’ within education settings creates contexts for ‘relays’ of recontextualization (Tyler, 1995) which strongly affect what currently is taught and learnt. Accordingly, in the local Norwegian recontextualization processes in which the Bologna discourse is the main reference, marketisation easily works as principle for locating and relocating of knowledge in terms of packages of ECTS in easy readable bachelor degrees in sport sciences.

Given that the ideological workings of market dynamics and local readings of the Bologna discourse as ‘surrounding text’, and ways in which it may inform current programs of study, seem played down and partly forgotten in the regional departments of sport and PE in this inquiry, this paper reminds the field to reopen critical educational and ideological debates about the production and the transmission of knowledge in bachelor degree programs of study mainly aimed to recruit students in the market.

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