

**Schizophrenia in Academia**  
**The academic-professional divide – a theoretical perspective.**

## **Abstract**

Within faculties, academic and professional schools often occupy different parallel educational universes. Each has its own distinct curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment strategies along the lines of Basil Bernstein 'competence' and 'performance' models respectively. This paper sets out to examine how divergent pedagogies can emerge within one discipline, in the light of Bernstein's theories.

Bernstein makes an analogy between Weber's religious paradigm of 'prophet, priest and laity' and the pedagogical field of 'producers, reproducers or recontextualizers, and acquirers' (1996, 51). The recontextualizers are those who 'constitute specific pedagogical discourses' (Bernstein, 1996, 46), and whoever controls the pedagogical device 'has the power to regulate consciousness' (1996, 52). The rules guiding recontextualisation denote 'who may transmit what to whom and under what conditions' and create 'specialised communications ... through its contexts and contents' (1996, 46).

Shulman states that if you wish to understand why professions develop the way they do, study their forms of professional preparation; i.e. the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions. In this paper, I will argue that the pedagogies which emerge under the auspices of professional bodies follow Bernstein's 'performance' model while the academic follows the 'competence' model. The performance model is determined by the professional bodies, in what Bernstein terms the 'pedagogical recontextualising field' coming from within the discipline or specific professional domain. The competence model is determined by the 'official recontextualising fields' which is determined by the 'state and its selected agents and ministeries' and therefore has broader influences and terms of reference.

Through an examination of Bernstein's theories and using the experience of the academic/performance dichotomy in music education, I will argue that the academic – professional divide occurs at the recontextualisation stage, where decisions are made about what is transmitted, and where, when, and how it is communicated. I will outline the principal features of the performance and competence models, and argue that the former fits the professional model and the latter the academic model. I will explore the implications for lecturers in the different fields and consider the implications for training the trainers. While this paper does not attempt to provide answers to this dilemma, it hopes to provide some explanation for the roots of this divergence.

## **Keywords**

Academic – professional; music education; Bernstein's competence – performance models.

## 1. Introduction

Shulman, citing Erikson, states that if you wish to understand a culture, you should study its nurseries; and if you wish to understand how professions develop, study their form of professional preparation. One would, however, rarely consider looking in a nursery to understand a profession – except perhaps in the case of music. Few professions begin the process of professionalising its participants as early as instrumental musicians. The myth persists that you must start very young. Prodigious 7 year olds come to mind and if you are not at least highly proficient by age 10, you are past it! Large numbers of learners begin the process of instrumental tuition, climbing the instrumental ladder taking a graded exam each year, only to fall off when the process becomes irrelevant to their interests, especially as they enter teenage years. Spruce has described this process as ‘a deficient model of music education and progression’, based around ‘the notion of the virtuoso musician as the paradigm of musical achievement’ (Spruce, 2002, 18).

Classroom music teaching, on the other hand, has enjoyed considerable development and innovation in recent years through the implementation of the ‘new’ Leaving Cert syllabus, which radically transformed curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in the area. This reform has to be viewed as an enormous success in terms of the number of teenagers now engaging in music education, with the numbers taking Leaving Cert Music increasing year on year since its implementation. This is in contrast to an identified problem with drop-out rates from formal instrumental music education.

This paper came about as an attempt by the writer to understand the academic/performance divide in music education. Taking the case of music education as an exemplar, I will examine the academic – professional dichotomy which exists in music from the early stages, but also in other professions at third level. Using the theoretical framework of Basil Bernstein, two distinct pedagogic models will be outlined which, I will argue, correlate to practices in academic and professional educational fields.

Classroom music teaching and instrumental music teaching have occupied different parallel educational universes. Each has developed its own distinct pedagogy, curriculum and assessment strategies along the lines of what Bernstein might classify ‘competence’ and ‘performance’ models respectively. Mills (2008) identifies this dichotomy at practitioner level stating: ‘Strangely, given my own commitment to and immersion in creative experiment in schools, when a local piano teacher first asked if I would teach her 9 year old daughter violin privately in the evenings, it never occurred to me to structure her lessons other than in much the same way I recalled being taught violin’.

The question remains as to how two divergent pedagogies have emerged within the realm of music education; why they have not followed the same path. In what follows, I will examine this question through some dimensions of Basil Bernstein's pedagogical code, which may shed some light on how these different pedagogical modes have emerged. Before I explore this framework, it is essential to state that the range and complexity of Bernstein's work means that I have had to be selective. Thus, I have isolated some key principles that help to explore the 'two parallel universes' that I have described.

## **2. Basil Bernstein's Theoretical Framework**

Bernstein makes an analogy between Max Weber's religious paradigm of 'prophet, priest and laity' and the pedagogical field of 'producers, reproducers or recontextualizers, and acquirers' (1996, 51). Here I will relate this to the field of music education.

Linking Bernstein's three areas of action to the field of instrumental music pedagogy, the 'producers' represent the realm of music production and performance, i.e. the purveyors of the canon, which has traditionally been classical or western art music, with the goal being the concert musician or master performer.

The recontextualizers or reproducers are those who 'constitute specific pedagogic discourses' (Bernstein, 1996, 46). They decide how the canon will be reframed to pass it on in the educational context. The rules guiding this recontextualisation denote 'who may transmit what to whom and under what conditions' and creates 'specialised communications ... through its contexts and contents' (ibid). In instrumental music pedagogy the discourse has been produced over the past 150 years through specialist music colleges, who have provided pedagogical materials and contexts for the transmission of sets of pre-determined skills, including a graded system from beginner to professional level. This incremental development is evident in the graded examination system which is prevalent in instrumental music education, from grade 1 entry level, through to advanced grade 8 level; and further to professional level through Diplomas and Fellowships for the production of teachers who then become Bernstein's reproducers. The leader in the field has been the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM, 2011), who have determined standards and benchmarks for the profession.

The acquirers are the learners who receive the skills and knowledge. Bernstein states that 'the variable forms of the realization of the pedagogical device can restrict or enhance the potential discourse' available to the acquirers (1996, 42), and that the pedagogical device is '*not ideologically free*' (ibid, original emphasis). There is strong evidence that in music education, a particular culture has been promulgated through the graded exam system. A recent study carried out by the writer found that 70% of

repertoire played for exams was western art music and 30% comprised jazz and children's music (i.e. pieces composed for young learners). Absolutely no traditional, popular, or film/show music was represented in the exam repertoire (O'Sullivan, 2011).

Bernstein also argues that whoever controls the pedagogical device 'has the power to regulate consciousness' (1996, 52). He distinguishes between 'official recontextualising fields' (ORF) and 'pedagogical recontextualising fields' (PRF); the former being determined by official or state agencies and policy, and the latter from within the discourse field itself. I will argue that classroom music has come more under the influence of the ORF, with music colleges and instrumental music coming under the influence of the PRF, and consequently this accounts for the divergence in approaches.

Two contrasting pedagogic models are identified by Bernstein which he calls the 'performance' and 'competence' models (1996, 55). These correspond to strong and weak classification in terms of control and influence in the pedagogic field. Strong and weak classification can be determined by the 'degree of insulation' of the discourses (1996, 21). In strong classification there is strong insulation, and 'each category has its own unique identity, its own unique voice, its own specialized rules of internal relations' (ibid). Where disciplines are less insular, classification tends to be weaker. Weak classification occurs when, for example, a business programme will not only include business principles, but aspects of management, marketing, and economics; even socio-cultural phenomena and psychology to understand market trends and consumer behaviours. The different disciplines will interact and impact on each other, thus weakening the boundaries of the business discipline. Bernstein has pointed to the development of more generalised Schools, as opposed to individual departments, within universities and third level institutions as a phenomenon of weakening boundaries. In weakening boundaries, influences at local level come into play, with social and cultural factors – even lecturers' research interests - impacting. Strong boundaries however are maintained by professional bodies where 'specialised communications', and 'contexts and contents' will be similar whether carried out in Ireland or Malaysia.

### **3. The Music Education Context**

One of the strengths of the international professional bodies is that are recognised world-wide and provide 'globally recognised qualifications' (ACCA). The ABRSM, which continues to be one of the most influential music examinations board, was established in 1889 (ABRSM, 2010). The Board held its first examinations in Britain in 1890 and the syllabus stated that it aimed at '*a standard so high that the certificate granted may be regarded as a distinction worthy of attainment*' (ibid). Five years later,

they had centres in South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, and by 1948 there were examining in several Asian countries. The ABRSM soon went on to become the accepted leading authority and benchmark by which standards in professional music education were measured in many parts of the globe. Boynton states that as a system, the ABRSM was ‘brilliant’, providing as it did a ‘portable system for certification of music skills’ (Boynton, 2006, 94).

Shulman (2005) believes that different professions have ‘characteristic forms of teaching and learning’, which he calls ‘signature pedagogies’. These are to imbue ‘professionally valued understandings, skills and dispositions’. Through the professional bodies, instrumental music pedagogy has had strong insulation, with the professions determining what is learned, and just as crucially, what is not learnt from the nursery to third level. Because of the different spaces that classroom music and instrumental music education occupy, I contend that they have come under different influences over time. Instrumental music has remained quite insular (strong classification), remaining within the remit of specialist schools and private teachers and under the influence of the PRF. Conversely, classroom music takes place in the less insular environment of schools. Classroom music education came under the influence of the ORF, with curriculum development veering towards the competence model. The disciplinary boundaries have been further broken down in the curriculum as music is included as part of a broader ‘arts’ programme which also includes drama and visual arts. It has been influenced by general social and educational policy which impacts on all other aspects of education within the ORF.

At third level, formal instrumental music education remained under the influence of the PRF, governed by specialist colleges or conservatories who recontextualized the pedagogical framework for teachers and learners; and provided teacher training and accreditation for those who went on to teach in music schools or privately. By contrast, at the universities in Ireland there was a trend towards music programmes becoming more academic and less performance based; learners focusing on performance went to study at music colleges. Graduates from the universities traditionally went into classroom teaching in secondary schools, while those emerging from the music schools pursued performing careers or went into instrumental music teaching. A further anomaly in Ireland was the fact that it was not possible to attain a degree in performance at the music schools until relatively recently. Instrumental learners graduated with diplomas rather than the primary degrees or masters achieved by the university graduates. This dichotomy further reinforced a divergence of approach between classroom music teachers and instrumental teachers and helped to maintain the status quo.

#### **4. Applying Bernstein’s Model to Music Education**

Bernstein's pedagogic models can further elucidate this question. Table 1 outlines the contrast between the competence model, which I argue is more widely used in classroom music (academic context), and the performance model which is used in instrumental music (professional context). I would also contend that these models could also represent academic and professional pedagogic fields in other disciplines; perhaps such as accountancy or law.

Competence Model (Academic)	Performance Model (Professional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner focused, taking into account existing competences and prior experience.</li> <li>• Learning based on enquiry through projects, range of experience, and shared learning.</li> <li>• The learner has more control over the selection, sequence and pace of the learning.</li> <li>• More process than product based with rules for learner work being implicit.</li> <li>• Focuses on differences rather than stratification of learners.</li> <li>• Learners have more control over learning contexts and spaces.</li> <li>• Time does not explicitly dictate the sequencing of learning.</li> <li>• Evaluation is process based, with the emphasis on learner progress.</li> <li>• Control of the learning process is negotiated with the focus on the intentions, dispositions, relations and reflexivity of the learner.</li> <li>• The product of learner performance takes into account cognitive, social and affective development, with the teacher being the primary reader of these processes.</li> <li>• Teachers and institutions have more</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus is on the specialization of subjects and skills.</li> <li>• Procedures are clearly marked in terms of form and knowledge.</li> <li>• Learning is structured in terms of selection, sequence and pace.</li> <li>• Rules for production of learner work are explicit.</li> <li>• Learner work or performance is graded and stratified.</li> <li>• Spaces are clearly marked and regulated.</li> <li>• Time marks or punctuates the sequencing and rate.</li> <li>• Evaluation is product based with emphasis on who is to blame.</li> <li>• Control of the learning process is explicit in terms of who is to blame; it gives rise 'to a potential repair service' (1996, 61).</li> <li>• Often external regulation of curriculum regulation leading towards 'specialised futures' (1996, 62).</li> <li>• Transmission costs are generally less than the consumption costs.</li> <li>• Classifications are strong.</li> </ul>

autonomous control of delivery, and resources are less likely to be 'pre-packaged' (1996, 62).

- Transmission costs are generally higher.
- Classification is weak.

**Table 1 - Summary of Bernstein's competence and performance models (1996, 58-63)**

(Note: I have used the term 'learner' instead of 'acquirer').

Table 2 below outlines how practices in instrumental music education 'fit' the performance model outlined above. It identifies a highly prescriptive model, where learners and teachers have little control.

#### Bernstein's Performance Model

- Focus is on the specialization of subjects and skills.
- Procedures are clearly marked in terms of form and function in the acquisition of knowledge.
- Learning is structured in terms of selection, sequence and pace.
- Rules for production of learner work are explicit.
- Learner work or performance is graded and stratified.
- Spaces are clearly marked and regulated.
- Time marks or punctuates the sequencing and rate of learning.
- Evaluation is product based with emphasis on what is missing in the product.
- Control of the learning process is

#### Practices in Instrumental Music Education

- Focus is on the canon and developing techniques
- Procedures are segmented into units such as sight a holistic approach.
- Selection is evident in what is present and omitted absent.
- Learner work focuses on true interpretation of style interpretation.
- Learner work is graded through the graded examination system.
- Teaching takes place in the one-to-one setting generally.
- The annual graded exam marks the expectation of performance.
- Evaluation is performance based and summative.
- Method books, along with graded examination systems explicitly structure the learning.
- Teacher professionalism is often embedded in learner attributed to lack of learner ability.
- The graded examination system defines curriculum with the paradigm of the concert musician representation.
- The one-to-one mode of teaching means that it is elitist.

- explicit in terms of space, time and discourse, and legitimises the structures and classifications.
- Learner performance is graded and objectivised and inheres the professionalism of the teacher; it gives rise ‘to a potential repair service ... practice and distribution of blame’ (1996, 61).
- Often external regulation of curriculum regulation, selection, sequencing, pacing etc. leading towards ‘specialised futures’ (1996, 62).
- Transmission costs are generally less than the competence models.
- Classification is strong.
- The classifications for instrumental music teaching directed by the profession and remains outside the influential factors.

**Table 2: Aligning Bernstein’s performance model with practices in instrumental music education**

## **5. Conclusions and Future Work**

The ABRSM was established when the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music decided to unite as an examining body ‘inspired by disinterested motives for the benefit of musical education... which would genuinely provide a stimulus and an objective for a high standard of achievement’ (ABRSM, 2011). A primary objective was to prepare learners to a standard to meet the requirements of the mentioned Colleges. The objectives therefore were designed with the profession, not the learner, in mind.

Jensen (2005) states that as insiders and survivors of the system, lecturers or teachers are not necessarily the best placed to evaluate the success or otherwise of teaching practices within a particular system. Rathgen (2006) reviews the theory and research around teacher practices. The literature indicates that teaching practices do not change over time. Rathgen cites Britzman who states that teachers bring their own ‘educational biographies and...well-worn and commonsensical images of teachers’ work’ to their own practice (2006, 580). Furthermore there is a history within the teaching profession of maintaining ‘unchanged cultural rituals’ (ibid) and practitioners rarely change their practice based on research. It has been recognized that teachers

have a lack of awareness of how institutions and dominant cultures determine practice (ibid, 587). Teachers are the insiders of their profession and therefore part of the culture.

While the writer does not have wide experience of other disciplines, anecdotal evidence from lecturers working within other professional schools indicates that the process of teaching and learning is often very structured. One lecturer participating on an education and training programme communicated that he had not considered teaching in any way other than the way he was taught (similar to the view expressed by Mills). He found the new pedagogical ideas and concepts enlightening and said that they had changed his practice. He did, however, make the point that the content and assessment strategies were very prescriptive in his own field, being determined by external bodies, and it was not easy to build in many of the pedagogical strategies introduced. The fact that the form and function of knowledge, the selection, sequencing and pace, and the timing and rate of learning is determined, takes a lot of control from the lecturer. A key factor is that learner performance is 'graded and objectivised and inheres the professionalism of the teacher'. Lecturers are therefore judged by their results, and under pressure to produce examination results – even at a cost to the educational experience; and learners will often require and demand the most succinct and direct route to these ends.

Not all aspects of the performance model are negative, but when training the trainers, the constraints that they encounter need to be kept in mind. Many may not have control or input into curriculum content or assessment strategies; and may need to adopt pedagogical practices to meet the demands of the assessment. The underlying professional environment, bringing as it does particular implicit understandings, also needs to be considered and understood. Further research in this area might consider how lecturers who have to bridge this academic – professional divide find it impacts on their practice; or if, like Janet Mills, they employ a type of pedagogic schizophrenia where they behave differently in the two different contexts.

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