

Copyright 2005 Taylor & Francis First published as:

Taylor, Sandra and Singh, Parlo (2005) The logic of equity practice in Queensland State Education - 2010. *Journal of Education Policy* 20(6):pp. 725-740.

The logic of equity practice in *Education Queensland 2010*

Sandra Taylor and Parlo Singh

School of Cultural and Language Studies,
Queensland University of Technology, Australia

Contact details:

Sandra Taylor,
School of Cultural and Language Studies,
Queensland University of Technology,
s.taylor@qut.edu.au

Biographical notes:

Sandra Taylor is an Associate Professor in the School of Cultural and Language Studies at the Queensland University of Technology. She has published widely in the fields of gender and education, and critical policy analysis. She is interested in social justice in education, and in policy processes and social change.

Parlo Singh is an Associate Professor in the School of Cultural and Language Studies at the Queensland University of Technology. She worked with Basil Bernstein in the late 1980s as a research student, and as a colleague throughout the 1990s. During this time she was introduced to the powerful sociology of education ideas produced by Pierre Bourdieu. She has drawn extensively on both theorists in her many research publications.

Abstract

This paper reports on an interview based study which explored the implementation of a major policy initiative in Queensland, Australia, with particular attention to social justice issues. Interviews were conducted with key policy actors in three sections of the bureaucracy: strategic directions, performance and measurement; curriculum and assessment; and workforce and professional development. We were interested in the ways in which the tensions between redistributive and recognitive approaches to social justice were being managed in the bureaucracy. We drew on Bourdieu's concepts of field, logic of practice, political discourse, habitus, capital, and symbolic power struggles to theorise the politics of discourse associated with such policy implementation processes within bureaucracies.

The interview data revealed differences in approaches to equity issues and in the language used in the three sections of the bureaucracy. We argue that these differences, associated with the different priorities of the three sections and their differing roles in the implementation processes, reflect the different logics of practice operating within the different sections. The final section of the paper discusses the implications of the analysis for theorising equity and difference in education policy in new times, and considers the value of Bourdieu's concepts for theorising policy implementation processes.

Keywords: *social justice; education policy; field; logics of practice; bureaucracy*

The logic of equity practice in *Education Queensland 2010*

Sandra Taylor and Parlo Singh

School of Cultural and Language Studies,
Queensland University of Technology, Australia

Introduction

Educational inequality remains an on-going problem in Australia and elsewhere, and equitable provision of education remains on education policy agendas, if less centrally in recent years. The particular concern of this paper is the on-going debate about how to balance two key aspects of social justice - redistribution and recognition of difference - in education policy. A number of writers have commented on the difficulty of balancing these two aspects in policy and practice, and Fraser (1997: 13) has referred to *the redistribution-recognition dilemma*.

In the paper, we draw on Bourdieuan analytic concepts to examine struggles over the terms equity and 'difference' in the implementation process of a major education policy initiative in Queensland, Australia – Queensland State Education 2010 (hereafter *QSE 2010*). We argue that Bourdieu's work is useful for highlighting the politics of discourse associated with such policy making processes within bureaucracies. In particular we are interested in how the tensions between redistributive and recognitive approaches to social justice were discursively managed in the talk of key policy actors employed in different areas of a state education bureaucracy. We suggest that these tensions reflect the different 'logics of practice' (Bourdieu 1991, 1998) operating within the bureaucracy, and that in the pursuit of social justice in education, the 'balance' between redistributive and recognitive approaches may need to change depending on the particular field of practice involved.

In the first section of the paper, we provide a brief review of trends in conceptualising social justice in education, including how equity issues were framed in the original *QSE2010* documents. In the second section, we provide a Bourdieuan analysis of interview data collected from key policy actors involved in the implementation of *QSE 2010*. Our focus is on the ways in which terms such as equity and difference were defined in the talk of policy actors, as well as on the struggles over the meaning of these terms in different areas of the bureaucracy. The final section of the paper discusses the implications of the analysis for theorising equity and difference in educational policy in these new times, and considers the value of Bourdieu's concepts in theorising the struggles over policy implementation processes.

Conceptualising social justice in education

A brief overview of the main trends in conceptualising social justice /equity in education policy is relevant to the concerns of this paper. The ways in which the issues have been conceptualised and addressed have changed over the years, reflecting developments in theory and research, and changes in broader economic, social, technological and political contexts (Taylor et al. 1997, Taylor and Henry 2000, Henry 2001). Here we are concerned with sketching developments in conceptualising equity issues. It should be noted that there are no absolute meanings of the concepts associated with equity, social justice and educational disadvantage; rather, the terms are constituted historically and politically in specific contexts. Further, '... these constructions never constitute a coherent set of ideas but rather a pragmatic expression of what appears feasible' (Taylor et al. 1997: 132).

There are two key aspects of social justice in these ‘new times’ (Hall 1996): the economic and the cultural. Traditional approaches have been concerned mainly with economic inequality and the *redistribution of resources*. There are three main *redistributive* traditions of thinking about social justice: liberal-individualism, social democratic and market-individualism (Taylor et al. 1997: 128, Henry 2001). Recently, more attention has been given to cultural aspects of inequality and the *recognition of difference*. Thus the terms which focused mainly on socio-economic inequalities have been reworked to address inequalities based on gender, ethnicity, disability and sexuality. In addition, cultural processes of globalization, including the rapid flows of people, images, ideas, and music across the world, provide resources for a new politics of identity and have challenged racist notions of fixed, static cultural identities (Singh 2004). There have been extensive debates about these issues during the 1990s, particularly centred on the ‘redistribution-recognition dilemma’ (Fraser 1997: 13); how to reconcile ‘equality’ and ‘difference’ in education and social policy.

One example of an attempt to integrate the redistributive and recognition approaches is seen in Young’s (1990) work on social justice based on freedom from five aspects of oppression - exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence. Oppression, Young argues, cannot be addressed simply by redistributing opportunities and rewards, cultural changes are also required. A further recent conceptualisation is *justice as mutuality* (Gewirtz 1998). This approach is strongly linked to discourses of citizenship, inclusivity and building social capital, and is ‘about shifts in the nature of participation, ... about a restructuring of power relations in society’ (p. 473). More recent conceptualisations of social justice also focus broadly on *all students*. For example, *inclusive education* approaches focus on the particular linguistic and cultural needs of Indigenous students, but also provide curricular knowledge in the area of Indigenous studies for everyone. These new approaches to recognitive justice highlight what Giddens (2000) has described as the lessening holds of tradition, and the democratising of all social relationships.

Education policies have reflected these differing conceptualisations of equity and social justice, sometimes bringing different elements together in an eclectic mix. There are ongoing debates about the appropriate approach to be taken, and in particular what should be the appropriate target for programs and funding: individual disadvantaged students, recognised target groups, schools or regions, and who should be accountable for ensuring equitable education provision – policy officers, school principals, classroom teachers, and/or local communities.

Social justice and QSE 2010

The reform strategy, *QSE 2010* (Education Queensland, 2000a), was developed in response to the major challenges for education posed by the global knowledge economy in ‘New Times’, characterised in particular by the global information networked society and increased inequalities and new forms of exclusion. Although the vision statement *QSE 2010* promoted a reasonably strong social justice agenda, Taylor and Henry (2003) suggested that there were problems with the ways in which equity issues were conceptualised. The main document (Education Queensland 2000a: 17) referred to ‘at risk groups’ as ‘those who on the basis of culture, linguistic background, gender, location, or socio-economic status have been disadvantaged ...’. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with a disability were also identified. In a subsequent document specifically dealing with equity issues, *Building Success Together. The framework for students at educational risk* (Education Queensland 2000b), the term ‘students at *educational risk*’ was used, and it was argued (p. 3) that it was necessary to consider ‘another map of educational risk’ as well as ‘the needs of particular target groups’. This seemed to reflect an attempt to reconcile redistributive aspects of social justice with the recognition of difference.

In the framework for ‘students at educational risk’, however, there seemed to be a shift away from any attempt to deal with equality and difference simultaneously (Taylor & Henry, 2003).

For example, the framework document stated (Education Queensland 2000b: 3): ‘single dimension target group strategies are no longer enough to explain the interrelated and cumulative social cultural, geographic and economic impacts on communities, particularly in localised settings’. Additionally, an information leaflet about the framework stated that stereotyping about learning capacity ‘based on single factors such as race, geography, cultural or linguistic background, socioeconomic circumstance or gender, [is] inappropriate in a world where flexibility and adaptability of skills and knowledge are a primary requisite for successful participation in work, families and communities’ (Education Queensland 2000c: unpagged). Taylor and Henry (2003) were critical of the fact that target group strategies were dismissed as ‘no longer appropriate’, and that poverty issues were ‘buried’ in the broad category of ‘students at educational risk’.

Policy implementation case study

Methods and analysis

The study of the implementation of *QSE 2010* reported in this paper was conducted in 2003. We interviewed fourteen ‘key players’, in eleven separate interviews, about issues of equity and difference in the early stages of the implementation of *QSE 2010*. The policy actors interviewed for the study included relevant senior bureaucrats in Education Queensland responsible for the implementation of *QSE 2010* and one influential academic/researcher involved in the reforms. Three areas of the bureaucracy (as it was then structured) were represented in the interviews: (1) Strategic Directions, Performance and Measurement (SDP&M); (2) Curriculum and Assessment (C&A); and (3) Workforce and Professional Development (W&PD).

The interview questions explored: how equity issues were being framed; what language was used; what specific groups were being targeted; what programs were being funded, and how outcomes were being monitored. Interviews were approximately an hour in length and were audio taped and later transcribed.

The interviews were analysed in a number of phases. A discursive logic was mapped in terms of: (1) concepts relating to ‘equity in education’; (2) how various policy actors/sections of the bureaucracy defined these concepts; and (3) different procedures to address equity agendas. In the final phase, the analyses focussed on the strength of the power relations constituting various categories of discourses about ‘equity’ and ‘educational risk’. In what follows we elaborate on the Bourdieuan analytic concepts used in the data analyses.

Bourdieuan Analytic Concepts

In order to theorise the politics of discourse associated with policy implementation within bureaucracies we draw on Bourdieu’s (1991, 1998) concepts of *field*, *logic of practice*, *political discourse*, *habitus*, *capital*, and *symbolic power struggles*. Bourdieu (1998) views society as a number of overlapping fields of practice, where fields are defined as socially constituted areas of activity. These fields are largely autonomous, with their own logics of practice or ‘rules of the game’, and their own power struggles. A general feature of fields ‘requires that if one is to produce discourse successfully within a particular field, one must observe the forms and formalities of that field’ (Thompson 1991: 20). An individual’s habitus, understood as a set of durable socially constituted dispositions originally inculcated in childhood, may be adapted to the demands of a particular field as their professional habitus (Lingard et al. 2003). Professionals within a field must acquire a practical sense or ‘feel’ for the game, that is, a habitus attuned to the specific conditions of the field (Thompson 1991: 27). Strategy, then, can be viewed as the ‘habitus in action’: ‘Strategies are worked out within particular fields which are sites of struggle and which evince certain logics of practice’ (Lingard et al. 2003: 22). Such strategies are acquired by experience and ‘become embodied and turned into second nature’ (p. 23). However, Bourdieu (2000: 138) comments that the language of ‘strategy’ is misleading, because the most effective strategies, ‘being the product

of dispositions shaped by the immanent necessity of the field, tend to adjust themselves spontaneously to that necessity, without express intention or calculation’.

Crucially, a field is a social space of conflict in which agents compete to establish ‘monopoly over the species of capital effective in it ... and the power to decree the hierarchy and ‘conversion rates’ between all forms of authority in the field of power” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 17). The term capital refers to the hierarchy of valued resources within a society at any given time. These resources or forms of capital may be economic (material assets such as property, shares, money) or symbolic (immaterial assets such as knowledge, credentials, inherited social standing). Capital, fields, and agents are not fixed, static categories. Rather, agents’ struggles over valued capital/resources can alter the shape and social divisions of a field because changes to the relative worth and distribution of forms of capital translate into changes of the structure of the field (see Bourdieu 1997). For example, policy actors’ struggles over definitions of equity are essentially struggles over what constitutes valid capital or resources, and how these various forms of capital/resources should be distributed. These symbolic power struggles constitute political actions aimed at producing and imposing representations ‘(mental, verbal, visual or theatrical) of the social world’ (Bourdieu, 1991: 127). In other words, these political actions ‘aim to make or unmake groups – and, by the same token, the collective actions they can undertake to transform the social world in accordance with their interests – by producing, reproducing or destroying the representations that groups make visible for themselves and others’ (Bourdieu, 1991: 127).

As we have already indicated, agents within different sections of the bureaucracy operate according to differing logics of practice, rather than conscious, rational political strategies (Bourdieu, 2000). For example, Lingard et al. (2003) use Bourdieu’s concepts to explain differing logics of practice in education – arguing that education policy ‘derived largely from the political field tends to deal with levels of funding, funding models, structural organisation and so on, rather than with the core aspects of schooling practices, at least as seen by teachers and principals’ (p. 24). They further argue that there is a disjunction between the logics of practice of the political field and educational field, particularly in the context of school based management policies. As a result, principals have to negotiate various logics of practice. (See also, Ball’s (1994) discussion of the relationship between the context of policy text production [the state] and the context of practice [schools].) We suggest that agents *within* various sections of a bureaucracy also work according to the dominant logic of practice in their specific field of practice (Singh, 2002). For example, within the education department bureaucracy some sections will be more school oriented, others more oriented towards system wide or workforce concerns. As a result, communication between the various sections is often inadequate and tensions may arise between them. It would be expected that different logics of practice will be evident with respect to equity issues in these sub-fields, particularly given the well documented difficulties in reconciling redistribution and recognition of difference referred to earlier.

Implementation Dilemmas – Data Analysis

In the following data analysis we focus on two key themes which arose in the interview data: (1) struggles over political discourses, and (2) dominant discourses about equity in the different sections of the bureaucracy. We use the term political discourse, following Bourdieu (see Thompson, 1992: 30), to refer to the language and texts constructed by ‘sets of agents who occupy similar positions in the social space, and hence possess similar kinds and similar quantities of capital, similar life chances, similar dispositions’ in the political field. Thus political discourses are constituted by the logic of practice within a specific field, and in turn, constitute the practical logic of that field (Bourdieu, 1998). A political discourse thus involves the production or appropriation of ‘a certain vision of the social world’ by a set of agents who position ‘themselves as an identifiable group within this world’ (Thompson, 1992: 30). In terms of political discourses on equity in education, a set of agents not only needs to

produce a vision of an equitable education system, but also clearly articulate their role in the formation of this social world.

Struggles over political discourses

Language emerged as an important issue in the interviews¹ in terms of the constitution of political discourses or official state policies on equity issues – and was clearly significant in the implementation processes. Although the language used in the framework document was ‘students at educational risk’, two years on there were a number of variations in the language used,

...the biggest discussion around this paper has been, you know, who are we actually talking about? [Int. C, SDP&M]

Terms used in the interviews to refer to equity issues were: ‘inclusive’, ‘inclusion’, ‘students at educational risk’, ‘students most at risk’, ‘those who have disengaged, or likely to disengage from schooling’, and ‘at riskness’.

Two people referred explicitly to the lack of a common language to discuss the issues:

I don't think there is a shared language in a lot of areas in here ...One of the things that I have commented on in the past is there is no shared language which is a deep language to allow, for instance, engineers by the introduction of themselves as engineers it's a coded language of how to have a deep conversation. There is no shared language in education to have a deep conversation. [Int. A, SDP&M]

... we might use the word ‘inclusive’ but we don't use it as a common sort of word in that policy. We use more ‘engagement’. I don't think we have a common understanding in the school communities. ‘Inclusion’ is a word we use in the State sector, not the non-government sector. ‘Inclusion’ is not a word used in the training sector so I mean this reform that we - is for all young people, so I've got to make sure the language we use is understood by all. [Int. I, SDP&M]

Several interviewees suggested that language choice was constrained by the wider political context. For example, there was a pragmatic choice to adopt the ‘new language’ of ‘risk’, preferred by the Minister of Education.

I don't know whether it was cross-government discourse or wherever, but it was that we couldn't have that old language of social justice or target groups ... The new language was ‘risk’. And so I suppose what we tried to do when we wrote that stuff was ... it was that sort of pragmatism ... to get it as good as it could be – and make it tight re accountabilities ... [Int. G, Academic]

Others, however, rejected the language of risk:

Yeah, so I guess what I'm - I don't use the ‘at risk’ language very much at all. I try to argue that, you know, kids will become more or less included, more or less enabled or disabled, more or less vulnerable in schooling because of the existence of a number of barriers to participation and so on. [Int. H, C&A]

Another person pointed out the problems with the term ‘inclusion’ because of its association with disabilities:

...the struggle that we have at the moment is that inclusion has a strong identification with students with disabilities. So originally it was like integration and people saw that ... integration ... was only part of the issue and so inclusion was more important. And so the struggle that we have is that when we talk about inclusive education people would hear students with disabilities... And so our difficulty has been and still is trying to broaden the notion of inclusive education and that's a difficult thing. [Int. B, C&A]

Several people referred to problems with the word ‘policy’ within the bureaucracy at that time, for example:

There’s an anti-policy environment. And I can understand that. I think that the old idea that you can change the system by policy is not one that you can really believe in. [Int. D, C&A]

But there is this notion that there were so many policies and they were just stuff written on paper... and there were too many for anyone and so they needed to be ... and I know, speaking to people in Ed Queensland now, they think that all of the policy officers and having a big central bureaucracy has taken away from out there in the schools, and it’s about the paper production of stuff, rather than the practice. [Int. G, Academic]

While several people expressed concerns about the use of the word ‘policy’ to describe their work, one interviewee explicitly identified as a non-policy person, referring to herself as a ‘schoolie’.

In terms of the policy work I’m doing now ... and it’s interesting, I’m not a policy person and it’s interesting they want to pick a schoolie to lead ... and that’s symbolic in itself

....

And so I work with all these policy people, they have a certain arrogance about it, but that’s life. But anyway, so I’m trying to make sure that my understanding about what improves outcomes for kids is integral to our thinking.... [Int. I, SDP&M]

These tensions which emerged seemed to reflect different logics of practice within the bureaucracy. One interviewee explicitly mentioned the link between the different sections of the bureaucracy and the language used:

So in one way for the political frame you have to - that has to be expressed in a particular language, another language when it comes into this end of the organization and then when you’re looking in schools it’s different again. [Int. H, C&A]

At the same time, however, we are not implying that the different language used by policy actors is simply a function of different work priorities and practices. The stronger the boundary between different sub-fields of the bureaucracy, the stronger the specialization of professional habitus, and thus language used to conceptualise educational problems and solutions. Struggles over language are also struggles over professional identity and work roles/tasks, as well as struggles over gaining a fair share of financial resources to carry out bureaucratic work (see Maton 2000). Note for example, the self-labelling of one of the policy actors as a ‘schoolie’ in contrast to a ‘policy person’. Note also that the shift in language from equity to inclusive education can work to dismantle whole sectors of the bureaucracy dealing specifically with equity target group issues, and thus weaken the political power of this group to assert their vision of the social world.

Bourdieu (1991) has argued that the professional habitus of policy actors is constituted by their positioning within various sub-fields of the bureaucracy, and the relation of a particular sub-field to other sub-fields of the bureaucracy (eg dominant, subordinate, marginal positioning). Moreover, struggles over language or discursive struggles have real material consequences not only for the policy actors (in terms of defining professional identities, work tasks, resources allocated), but also for teachers and students in schools. Thus, actors positioned within different sub-fields of the bureaucracy are always likely to be engaged in

ideological power struggles over defining what counts as social justice in education. The discursive or language terrain is a crucial arena in these power struggles.

The problem with ‘policy’ may also be related to the neoliberal policy regimes which have seen a move away from ‘the old policy roll out’ to more decentralised approaches to education policy making associated with economic globalisation. In this context schools have been encouraged to be more policy productive rather than simply policy receptive, and to be more accountable in delivering equitable outcomes.

Managing the Redistributive and Recognitive Aspects of Equity

In this section we use extracts from the interview data to illustrate in more detail how equity issues were being conceptualised in the different sections of the bureaucracy: Strategic Directions, Performance and Measurement; Curriculum and Assessment; and Workforce and Professional Development. We are specifically interested in analysing how policy actors in sub-fields of the education bureaucracy managed the redistributive and recognitive dimensions of social justice. We use extracts from one interview from each of the areas for illustrative purposes.

From *Strategic Directions, Performance and Measurement*, where the approach to equity issues was goal driven, focussed on performance, and driven by evidence, we draw on Interview A:

So in terms of Destination 2010 [implementation document], we are driving that performance agenda putting a real hard edge behind it.

The concept of ‘equity’ was subsumed in the concept of ‘inclusive’, with a focus on tracking individual students within the system. Equity is seen as having been an ‘add-on’, targeting groups on the basis of deficit.

... within the individual focus approach there is no notion of equity. There is a notion of different needs but we are operating that full and inclusive model, full stop. ...

... obviously, what I’ve articulated here is an inclusive model, that is, diametrically opposed to a model where you have a traditional 1970s, 1980s equity approach. It doesn’t mean that you’re not interested. It’s a systems approach for how you do it.

...

So we have one target group now - and that’s every kid, full stop.

This interviewee argued that Education Queensland was adopting a *pro-active intervention model* where difference is treated as an *up-front asset, rather than ... as an add-on*. System solutions are advocated through inclusion and measuring outcomes, and through lighthouse success programs where performance is enhanced by transferring knowledge from successful to less successful schools. Performance is ‘the driver’, assessed through systematic monitoring:

Once you start tracking every single kid in the State you start seeing some obvious patterns. You start seeing some obvious success stories and you start seeing ways to build bridge patterns between schools that are significantly delivering and those that are not. You then put in place the analytical framework to allow those sort of research areas to go ahead. If we don’t have the research...Some of the ongoing work within the pathways stuff which is just appearing under the ETRF [Education

and Training for the Future – one aspect of the reform agenda] is about having initial research to actually find out what's happening.

The problem with this approach is that it is individualised: equity issues may be lost and may be subsumed within individual differences. Trying to ensure that all students succeed in the system is an appropriate goal but to achieve the goal a more targeted approach is needed. Focussing so exclusively on 'performative' aspects of the bureaucracy seems to leave out other aspects of institutional outcomes (see Lyotard 1985). Further, referring to difference as an 'up front asset' glosses over inequality and disadvantage, and in some senses could be said to be 'equity blind'.

We draw on Interview B conducted with a senior bureaucrat from the Inclusive Education Unit (now disbanded) as the example from the *Curriculum and Assessment Section*. For this interviewee, *inclusive education* has replaced the concept of equity:

When you look at all of the information that we have, whether it be assessment information or simply anecdotal reported information, there are kids that our system is not doing well with. And they're the kids who are Indigenous that the system is not responding well to; there are kids with disabilities that our system struggles with; there are kids who are from socially isolated or geographically isolated; there are kids who are - for whom school is boring and doesn't engage them; there are kids who aren't interested in school and [the] school doesn't know how to respond to them; there are kids from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds... And so when we looked at all of the areas where the system wasn't doing well and actually could do better, that became the area of focus for the inclusive education branch. Because our role then is how we work with the system to improve. How the system responds to all of these groups without setting up separate mechanisms for response - so, actually working with the mainstream to do it ...

A deficit model is avoided by placing the focus on the system. Equity issues are addressed by a system approach, through inclusion and measuring outcomes. This interviewee explained that:

...inclusive education is a process that responds to individuals within the system and it's a process where we're trying to increase presence, access, participation and achievement of all students and how we use those – why we use those terms and what they mean is presence is like – 'Well, who are the kids in our schools and in our system and who are the kids who aren't?' And, 'Why aren't they in there? And what are we doing about it?' And that can be any kids – you know – like across all of – all of this.

The Inclusive Education Unit contributed to mainstream programs and also managed targeted programs. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and students with disabilities are separated out from the remaining 'equity groups' which were grouped together with other 'problem' categories such as behaviour management. This is consistent with the classification used in *The framework for students at educational risk* document (Education Queensland 2000b), discussed earlier.

This interviewee raised problems with the term 'inclusion' because of its association with disabilities, and suggested that the Inclusive Education Unit would not use the term 'disadvantaged' to refer to students:

We would use the term 'at educational risk' because that puts the onus or focus on the system, rather than on the individual.

The system operates on the principle of differential distribution of resources to schools, and schools may or may not choose to apply resources differentially to students 'at educational risk'. In this context, where schools are not named as disadvantaged as they were in the past, equity issues are likely to easily become marginalized. Further, the lack of relevant data for schools to use to identify the key issues for which they are seeking departmental funding was raised as a problem.

This interviewee raised recognition of difference in discussing the approach to cultural difference:

... culture is one of the ones where we are trying to move the agenda. We would talk about cultural affirmation ...in what we're trying to do ... but not limit that to saying that that's only for the kids who are different.... Like cultural affirmation is something that we all need and for people who are in the dominant culture that happens automatically. So what we would want to be doing - well, what we try and do is to really unpack that for kids. So through the curriculum it's to unpack ... the fact that one person's culture won't get questioned because they're the dominant culture but another person's culture does. ...And how does that impact on them as an individual and their culture and all that sort of thing. So we would try and unpack that across all of the cultures. ...Not to actually just say, 'It's for those who are the minority cultures'.

This person's expertise in equity issues was evident in their understandings of the complexity of the issues: there are issues for those who are from cultural minority backgrounds as well as issues for the mainstream. The issue of active citizenship was also raised in this interview, reflecting ideas coming from more recent conceptualisations of social justice discussed earlier in the paper.

A rather different perspective on equity issues was put forward by a bureaucrat in the *Workforce and Professional Development* area, illustrated by extracts from Interview J. The terminology used here was 'diversity', where it was seen to be important that the workforce was diverse and representative of the student population.

The student population is already diverse and we have a workforce that's - I wouldn't say 'generic' but it doesn't reflect the population or the community that ... they serve. So while we do have Indigenous teachers and workers and whatever, there's no way in the world that we can actually say that that reflects the student population. It doesn't, it's way off...

If you have an increasingly diverse population, which we are, and you haven't got an increasingly diverse workforce that matches that, then essentially, what you will have - and over time - is a marginalised group of people who don't contribute to economic success, they actually detract from it. So the notion of trying to achieve a more diverse workforce is to actually have as many people from as many cultures working successfully to achieve that notion of educated learning as part of being a member of [a] productive society.

...

So when I say it's becoming increasingly diverse, it's noticeably more diverse than it was because more people from different cultures have found their voice...

Here equity is viewed as relatively uncomplicated – diversity is harnessed by targeting equity groups otherwise some groups are likely to be marginalised from the learning agenda. There seems to be a lack of awareness of the complexities of this approach, particularly in terms of the politics of representation. Although attention is given to diversity, this interviewee draws

on the discourse of ‘productive diversity’ which is driven by economic rather than social imperatives, and is associated with market approaches to social justice (Taylor et al. 1997). It should be noted that the interview conducted in this section of the bureaucracy was shorter than the others, and this policy actor had less to say about equity issues.

Discussion and implications

The study raises a number of questions about how social justice issues are being managed in new times. It also contributes to understandings about the broader policy making processes occurring in education bureaucracies.

Implications for social justice

Our study has explored how a number of key policy actors in the Education Queensland bureaucracy attempted to manage the contradictory components of the redistributive and recognitive aspects of equity. We suggest that the different accounts provided by those interviewed may reflect their differential positioning within various sub-fields of the education bureaucracy. Those interviewed were responsible for different aspects of policy implementation. Moreover, the various sub-fields of the bureaucracy: Strategic Directions, Performance and Measurement; Curriculum and Assessment Section; Workforce and Professional Development – are likely to regulate the habitus of bureaucrats and therefore their accounts of educational equality. At the same time, different sections of the bureaucracy are likely to attract recruits with the appropriate habitus.

The interview data revealed differences in approaches to equity issues and in language used in the three sections of the bureaucracy, to some extent reflecting the ambiguities in the original documents discussed earlier in the paper. There was no clear conceptualisation of ‘students at educational risk’ beyond a rejection of a deficit approach. In the interviews which we reported in detail, all three of the policy actors interviewed explicitly distanced themselves from the deficit approaches to addressing inequality seen in the past. However, they did this in different ways: in Interview A, difference was seen as an asset; in Interview B, the emphasis was placed on the system as the problem (and the solution) rather than on the student; in Interview J, diversity was seen as an advantage for the organisation and relevant to learning issues for equity groups. The agents are aware that they can no longer use a language that may depict particular groups in negative ways, and recognise their own symbolic power position in evoking and articulating performative discourses (Bourdieu 1991).

However shifts in language are not in themselves enough to effect more fundamental changes in approach which are necessary in implementing major educational reforms. They may easily result in equity issues slipping off agendas, or becoming recontextualised as individual differences, as seen in Interview A. While the shift in language to view difference as an asset is apparently positive, it ignores the existence of both material disadvantage and cultural oppression, and could be said to be in some ways ‘equity blind’. Further, avoiding the language of ‘equity groups’ means that the particular needs of these groups are glossed over, and economic and cultural differences become recontextualised as individual differences.

There was evidence from the interviews that the introduction of the ‘students at educational risk’ language was influenced by political considerations. Despite the intention to avoid deficit notions, it seemed that the *Framework for Students at Educational Risk* was in fact widely read in deficit terms. According to this framework, principals were required to identify individual students at educational risk and develop strategies to address this risk. As a result, rather than avoiding a deficit approach, the framework actually reinforced it. Although a principal might identify a whole group of students at educational risk, for the process of identification it was necessary to develop strategies specific to the needs of individual students.

Problems also emerged with the subsequent move to use the term *inclusion*. Once again there were political pressures behind this shift. It had been intended to define the term inclusion broadly to encompass social justice issues in general. However, this proved to be difficult because of the association of the term with disabilities, and its ‘capture’ by the disabilities area. As a result, it came to have a much narrower meaning within the bureaucracy than had been intended. Once again this shows the political struggles over meaning which characterise policy processes, and the relationship between language, power relations and social change (Fairclough 1992, 2003).

Similarly, but in a different context, the concepts of difference and educational risk were ‘captured’ by the demand for accountability, reflecting market versions of social justice. One interviewee from the Inclusive Education Unit said that as soon as the issues of difference, and students having multiple identities were raised, they were told that more complex multi-variate analysis was needed:

... and at that point it became an issue owned by the data people... And they started to put together all these graphs and pie charts and whatever, that weren't telling us anything new. ... So it became a data issue rather than, 'Let's create a more accessible way of talking about kids and their lives and their families'. [Int. D, C&A]

As a result, this person said that people from the Inclusive Education Unit felt excluded from engagement with the issues. The discourses of ‘*target groups*’ and ‘*anything else*’ which had attracted agents to work in the Inclusive Education Unit were effectively replaced by the new equity discourse of ‘*educational risk*’.

In relation to the redistribution-recognition dilemma, of the three interviews analysed in detail, only Interviewee B showed awareness of the complexities of the issues, of the need to balance both aspects of social justice. More awareness of cultural issues, of the fact that recognition of difference is relevant for *all* students, and of more recent conceptualisations of social justice, such as justice as mutuality (Gewirtz 1998), was also shown in this interview.

However, in relation to the pursuit of social justice in education, it may well be that the ‘balance’ between redistributive and recognitive approaches may need to change depending on the particular field and logic of practice involved. For example, the emphasis may need to be on *redistributive* aspects when funding, the provision of services and monitoring of student outcomes are the concern, but on *recognition of difference* in relation to classrooms and pedagogy.

Policy implementation processes

The focus on equity issues illustrates the complexities of the political struggles within the subfields of the bureaucracy we have examined. There was some support in the study for the notion of different logics of practice in these sub-fields associated with the different priorities of the three sections and their different roles in implementing *QSE 2010*. There was some evidence of poor communication between different sections, a problem with ‘policy’, and a dichotomy between ‘policy people’ and ‘schoolies’. Further, in the three interviews reported in more detail, the focus was mainly on *system* issues in interviews A and I, and more on *school* issues in interview B. However, this interviewee seemed to be able to negotiate between the different logics of practice in other sub-fields, and discussed system issues as well as school issues.

The study has also demonstrated some of the ways in which new education policy regimes are playing out in the implementation of *QSE 2010*, resulting from changes in the traditional hierarchical relationship between the centre and periphery. Decentralisation has been associated with a move away from ‘top down’ approaches to policy making towards more participation at the local level. However, this study is based on a small number of interviews

and is therefore limited. These issues need to be investigated further in a more comprehensive study.

Bourdieu argues that the discourses produced by professionals are determined by two broad sets of constraints: one derives from the logic of the field itself, in which professionals are competing with one another, taking stances vis-à-vis one another. In this respect, their utterances make sense only in relation to other utterances issued from other positions in the same field. As Thompson (1991: 27) comments:

It is for this reason that a specific field appears to many people outside of this field as a kind of esoteric culture with which they have little sympathy or empathy: they feel distanced from it, not so much because they fail to understand the words, but because they fail to understand why a distinction between words could matter so much, since they are not themselves involved in the constant attempt to define a distinctive position in the field.

The second set of constraints derives, not from the field itself, but from the relation between the field and a broader range of social positions, groups and processes. Therefore, as Thompson (1991: 29) explains, if we want to understand these relationships fully, 'there is no alternative to a careful, rigorous reconstruction of the fields and of the links between the positions and agents within them'. Additionally, in relation to our study, it is clear that these sub-fields are being regularly reconstituted due to restructuring. For example, as mentioned, since the interviews were conducted the Inclusive Education Unit has been disbanded and equity issues have been 'mainstreamed'. Currently there are concerns about these developments and the implications for the social justice agenda outlined in 2000 in *QSE 2010*.

The study reported in this paper examined struggles over conceptions of social justice in education by key policy actors. We argued that the discourses articulated by policy actors concerning issues of social justice were in part constituted by their positioning within sub-fields of the education bureaucracy. The concepts drawn from Bourdieu have provided a useful base for theorising and analysing the policy implementation processes which were the focus of our empirical study. We suggest that Bourdieu's work has much to offer other researchers investigating the politics of discourse which characterise educational policy making processes in these new times.

Acknowledgement

We wish to thank the people who willingly gave up their time to be interviewed for the research.

Note

1. To ensure confidentiality, each interview was labelled alphabetically. The location of the interviewee is indicated in the extracts as follows: SDP&M (Strategic Directions, Performance and Management), C&A (Curriculum and Assessment) and W&PD (Workforce and Professional Development.)

References

- Ball, S. (1994) *Educational Reform: A critical and post-structural approach* (Buckingham: Open University Press).
- Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Bourdieu, P. (1997). The forms of capital, in A. H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown and A. Stuart Wells (eds.), *Education. Culture, Economy and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 46-58.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998) *Practical Reason. On the Theory of Action* (trans. R. Nice). (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Bourdieu, P. (2000) *Pascalian Meditations* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. D. (1992) *An invitation to reflexive sociology* (Oxford: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers Ltd).
- Education Queensland (2000a) *Queensland State Education – 2010*. (Brisbane: Education Queensland).
- Education Queensland (2000b) *Building Success Together. The framework for students at educational risk* (Brisbane: Education Queensland).
- Education Queensland (2000c) *Building Success Together. The framework for students at educational risk* (Brisbane: Education Queensland)(Information leaflet).
- Fairclough, N. (1992) *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Fairclough, N. (2003) *Analysing Discourse and Text: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge).
- Fraser, N. (1997) *Justice Interruptus. Critical Reflections on the 'Post-Socialist' Condition* (London: Routledge).
- Gewirtz, S. (1998) Conceptualising social justice in education: mapping the territory, *Journal of Education Policy*, 13, 4, 469 - 484.
- Giddens, A. (2000) *Runaway World. How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives* (New York: Routledge).
- Hall, S. (1996) The meaning of new times, in D. Morley and K. Chen (eds.), *Stuart Hall. Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge), 223-237.
- Henry, M. (2001) *Policy Approaches to Educational Disadvantage and Equity in Australian Schooling*. (Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning).
- Henry, M., Lingard, B., Rizvi and Taylor, S. (2001) *The OECD, Globalisation and Policy Making in Education*. (Oxford: Pergamon Press).
- Lingard, B., Hayes, D., Mills, M. and Christie, P. (2003) *Leading Learning: Making hope practical in schools*. (Buckingham: Open University Press).

- Lyotard, J. F. (1985) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).
- Maton, K. (2000) Languages of legitimation: The structuring significance for intellectual fields of strategic knowledge claims, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 21(2), 147-167.
- Singh, P. (2002) Pedagogising knowledge: Bernstein's Theory of the Pedagogic Device, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 23, 4, 571-582.
- Singh, P (2004) Globalization and education, Review Essay, *Educational Theory*, 54, 1, 103-115.
- Taylor, S. (1997) Critical policy analysis: exploring contexts, texts, and consequences, *Discourse*, 17, 3, 23-35.
- Taylor, S. and Henry, M. (2000) Challenges for equity policy in changing contexts, *Australian Educational Researcher*, 27, 3, 1-15.
- Taylor, S. and Henry, M. (2003) Social justice in a global context: Education Queensland's 2010 Strategy, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 7, 4, 337-55.
- Taylor, S., Rizvi, F., Lingard, B. and Henry, M. (1997) *Educational Policy and the Politics of Change* (London: Routledge).
- Taylor, S. (2004) Researching educational policy and change in 'new times': using critical discourse analysis, *Journal of Education Policy*, 19, 4, 433-451.
- Thompson, J. B. (1991) Editor's introduction, in P. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, (Cambridge: Polity Press), 1-30.
- Young, I. M. (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).