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A Sociological Approach to the Rights of Children in Greek Primary Education

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A Sociological Approach to the Rights of Children in Greek Primary Education

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Abstract

The aim of this research paper, which makes use of Basil Bernstein's theoretical framework, is the investigation of the rights of children in relation to education, as they are set out in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and as they are perceived by the pupils themselves through the pedagogical practices of their teachers in the primary schools. At the same time the degree of differentiation in the teachers' pedagogical practices regarding the application of these rights is investigated. This research was carried out in Patras, with pupils in year 6 of primary school, using the semi-structured interview as a tool for the collection of research data. The main findings of this study revealed that two of the four rights of the children (the right to rest, leisure and play, and the right to freedom of expression and participation) were significantly restricted through the visible pedagogical practices that the teachers applied at the micro-level of the school classroom. In addition, the pedagogical practices applied, concerning the right to primary consideration of the pupils' best interests and the right to equal treatment, tend towards the rules of an invisible pedagogy, which favours more the common processes of knowledge uptake amongst all the pupils.

Keywords: rights of the child, primary schools, code, visible pedagogy, invisible pedagogy

Un Enfoque Sociológico de los Derechos de la Infancia en la Educación Primaria Griega

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Resumen

El objetivo de este trabajo de investigación, que hace uso del esquema teórico de Basil Bernstein, es la investigación de los derechos de los niños sobre la educación, tal como se establece en la Convención Internacional sobre los Derechos del Niño (1989), y tal como están percibido por los alumnos a través de las prácticas pedagógicas de sus profesores en las escuelas primarias. Al mismo tiempo, se investiga el grado de diferenciación de las prácticas pedagógicas de los docentes con respecto a la aplicación de estos derechos. Para llevar a cabo esta investigación, en la que participaron los alumnos de sexto año de las escuelas primarias del área de Patras, se utilizó la herramienta de la entrevista semiestructurada para la recolección de datos de investigación. Los principales hallazgos de este estudio revelaron que dos de los cuatro derechos de los niños (el derecho al descanso, el ocio y el juego, y el derecho a la libertad de expresión y participación) se vieron significativamente restringidos por las prácticas pedagógicas visibles que los profesores aplicaron en el micro-nivel de la clase de la escuela. Además, las prácticas pedagógicas aplicadas, relativas al derecho a la consideración primaria del interés superior de los alumnos y el derecho a la igualdad de trato, tienden hacia las reglas de una pedagogía invisible, que favorece más los procesos comunes de aceptación del conocimiento entre todos los alumnos.

Palabras clave: derechos de la infancia, escuelas primarias, código, pedagogía visible, pedagogía invisible

The concepts of “childhood” and “childlikeness” are closely linked with the rights of the child, which emerged historically almost in parallel with these concepts. Until the 1960s and 1970s, the dominant perceptions even in developed western society saw children as the property of their parents. These perceptions began to change radically and the concepts “child”, “childlikeness” and “childhood” emerged more and more as concepts that referred to the rights of the child. The view of the child as a separate entity with particular needs, was shaped during the previous two centuries due to the economic, socio-political and spiritual developments that took place in the western world. The significant consequences of these developments were the transfer of the duty to protect the child from the family to the state, and the creation of an ecumenical view of the child and his rights (Balias, 2011, p. 26).

On 20th November, 1989, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is an attempt to protect the child's right to learning, growth and quality of life, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly with an overwhelming majority. The aim of the convention is as much the defence of the child's interests as the “preparation” of a society which will be called on to incorporate and support them (Hart & Hart, 2014, p. 7). The International Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989) establishes and broadens the central idea that all children have the right to education. Hence, it is founded on the development of the following four crucial pillars within the field of education (Clair, Miske, & Patel, 2012, p. 7):

- The right of the pupil to rest, leisure and to engage in play (Article 31 – UNCRC)
- The right to participation and freedom of expression (Articles 12 & 13 – UNCRC)
- The right to primary consideration of the children's best interests (Article 3 – UNCRC)
- The right to equal treatment (Article 2 – UNCRC)

We should point out that in this paper we will be concerned with these four particular rights of the child, which are referred to in the “interpretive map” of the rights of the child (Luxembourg Resolution 20011 and

International Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989) and which focus on the educational field.

As we enter the 21st century, the right to education is nothing more than the right of every citizen in the modern world's to participation. So, education is linked to the rights of the child in those educational practices that are considered to be compatible with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is a form of education which takes the belief that the children have rights as future citizens seriously. From this point of view schools are approached as democratic communities where children learn the values and practice of the responsible active citizen (Howe & Covell, 2005, pp. 1067-1087).

In addition, schools have been organised with the aim of teaching, and the provision of knowledge, and so, the participation of children is often restricted exclusively to the learning process (Oster & Starkey, 2006, pp. 313-333). However, schools also constitute institutionalised "cultural relays" of society, which take on the development and education of children. This means that schools are responsible for the socialization of young people and comprise the space within which the UNCRC can be implemented (Hart & Hart, 2014, p. 7).

Research results in the international space revealed the significance of the learning and application of the rights of children in school (Covell, 2010; Franklin, 1989; Lo, Leung, & Yuen, 2015; Pavlovic & Leban, 2009). The UNCRC (1989) highlighted the need for educational reform aimed at the creation of a friendly educational environment for the children which would chiefly promote the "voice" of the children in order for their rights to be "heard" (Clair et al., 2012, p. 6).

Most research from the international field focuses mainly on children's right to participation and freedom of expression (Baroutsis, McGregor, & Mills, 2015; Harcourt & Hagglund, 2013; Johnny, 2005, 2006; Konstantoni, 2013; Molinari, Melotti, & Emiliani, 2002; Smith, 2007), as well as on their right to leisure and play within the educational process (Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008). In addition, they approach in particular the children's right to participation and freedom of expression in an environment, like that of the school, where power should be shared amongst all of those involved (teachers – pupils) and not be enforced on the pupils (Dayton & Proffitt

Dupre, 2009; Gilleece & Cosgrove, 2012; Hart & Hart, 2014; Johnson, 2010; Lundy & McEvoy, 2011; Mason, 1999; Merey, 2012; Ndfirepi & Cross, 2015).

A review of the literature in the Greek space revealed a great lack of research concerning teaching and learning about children's rights, as much by the teachers, as by the pupils. In addition, research gaps were revealed concerning the teachers' pedagogical practices for the application or not of children's rights within the framework of the school (Asimaki, Koustourakis, Lagiou, & Tampourlou, 2016; Balias & Michalopoulou, 2015; Pitsou, 2014).

The aim of this research paper is dual. It concerns, firstly, the investigation of the children's views on their rights in the school field of primary education, as they appear to perceive them through the pedagogical practices of their teachers. Secondly, it concerns the tracing of the degree of differentiation of the teachers' pedagogical practices, from the perspective of the pupils, in terms of their rights in school.

This paper begins with the theoretical framework which focuses on concepts from Basil Bernstein's theory, followed by the section on the research questions and methodology and then our research results are presented and analysed. The paper closes with the section containing the discussion and conclusions.

Theoretical Framework

According to Bernstein's theoretical framework (1989, 1990, 1996, 2000), the concept of code2 is absolutely relevant to pedagogical practices. Code constitutes a regulative principle within which class regulated power relations are set out, together with the principles of social control. From this point of view, the concept of code defines the implementation, choice and the suitable combination of pedagogical practices, in other words the forms of their application as well as the context of their expression.

The concepts of border, classification (C) and framing (F) (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 21-22; Bernstein, 1990, pp. 11-12; McLean, Abbas, & Ashwin, 2012, p. 265) are directly related to the concept of code in Bernstein's theoretical framework. Borders3 may refer to either social contracts and

“techniques” that differentiate social groups in time and space, to the cognitive contents or even the stages of the processes. Based on the symbolism and their contents, the borders are taken up by the acting subjects and can be reproduced and maintained (Atkinson, 1985, p. 27; Bernstein, 1989, p. 26).

The concept of classification depends on and is defined based on the strength of the border between the different categories that are created. In other words, it is potentially addressed to the condition of power which can determine “what can be set with what”, forming a category, such as for example in this case the exercise of power on the part of all the teachers in our sample, and may also determine the strength of the separation between the social groups (Bernstein, 1989, p. 25; McLean et al., 2012, p. 266; Hoadley, 2007, p. 683; Sriprakash, 2011, p. 528). The concept of framing concerns the control that the transmitters (teachers) and acquirers (students) have in terms of the choice, organization, the time frame, pacing and evaluation of the knowledge that is being channeled and acquired within the pedagogical relationship. Strong framing always requires and determines clear borders. In contrast, when it is weak, it requires indistinct borders between what can and cannot be transmitted (Bernstein, 1989, p. 68; McLean et al., 2012, p. 266; Hoadley, 2007, p. 683). According to the above, the pedagogical relationship between the transmitters and the acquirers may result in the pupils not being given a margin to take action and initiatives. Within this context at the microlevel of the school classroom the pedagogical relationship that develops between the transmitter (teacher) and the acquirer (pupil) is obviously more distinct, and clear to the pupils. What’s more, the “modalities” of the educational practices, in other words the “exchanges” that take place within the pedagogical relationship can be clearly discerned⁵ (Cause, 2010, pp. 3-8).

According to Bernstein each pedagogical practice is defined as a “cultural relay”⁶. Moreover, the main relationship for cultural reproduction is the pedagogical relationship which is made up of transmitters (teachers) and acquirers (pupils) (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 111-114, 125; McLean et al., 2012, p. 268). The fundamental structure of each pedagogical relationship is linked to the interaction of three rules which are the hierarchical rules, the sequencing rules and the criterial rules. In Bernstein’s theoretical

framework, the hierarchical rules are the most important. These rules determine the internality of each pedagogical relationship between the transmitter and the acquirer (Hoadley, 2006, pp. 21-26; Lamnias, 2002, p. 85). The acquisition of the rules of social order, morals and conduct is a dominant requirement⁷ for the development of appropriate behaviours within the framework of the pedagogical relationship (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 114-115). The sequencing rules focus on and regulate each pedagogical practice in relation to the progress of a transmission which is made up of the rules of sequencing and pacing. Pacing that is linked to the transmission of knowledge refers to the length of time given to the acquirers (pupils) in order for them to take up and acquire the particular “quantity” of knowledge (Bernstein, 1989, p. 115; Bernstein, 1990, pp. 57-58). Finally, the criterial rules make known to the acquirers what is considered appropriate or inappropriate communication and social position within the framework of each pedagogical relationship⁸ (Bernstein, 1989, p. 116; Bernstein, 1990, p. 58; Bernstein, 1996, p. 50).

Hierarchical rules can be either explicit or implicit. Hence, when within the context of each pedagogical relationship that develops between teachers and pupils, the power relationships are clear and determined then the particular rules are explicit (strong Framing: F++/F+). It is a relationship of explicit compliance and imposition of power. In the case where power is hidden, through communicative strategies, between the teacher and the pupil, the hierarchical rules are implicit (weak Framing: F--/F-)⁹ (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 117-118; Bernstein, 1990, p. 61; Singh, 2002, p. 577). What's more, the explicit rules of sequencing and pacing of the transmission of knowledge limit the timetable of the pupils and are set out in the daily timetables, curricula and also appear in rules of behavior. When the sequencing rules are implicit the pupil doesn't have clear and obvious knowledge of his timetable as this is “constructed” and “managed” by the teacher only (Bernstein, 1989, p. 118; Bernstein, 1990, p. 58-61). Finally, the criterial rules may be explicit or implicit. In the first case the criteria that the acquirer (pupil) must satisfy have been made specific and clear, while in the second case the pupil is aware of the criteria only in a very general and indefinite way (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 121-122; Frandji & Vitale, 2011, p. 160). This means that the acquirer is given “space” and ostensibly

at least conditions of external obligation within the context of the communicative pedagogical relationship between teacher and pupil are restricted, so that the latter can construct his own ‘spontaneous’ text¹⁰. Finally, Bernstein claims that when the rules above are explicit in their entirety, then a type of pedagogical practice is created which he calls “visible pedagogy”. In contrast, when the rules are implicit then Bernstein calls this particular type of pedagogical practice “invisible pedagogy” (Bernstein, 1989, p. 122; Bernstein, 1990, pp. 61-64; Loo, 2007, pp. 9-19). From this perspective, within the micro-level of the school classroom, the effect of power within the pedagogical relationship may become evident, whether this is aimed at the acquisition of regulative or discursive rules¹¹ (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 116-117). Within this framework it is likely that an overshadowing of the rights of the children concerning education, as those are defined by the UNCRC may be evident.

Research Questions & Methodology

In this paper, we attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. How do the pupils perceive, through the pedagogical practices of their teachers in primary schools, the rights of children concerning education that are set out in the UNCRC?
2. In the opinion of the pupils, is there any differentiation in terms of their teachers’ pedagogical practices related to the application of their rights within the schools they attend?

This research was carried out during the 2015-2016 school year and lasted from January until May 2016. The sample was made up of twenty (20) pupils (4 boys and 16 girls) in Year 6 of Primary schools in Patras. More specifically, these pupils came from 5 schools in the city which were considered to be representative of its cultural diversity. Patra is the third largest city in Greece and is also an important port linking the country to the rest of Europe, something that has contributed to the concentration of a significant number of immigrants, the majority of whom comes from Albania (Maroukis, 2010).

As far as the demographic features of the pupils in the sample are concerned, 17 were natives (85%) and 3 came from Albanian immigrant families (15%). As far as the educational level of the native parents is concerned, the majority of the fathers (10 subjects, 58.8%) and mothers (12 subjects, 70.6%) were lyceum graduates. In addition, there was a significant percentage of parents with higher education qualifications (tertiary education graduates: 7 fathers, 41.2% and 5 mothers, 29.4%). As far as the educational level of the immigrant parents was concerned, all of them were junior high school graduates.

To carry out the research we chose 'convenient', 'symptomatic' or 'easy' sampling (Robson, 2007, p. 314). More specifically, more girls than boys took part in this research, for two reasons. Firstly, girls were in the majority¹² in the school classrooms in which we carried out the research, and secondly parental consent had to be ensured for the pupils who took part in the research and consent had been granted for more girls than boys. It is noted that according to the ethical principles the participation of the pupils in the interview process was based on the signed consent of their parents (Creswell, 2011; Spiliopoulou, Koustourakis, Asimaki, & Kiprianos, 2018).

The semi-structured interview was used as research tool and this allowed us to delve more deeply into the research sample's answers and highlight their attitudes (Bell, 2007, pp. 209-213). For the needs of the research, and in order to investigate the teachers' pedagogical practices in relation to the exercise of the children's rights through their views, we formed a suitable guide for semi-structured interview questions, divided into thematic areas which included the following axes: a) the right of children to play, leisure and rest, b) the right to freedom of expression and participation, c) the right to primary consideration of the children's best interests, and d) the children's right to equal treatment. The guide to the semi-structured interview was piloted on two years 6 primary school pupils, who were excluded from the research sample. We should point out that the interviews were recorded with the consent of the research subjects. In addition, for the pupils' participation as much in the pilot application as in the main research, we had ensured the consent of the parents, the research subjects themselves and the teachers in the school.

When the interviews had been completed and the data collected, the qualitative content analysis method was used (Cohen & Manion, 1997, pp. 438-440; Iosifidis, 2008). In addition, we categorized our data using the theme as our unit of recording, remaining, in terms of degree of reduction, with their manifest content (Robson, 2007).

Then, based on this aim and the theoretical framework of the research we formed the following conceptual analysis categories (three categories and two sub categories):

A. The ‘gradations’ of the pupils within the framework of the visible pedagogy and the consequences of this for their rights.

A1. The tendency towards an invisible pedagogy: a pedagogical practice through which the rights of the pupils are evident.

B. The communicative framework of the school classroom: a framework of school integration.

C. Consolidation of the rules of recognition and realization by the pupils.

C1. The curriculum: a code that structures the educational time of the pupils in the school framework.

The above analysis categories were shaped based on the theoretical framework and the aim of our research. Consequently, the theory and especially the conceptual tools that we used functioned interpretatively in relation to the research data. This is because according to Bernstein (1989, p. 47), theory constitutes an illustrative language through which the social reality we approach, which in this research focuses on the examination of the pupils' views on the implementation of their rights through the implementation of their teachers' pedagogical practices, can be understood and interpreted.

In the following section the research results are presented and analysed.

Data Presentation & Analysis

A. The ‘Gradations’ of the Pupils Within the Framework of a Visible Pedagogy and the Consequences of This for Their Rights

According to Bernstein’s theoretical framework, learning to write and read early on, is very important for the realization of a visible pedagogy and constitutes one of the primary requirements of the sequencing rules. When the sequencing rules are explicit, they set out the pupil’s pedagogical future with specific steps. Consequently, when the pupil is not able to meet the demands of these predetermined rules, then he is found lacking in relation to the pacing of the knowledge to be transmitted within the context of his class (Bernstein, 2003, pp. 204-205). From the discourse of the pupils in our sample, it is evident that in cases where some pupils are unable to acquire the sequencing rules, the teachers apply a corrective system. Organization into mixed ability groups (good – weak pupils) and the involvement of weak students in these is implemented as a corrective system whose aim is satisfaction of the sequencing rules by the weak students (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 128-129). The following statements from the research subjects are indicative, as they reveal that the teachers create mixed ability groups that include good as well as weak students so that the latter can be helped by the former and the sequencing rules implemented. In this way, the pupils’ right to equal treatment is promoted.

“ ... the teacher has told my friend Adriana who sits next to me to help me when I don’t understand something, to explain it to me”
[interview 3 - I.3]

“ ... our teacher has organized us into groups to work together”
[I.4]

“... in my class the teacher has said that whoever is a good student should help those who are weak” [I.8]

Each pedagogical practice contains sequencing rules which also entail the rules of pacing. In a visible pedagogy, pacing refers to the expected

pace of uptake, with which learning is expected to be achieved. The right of the children to play, leisure and rest, seems to be restricted because of the very intensive learning processes. In other words, as the pupils grow, it is expected and required of them to do more and more work (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 131-132). The statements of the research subjects reveal that their teachers' practices focus on and have been organized with the aim only of teaching and learning and as a result they greatly restrict the pupils' free time at home. They state, characteristically:

“...I have quite a lot of homework every day, because personally I study a lot and alone. But we get a lot of homework” [I.15]

“... generally I don't have any free time because apart from getting a lot of homework I have foreign languages too. I only have a bit of free time on Sunday” [I.9]

“...when sometimes we don't do so much at school, we do more at home with the exercises that the teacher sets us. So there is no time left for me to play and to rest” [I.17]

Through the pupils' discourse, it becomes clear that the purpose of the school concerns more teaching and its effectiveness, while at the same time there is a significant surrendering of its pedagogical strength and its role in socialization (Lamnias, 2001, pp. 125-134). In other words, the learning process is not completed at school, but the teachers require, through explicit rules, which are an element of a visible pedagogy, that use is made of the pupils' free time at home for school work. However, in this way the pupils' right to free time for play is restricted, if not entirely quashed.

A1. The tendency towards an invisible pedagogy: a pedagogical practice through which the rights of the children are evident. From the research data it emerges that the pedagogical practice that is applied as far as the equal treatment of the pupils within the field of the school classroom is concerned, focuses on teamwork teaching. This pedagogical practice has a triple aim. Firstly, to apply changes between groups of pupils that are dissimilar in terms of their cognitive level by utilizing the abilities of all the

children. Secondly, to apply changes in terms of the attitude the pupils have towards their position in the class. And, thirdly, to contribute to changes in the teachers' educational practices (Bernstein, 1989, pp.124-125). From the discourse of the pupils in the sample, as emerges from the indicative excerpts that follow, it becomes obvious that their teachers apply teamwork teaching during the educational process:

With my classmates we are a nice group and we all help each other [I.5]

(the team) always helps me because we help each other when we have difficulties in a lesson [I.16]

We do lots of group work. For example, the teacher has put us into groups to find countries and their cultures. We often work together as a team [I.7]

According to Bernstein, the texture of the pedagogical practices is determined by the various classification values (C++/C+/C-/C-) and framing (F++/F+/F--/F-). These two concepts determine the regulative and discursive rules which in turn define the pedagogical practices that the teachers apply within the field of the school classroom (Bernstein, 1998, 125-134). The regulative rules determine the power relationships that are expressed in each pedagogical relationship. More specifically, in the school classroom the pedagogical relationship between the pupil and the teacher which is determined by the existing power relationships, is formed. In particular, in an explicit hierarchy (F++) the teacher plays the dominant role and his distinction is clear to the pupil, while in an implicit hierarchy (F--) the teacher should facilitate the educational process and give priority to the pupil (Lammas, 2002, pp. 77-80).

The discursive rules, apart from being related to the processes of transmission and acquisition of knowledge, are also linked to the sequencing rules, which regulate what must come first and what must follow. They also refer to the pacing that completes the sequencing rules and determines the time needed for the acquisition of knowledge. Finally, they refer too to criterial rules which regulate what is considered to be

“desirable or undesirable communication, social relationship or position”. Various kinds of pedagogical practices may emerge from the differentiations in the values of classification and framing (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 114-117). In this particular case, as far as the right to equal treatment within the framework of the school classroom is concerned, the pupils in our sample mentioned and linked this particular right mainly to the manner in which conflicts within the school field were resolved by teachers. So, the dominant means for ensuring a favourable climate for activating the pupils in dealing with conflict appeared to be dialogue. This pedagogical practice reveals the acquisition of criterial rules on the part of the pupil, who can now understand means of correct behavior and communication with his classmates and his teacher (Bernstein, 1989, p. 116). The following excerpts are characteristic:

“My teacher intervenes in fights immediately. He helps and tries to solve all the problems in a peaceful way without us raising our voices and without fights” [I.5]

“When we fight amongst ourselves, we will have a discussion with the teacher until we find a solution” [I.4]

We could claim then that with the cultivation of dialogue in the educational process, the pupil learns to think about things in his own way. So, with dialogue as part of the lesson, a learning process is cultivated in the classroom that contributes greatly to the development of the free character of the pupil and his spiritual and linguistic development. Consequently, our research findings, which emerged from the pupils’ discourse, reveal the existence of elements of an invisible pedagogy as far as the pedagogical practices implemented by the school teachers are concerned. This is because teamwork teaching which promotes the pupils’ right to equal treatment, as much as dialogue for the resolution of conflict between the pupils which allows them to discuss and express their opinions on the issues that bring about conflicts within the microcosm of the classroom, and their resolution, are frequently applied. In this way it appears that the children’s right to participation and freedom of opinion and expression are promoted.

B. The Communicative Framework of the School Classroom: a Framework of School Integration

In his theoretical framework Bernstein (2000, xx-xxii) makes indirect mention of the concept of citizenship¹³ and determines the criteria based on which the pedagogical practices that the teachers apply within the micro-level of the school classroom can be evaluated. This is important because the interpretation of the observational framework of each pedagogical practice is likely to strengthen the investigation of the school dynamic regarding the creation of the conditions necessary for an effective democracy. In other words, his approach is based on the fact that within the context of the school community, all pupils (native and foreign) must have the opportunity to contribute or feel that the conditions within the context of the school are shaped in such a way that there is the potential for them to make a contribution. For Bernstein this condition concerns the ensuring of “democratic pedagogical rights” (Bernstein, 2000, p. xxi). More precisely, he proposes that pedagogical communication in schools can be democratic and socially fair when the pupils feel that they have established interests in the school (Singh, 1997, p. 8). In order to ensure this, Bernstein claims that three interrelated rights need to be established within the context of the pedagogical practices that are applied. They are the rights concerning the empowering, integration and participation of the pupils (Singh, 1997, pp. 7-8).

From the discourse of the pupils in our sample, as appears in the excerpts below, it emerges that the teachers have taken care that the space of the school in general, and the classroom in particular, comprise the necessary context for the recognition of and respect for difference, as well as a context for school integration and the participation of all pupils in the educational process:

“I want to be friends with the pupils who have come from other countries, as our teacher says. If I went to another country and the children didn’t play with me then I wouldn’t feel nice” [I.1]

“Yes, I’d like to get to know pupils from other countries, their culture, their religion and the way they lived in their country, as our teacher has said. Our teacher insists that we don’t behave strangely to them and ignore them just because they are from a different country” [I.6]

The above seems to correspond with Bernstein’s position (2000, pp. xx-xxii) concerning the right to integration at the level of the school and by extension in this case, the community. Consequently, the teachers’ attempt to integrate all the pupils in the school classroom is revealed through the discourse of the children that participated in the research. In this way it appears that the conditions are created for mutual respect amongst the pupils and the implementation of their right to equal treatment.

C. Consolidation of the Rules of Recognition and Realization by the Pupils

A central concept in Bernstein’s theoretical model is the concept of borders. As he himself mentions characteristically, “borders constitute social contracts and practices that separate in space and time social groups and areas of knowledge” (Bernstein, 1989, p.26). Borders are mostly symbolic and so they are taken up, maintained and reproduced by the subjects. A border may be an explicit or implicit prohibition and in the present research the borders are evident, on the one hand, in the shaping of the space of the school classroom which has been explicitly structured by the teachers and, on the other hand, in the explicit prohibitions on the part of the teachers towards the pupils concerning the right to play during the learning process.

So, the strength of the border, which is expressed in classification, constitutes a principle which is taken up silently by the subjects themselves, in this case the pupils, and regulates their conscience and their behavior, in the sense that it offers them the rules for the recognition of what belongs where and by extension where it should be placed within the school field and especially in the classroom. In other words, what is their position and their place within the field of power relationships (Bernstein, 1989, p. 26). According to the rules of recognition, the pupils have taken up the borders that the teachers have defined in the shaping of the space of the school

classroom and they have silently accepted their position within it. This results in the reduced participation of pupils in discussions on the organization of the spatial framework of the classroom, as is revealed in the following excerpts:

“The teacher never asks us how we will be sat, because if she asked us each of us would give his opinion and there would be no quiet in the classroom” [I.19]

“The teacher doesn’t ask us how we would like the classroom to be. He usually arranges the classroom himself and tidies it and puts the things where he wants to put them...” [I.11]

“Only the teacher decides on the position of the desks, not us. We sit at whichever desk the teacher tells us to” [I.6]

Consequently, it appears that the traditional school space has a stable orientation and faithfully reproduces existing social stereotypes. In other words, the teacher remains the sole regulator and organizer of the space of the school classroom. In addition, the teaching process seems to be largely teacher-centred ([Germanos, 2006, pp.7-8](#)). In this way, the teachers apply explicit rules for the organization of the classroom space, which is linked to the implementation of a visible pedagogy (F++). However, the pupils see the choice of the teachers to shape the rules for the organization of the classroom space by themselves as something that limits their right to participation and the free expression of their opinion on this matter.

Furthermore, the strength of the border that is expressed in the framing becomes silently accepted by the pupils who participated in the research and it shapes their behavior and conscience in the sense that it provides them with the rules for the form that is accepted for the processes to take within the context of the school classroom (rules of realization) ([Bernstein, 1989, p. 26](#)). In fact, according to the rules of realization it appears that the pupils silently realize that play is not permitted during the educational process since the teachers are mainly oriented to cognitive processes. The following excerpts are indicative of this finding:

“The teacher doesn’t let us play during the lesson, because we are obliged to come to school to learn. If we don’t pay attention in class and we are left with gaps in our knowledge, we won’t be able to complete our education” [I.13]

“There is no talk of play, only learning. Outside during the breaks, we can play. During the lesson we must be there and listen to the teacher. That’s the rule” [I.20]

Despite the proven cognitive and social benefits that emerge from the utilization of games in the educational process, it appears that learning in this case is restricted to purely didactic situations. So, it is not perceived as a continual socio-cultural process, in which the pupils as much as the teachers can participate (Kontopoulou, 2003). However, from the pupils’ discourse, it emerged that the teachers implement a strong framing of hierarchical rules, which excludes play from the learning process. Consequently, the children’s right to play seems to be permitted only during break time.

C1. The curriculum: a code that structures the educational time of the pupils within the school framework. Bernstein points out that in every curriculum, in the sense of a regulative principle (code), a powerful classification of knowledge can be found, which is often comprised of knowledge contents with distinct and strong borders that structure a type of curriculum that he himself named “collection code” (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 70-71). In this code the teaching of the various cognitive objects, such as for example the Language lesson in Greece, is supported by a particular textbook and the time that ought to be spent on the teaching of the various teaching units is strictly pre-determined. Hence, there are explicit sequencing rules for knowledge that shape the pupil’s timetable and as a result the teachers are unable to plan their lessons according to their own teaching criteria. In other words, in this case, the principles and regulations that are foreseen in the prevailing curriculum are followed (Bernstein, 1974, pp. 200-204). Consequently, in the collection codes there are explicit sequencing rules for knowledge that structure the pupil’s timetable and which are set out in the timetables and curricula (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 66-

118). In response to a question regarding whether the pupils were aware of the creation and formation of their timetable, they pointed out that they have no influence or contribution in the creation of this timetable. Consequently, it appears that the pupils do not implement their right to freedom of expression on any issue concerning teaching and the transmission of school knowledge to themselves (UNCRC. Article 12 – par. 1). The following answers are indicative of this fact:

“Every day we start the lessons with Language and one day a week we start with English. From time to time if we have a heavy timetable the teacher might change the hours a bit, but we will still do the same lessons as are on the timetable” [I.15]

“We don’t create the timetable with our teacher since the children might want more hours of Music, or P.E. rather than lessons. So we do whatever the teacher says” [I.3]

“The teacher always has a particular timetable so that we can get through the syllabus, as she tells us...” [I.7]

The above excerpts confirm the imposition of the curriculum in the educational process. Hence, the teachers are transformed from scientists who could shape a curriculum and their objectives, into “technicians” who simply apply a code, in other words, a regulative principle of the transmission of knowledge that others have pre-decided (Goodson, 2000, p. 14). In this way strong framing is implemented since due to the manner in which official school knowledge is shaped in Greece, the teachers as much as the pupils do not have a say in the choice, organization, pacing and sequencing of the knowledge that is transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship. (Bernstein, 1989, p. 68; Koustourakis, 2007).

Discussion & Conclusions

In this research we endeavoured to investigate the manner in which pupils perceive their rights within the school framework, through their teachers’ pedagogical practices. From the data that emerged from the semi-structured

interviews with year six primary school pupils from schools in Patras, regarding the investigation of four fundamental rights of children in the field of education, as those are set out in UNCRC (1989), we ascertained the following:

As far as the right of the children regarding leisure, rest and play is concerned, it emerged that their teachers do not appear to recognize the importance of free time in their life. From comments made by the pupils it appears that they describe themselves as individuals who have to work intensively, a fact that is connected to the application of visible pedagogical practices by their teachers. Consequently, the application of this particular pedagogy which is characterized by explicit rules of pacing and sequencing, results in the significant reduction of the children's free time as they are called on to do homework on a daily basis, in addition to the work done at school (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 131-132).

What's more, we highlight that the pupils in our sample, in their comments regarding play in the school process, appear to accept the teachers' refusal to allow play within the field of the school classroom. So, they describe their teachers' pedagogical practices as a set of explicit impositions, to which they submit and which function as a "control mechanism", which focuses exclusively on the learning process and abolishes play, transforming the pupils into "silent" acquirers of that mechanism.

As far as the right to the pupils' freedom of expression and participation in the school process and everyday life is concerned, it appeared that the pupils in the sample considered themselves as those individuals who usually are found on the margins and don't articulate their discourse to the teachers, playing a 'decorative' role in the school's participatory processes. The pupils in the sample seem to describe their teachers' pedagogical practices as explicit, in other words as strictly determined. In terms of the teaching model that is implemented in the schools in this sample, it becomes apparent that the teachers do not follow a participatory teaching model, which would potentially push the pupils to express their opinion more. Hence, the teachers appear as transmitters who with difficulty deviate from the timetable and the

‘pressure’ of the curriculum, aiming to complete the foreseen syllabus. So, they marginalize the children’s desire for more participation in daily school life (Balias & Michalopoulou, 2015, pp. 2-13; Bernstein, 1990, p. 61; Singh, 2002, p. 577).

As far as the right to primary consideration of the best interests of the child is concerned, it seems that the pupils in the sample recognize and adopt their teachers’ pedagogical practices in relation to the right in question within the field of the school classroom. In the pupils’ comments, the school is described as a small society in which they recognize and respect any kind of difference while they try to ensure “democratic pedagogical rights” (Bernstein, 2000, pp. xxi-xxii).

As far as the final right is concerned, which refers to the equal treatment of the pupils in the sample within the school framework, it appeared that the children mentioned issues of conflict which emerged in the relationships between them and which were solved through the use of dialogue. They stress that their teachers, through their pedagogical practices, try to apply equal treatment to all pupils. More especially, the pupils claim that the teachers play a decisive role in conflict solution in the field of their school classroom. In addition, the pupils in the sample seem to accept the fact that their teachers try to incorporate in their practices collaboration amongst all the children, so that through a teamwork framework the relationships between the pupils are equal and symmetrical (Bernstein, 1989, p. 123).

In conclusion, from this research it emerges that two of the four rights of the children, which are the right to leisure, rest and play and the right to freedom of expression and participation are limited significantly through the visible pedagogical practices that their teachers apply on the micro-level of the school classroom (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 129-133). As far as the other two rights of the children are concerned, the right to primary consideration of the pupils’ best interests and the right to equal treatment, it is noted that the pedagogical practices applied by the teachers may be democratic and socially fair when the pupils feel that they have established rights in the school (Bernstein, 2000, pp. xx-xxii). In addition, the applied pedagogical practices related to these two particular rights tend towards the rules of an invisible pedagogy, which favours more the common “take-up processes” amongst all the pupils (Bernstein, 1989, p. 123).

Based on our research results, it would be useful to conduct research in relation to the needs for continuing and specialized teacher training, in order for the teachers to become familiar with and take on a more active role related to the issue of the application of the rights of the pupils in Primary school, generally, as well as on the micro-level of the school classroom in particular.

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Notes

1. The Resolution at the Conference in Luxembourg that was voted on between 13-15/9/2001 is addressed to all the bodies involved in the educational process and aims at sensitization to the rights of the child at school, as well as the improvement in the coexistence of all the bodies involved (Der Kindergipfel, 2001).
2. The concept of code constitutes a regulatory principle based on which attempts are made to explain the various forms of communication and social relations that develop in the varying social contexts, such as those of the school and the workplace and so on (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 21-23). In this research, code focuses on the way pedagogical practices in the school classroom are shaped,

3. The concept of border in Bernstein's theoretical framework refers to real or virtual borders that are implemented in social reality and separate things, subjects, cognitive contents and the stages of the processes in daily school life (Bernstein, 1989, p. 26). For example, a material border could be the teacher's desk in a school classroom, while a virtual border could be the social prejudices surrounding certain groups of pupils, such as pupils with an immigrant background.
4. An example of borders between pupils that reveal the implementation of a strong classification is the creation in a school of classes where pupils are placed depending on their cognitive ability (good or bad students). Furthermore, when inclusion is promoted in a school classroom, then weak classification is being implemented since pupils are placed within it irrespective of their ethnic origin and learning abilities.
5. When framing is strong, the teacher can teach in a teacher-centered way without allowing the pupils any initiative. In contrast, when framing is weak, the teacher gives the pupils space to actively discover school knowledge. In the case of strong framing, the teacher's power is evident during the realization of the teaching act. In the opposite case, an attempt is made to give the pupils space to become activated and to act within the educational framework of the classroom. In other words in the case of weak framing, the rights of the children in school are implemented to quite a significant degree.
6. In explaining the concept of pedagogical practice as cultural relay, we note that the logic of each pedagogical practice is linked to 'what' is transmitted (content) as well as to 'how' this content is transmitted (Bernstein, 1989, p. 111).
7. Hierarchical rules constitute rules of behaviour, ethics, conduct and order according to which the teacher must learn to be a teacher, fulfilling the demands of his role. In addition, the pupil must learn the demands of his role too (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 114-115).
8. Criterial rules are, essentially, linked to the implementation of pupil evaluation, which concerns as much the behaviour expected of him in the school classroom, as it does his performance in the lessons taught. The implementation of this evaluation determines the pupil's position in the class in cases where a stratified pedagogical practice is implemented (Bernstein, 1989, p. 116).
9. An example of a communicative strategy which conceals the explicit imposition of the teacher's power could be his participation in the pupils' games during break-time, where the initiative for action is given to the pupils themselves (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 117-118).
10. According to Bernstein's theoretical framework, the text can be any motion, knowledge, act and so on that can be subject to evaluative judgement, whether that is positive or negative (Bernstein, 2000, p. 18).
11. Bernstein distinguishes two types of rules within his theoretical framework on a general level. The hierarchical rules are called regulative and the sequencing, pacing and criterial rules are called discursive (Bernstein, 1989, pp. 116-117).
12. The composition by gender of the students attending 6th grade in the primary schools in which this research was carried out was: 16 students attended Primary School A (4 boys, 25% and 12 girls, 75%), 22 students attended Primary School B (8 boys, 35.4% and 14 girls, 64.6%), 18 students attended Primary School C (7 boys, 38.9% and 11 girls, 61.1%), 14 students attended Primary School D (5 boys, 35.7% and 9 girls, 64.3%) and 25 students attended Primary School E (8 boys, 32% and 17 girls, 68%).
13. Citizenship, is the term that includes the political, social, economic, educational and cultural identity of the citizen (Koutselini, 2008, p. 163-164).

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