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# Comparing teacher roles in Denmark and England

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This article reports the findings of a comparative study of teaching in Denmark and England. Its broader aim is to help develop an approach for comparing pedagogy. Lesson observations and interviews identified the range of goals towards which teachers in each country worked and the actions these prompted. These were clustered using the lens of Bernstein's pedagogic discourse to construct teacher roles, which provided a view of pedagogy. Through this approach we have begun to identify variations in pedagogy across two countries. All teachers in this study adopted a variety of roles. Of significance was the ease with which competent English teachers moved between roles. The English teachers observed adopted roles consistent with a wider techno-rationalist discourse. There was a greater subject emphasis by Danish teachers, whose work was set predominantly within a democratic humanist discourse, whilst the English teachers placed a greater emphasis on applied skills.

**Keywords:** comparative pedagogy; Danish teaching; English teaching; teacher roles

## Introduction

Teaching is closely linked to the societies and education systems in which it is situated (Alexander 2000; Osborn et al. 2003; Goodson and Lindblad 2011, to name just a few). Yet there is little account of how socio-political value positions translate into acts of teaching situated in certain conditions. Indeed, few researchers bring values and practice together into an approach that allows teaching embedded in one context to be adequately compared with teaching embedded in another. This is our intention here. Alexander (2001) views pedagogy as, 'the discourse in which the act of teaching is embedded' (521), but asserts an account of teaching should be central to any pedagogic model (Alexander 2000). Hence, comparing pedagogy is an appropriate method for illuminating the relation of teaching to its discursive context (Alexander 2001). Yet the difficulty in designing approaches that both fully respect its complexity and that combine an account of

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teaching with an understanding of the socio-political context in which it is set, had led to little comparative research addressing pedagogy (Alexander 2009).

This article reports the findings of a comparative study of pedagogy in Denmark and England. Specifically, we compare the roles adopted by a small group of Danish and English language teachers from each country because, we argue, teacher roles provide a window on pedagogy. Thus, we begin to identify variations in pedagogy across these two countries, consider in each country the links between teaching and the socio-political circumstances in which it sits and contribute towards the development of an approach to comparing pedagogy for future studies.

## Contrasting Denmark and England

The comparative foci of this study, Denmark and England, provide contrasting education cultures and traditions. For the most part, the English education tradition promotes individualised, child-centred teaching and regards children as requiring different types and levels of schooling (Ravn 2002; Osborn 2004; Goodson and Lindblad 2011). Schools in England have been subject to much reform over the past two decades, concentrating mostly on teaching, with teachers' work subject to considerable surveillance. Parental choice in schools, a policy introduced in the 1990s along with the publication of school performance tables in order to raise educational standards, is more rhetorical than real, although national tests continue to have a huge impact on children's experiences of school (Ball 2008). In recent years this paradigm has also gained ground in Denmark. In the 1990s, the political discourse of global market competitiveness (to finance the welfare state) and the pedagogical discourses of learning-to-learn, of self-governing responsibility for one's own learning and of personal competences joined hands to challenge a former discourse of community and democracy (Hermann 2007). From the turn of the millennium, however, these discourses have themselves been challenged, if not replaced, by the discourse of the importance of subject competences governed by external goals and evaluations and the discourse of social cohesion and citizenship education.

Most recently, whilst some have argued that normative goals like critical judgement and autonomous decision making are important, educational voices have been raised against arguing that content-related goals are a prerequisite to a competent, reflexive modern *Bildung* (Klafki 1991) and, lately, both basic knowledge and skills- and values-based citizenship education have acquired a prominent status in the political and scientific educational debate (Dorf 2008). Here, although difficult to translate, *Bildung* refers to the process of personal formation that brings about the inner development of the individual through education.

Nevertheless, Danish education continues to place high importance on the group rather than the individual and values greatly a close relationship between a class teacher and one group of pupils (Ravn 2002; Osborn 2004). Educating for democracy (accompanied by the idea of obtaining equality through schooling) has been a dominant ideology in Denmark since the 1970s, whereas the focus on cultural-citizenship values is a more recent focus of attention in Denmark than it is in England. There is greater trust of teachers and schools in Denmark than in England. Thus, the present study looks at two countries chosen to reflect different cultures and education traditions: Denmark can be characterised still as largely democratic and humanist, whilst England, after more than 20 years of reform, is largely techno-rationalist.

## Schooling in Denmark and England

The form of the statutory curriculum in both Denmark and England is similar, comprising aims, programme or syllabus and student targets or objectives in linear relation. In general, curriculum goals in Denmark are broader than in England and whilst the exact order and approach to teaching in Denmark is not specified in detail, in England at the time of this study it was subject to considerable guidance, reinforced through external school inspections, as a result of the Key Stage 3 Strategy, which ran from 2000–2010 (Ofsted 2010). More recently there has been a move away from the prescription of teaching approaches (DFE 2010).

As a result of international comparative data, a significant number of school policy reforms have been implemented in Denmark over the past 10 years, including the introduction of common objectives for *folkeskole* students (in 2003), national tests (first used in 2007 then subject to revision in subsequent years), an increased number of lessons, individual student plans and a strategic education of reading consultants at all schools (OECD 2011; NCR 2012). Until recently and at the time of the present study, test success was not regarded as the primary goal of teaching, with continuous formative teacher assessment still valued over summative tests and these tests individualised to enhance their formative use and disallow comparison. Accountability pressures were, however, beginning to impinge on this (Ministeriet for Børn og Undervisning 2010). In England, tests provide the basis for the evaluation of both pupils and teachers. National tests at the end of Year 9 (the school year in which pupils are 13–14 years old) were scrapped at the end of 2008 and replaced by detailed requirements for rigorous teacher assessment and reporting, which are now in place. Many schools continue to make use of what are now optional tests produced by the government for students at the ends of Years 7, 8 and 9 (DFE 2013).

## Pedagogic discourse

Any analysis of pedagogy requires an analysis of practice embedded in discourse (Alexander 2001). In this study, we confine ourselves to analysing practice within pedagogic discourse, which operates at the level of the classroom, linking this analysis to the contribution wider socio-political educational discourses make to the formation of pedagogic discourses when discussing our findings.

Bernstein (1990, 1996, 2004) has written much about the structure of pedagogic discourse. As his account is well known we will summarise only those aspects that are relevant to the present study. Pedagogic discourse, he suggests, comprises two elements, which are expressed by teachers and embedded in their practices: (1) an instructional discourse, which concerns the content, sequencing and pace of teaching and the approach to and focus of assessment; and (2) a regulatory discourse, which concerns managing the division of labour and promoting appropriate conduct in the classroom (Bernstein 1990).

For Bernstein (1996), schooling is a field, an area of negotiation, contestation and conflict, where different interests compete with each other. With this in mind, he invokes two principles to examine power relations in pedagogic discourse: (1) classification, being the strength and weakness of borders between categories such as phases of school, subjects or academic and vocational approaches, any movements in this and the work of boundary maintenance; and (2) framing, indicating who has control over, for example, sequencing and pacing the teaching and learning interaction. When the control is with the teacher, the framing is strong, whilst in weak framing, the student appears to gain more control.

These aspects of pedagogic discourse provide a frame through which we view teaching in the present study. Indeed, it is with reference to them that we categorise pedagogic practice.

## Pedagogic practice: teaching

Bernstein (2004) argues that pedagogic practice emerges from the adaptation of wider discourses into pedagogic discourses within schools and classrooms. But this is not straightforward. For one thing, teachers face many varied demands (in Denmark, Mortimore 2007; in England, DCSF 2009b) and classrooms can be considered sites of struggle between competing influences and goals (Ball 2006; Kelly et al. 2012): 'teaching has always involved making decisions within a complex and rich field of contradictions, dilemmas and priorities' (Ball 2006, 83). Not only are classrooms contested fields, they are also social spaces to which both teachers and students bring their own agendas and identities. And they are also physical spaces, which are resourced to allow certain forms of practice and preclude others. It is our contention that teachers mediate across these various situa-

tional factors in schools and classrooms, bringing wider educational discourses to bear in the process, and the outcome is therefore pedagogy that is situated.

In this study we explore situated pedagogy by examining teacher roles. We use the term *role* metaphorically. Rather than describing someone occupying a recognised position in a community who has particular rights and responsibilities, is charged with the pursuit of particular kinds of goals, adopts various, often socially agreed, patterns of practices in order to do so and, most likely, has a particular view of how the world works, we use the term *as if* this were the case. For us an important thing about roles is that they indicate a division of labour and carry an assumption that others will reciprocate in their roles. So, generally speaking, by acting as a teacher I expect others to act as students, whilst if I act as a student in a certain context, I may be expecting someone in that context to take on a teaching role. Constructed thus, teacher roles provide a social unit of analysis: it is not simply in the gift of teachers to adopt and act out their preferred roles – roles can be assigned, adapted or resisted by the actions of others. Teacher roles are the visible outcomes of teacher mediations across many situated influences and wider educational discourses within a contested social arena, they respond to the roles adopted by students and they are enacted within a particular subject, classroom, school culture and so on. Hence, teacher roles characterise the act of teaching, whilst acknowledging its situated and reciprocally defined nature. By linking these roles to pedagogic discourse, we describe pedagogy. And by contrasting our analysis across national groups, we compare pedagogy.

## Methods

This study is a comparison of two cases – Denmark and England – chosen for their contrasting education cultures. The broad profile of each case is matched, but only loosely representative. Hence, inevitably, our account is tied to the specific range of contexts in which the study was carried out, although our findings might resonate more broadly with the experiences of others, allowing naturalistic generalisations (Stake 1995) to be made. Within each case, we focus on analysing pedagogy. An analysis of pedagogy requires an analysis of practice embedded in discourse (Alexander 2001). We explore practice by identifying teacher roles. These characterise the act of teaching, whilst acknowledging its situated and reciprocally defined nature. We then categorise roles using Bernstein's model of pedagogic discourse (1990, 1996).

English and Danish language and literature were chosen because, as core areas of pupil learning, these have been sites of much reform and contention over the past 20 years in England and 10 years in Denmark. Yet our interest was not in language teaching *per se*, rather, the relation of teaching to its discursive context.

The focus was on 16 teachers, two from each of four schools in each country. Local advisors identified the schools as those recognised in external evaluations as having been particularly successful in language and literature teaching. We sought such schools to avoid clouding comparisons with issues of competence. In Denmark, schools were geographically diverse. All were state *folkeskoles* (catering for primary- and lower-secondary-aged students aged 6–16), two with a mixed catchment, being situated in town environments of a mixed suburban character and two situated in a larger city in a multicultural, socio-economically disadvantaged, low-education and low-employment environment. The schools in England were state *community colleges* (catering for lower- and upper-secondary-aged students aged 11–16) with comprehensive intakes, situated in the south-west. Two were in the multicultural, socio-economically disadvantaged, low-education and low-employment environment of a medium-sized city and two had mixed catchments, being situated in a fishing town of a mixed suburban character.

Pupils were aged 12–13 years (grade 6 in Denmark, year 8 in England). This allowed consideration of subject teaching beyond basic level, but avoided working with teachers focused entirely on test preparation. Students in Denmark were taught in mixed-ability classes of about 20 students by generalist class teachers (with some subject expertise), who were also responsible for other subjects and students' pastoral development. Most had been with the same classmates since starting school. Those in England were taught by specialist English teachers in subject classes of about 25, set according to attainment.

The profile of the participating teacher group in each country was similar. Teachers were university or college trained to at least bachelor level and had, to some extent, specialised in Danish or English, they had between 3 and 15 years of experience, were divided equally between males and females, and their ethnic mix reflected that of the schools they taught in. All were identified as promoting high student attainment by their school managers.

## Data collection and analysis

Two lessons for each teacher, each relating to a slightly different context (such as a different ability class or content area) were observed and audio recorded during a three-week period during the summer term (when classroom norms and routines were fully established) by insider researchers who were native speakers of Danish or English and, on each occasion, both the teacher's planning and samples of the pupils' work were collected. Following each lesson, the observer's notes, audio recording of the teacher in the lesson, planning and children's work provided the basis for lesson analysis. Immediately following each lesson, a detailed interview was used to explore and illuminate the varied goals and broader expectations that orientated

teachers' work, how they made sense of them and what they did to achieve them. Participating teachers were asked to reflect on their teaching between visits. Their reflections were used as a basis for further questions at the end of the second interview to explore their decision making processes in the light of their professional identities.

We began by identifying from our observations of lessons (using the audio recordings alongside the observation notes) the varied goals and broader expectations (including those implicit in what teachers said and did) that orientated teachers' work, how they made sense of them and what they did to achieve them. This was also done in the interviews, in response to the researcher's recalled observations, teacher planning and examples of student work. In the later part of the second interview, teachers' values and beliefs in relation to their own goals were explored.

As pedagogy combines practice with pedagogic discourse, identified goals and expectations, together with their associated justifications, and behaviours from across the data were clustered together on the basis of their differing orientations towards instruction, regulating the division of labour and regulating student socialisation (Bernstein 1990, 1996). This was done broadly in terms of pedagogic process (form) rather than with reference to specific subject knowledge (content). Thus, we combined the actions of teachers with the discourses or meaning making systems within which they sat to form metaphorical descriptions of teacher roles. Participant validation tested the verisimilitude of the resultant descriptions, their resonance with the lived experiences of teachers.

## Findings

### Roles within instructional discourse

#### Skills coaching and subject teaching in England

The eight teachers observed in England frequently adopted a coaching role, which was seldom seen in Danish teaching. In doing so, their instructional discourse focused on developing pupils' skills in a variety of contexts through a variety of approaches. Although all was ultimately directed towards performance in course work or final examination, the wider benefits of developing pupils' life skills were also assumed. Indeed, teachers sometimes downplayed the importance of the subject by emphasising it as a vehicle for developing these life skills. This meant the English teachers we observed frequently saw the curriculum as weakly classified, largely comprising skills that, once acquired, were transferable across subjects and contexts. This appears important to a number of those interviewed, who emphasised the importance of skills development in 'making a difference' to children's lives. In this, teaching deliberately tried to keep boundaries porous across subjects.

Occasionally, these English teachers adopted a more strongly classified stance towards the curriculum by adopting a subject teaching role. In this, most of the teachers defined literature broadly and included an eclectic array of subject matter, teaching about and through literature, poetry, indeed, all forms of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and highlighting the way they help people understand the world, the human condition and the lived experiences of others. This was exemplified in teachers' instructional discourse by notions, for example, that poetry should be taught, 'because it is a central example of the use human beings make of words to explore and understand' (Ofsted 2007, 6). Although there were limited examples of this view, some teachers talked of their love of books and wanting to give to children a love of Shakespeare – clearly many identified strongly with their subject. In this regard, the need for time and space to make reading pleasurable for pupils was recognised.

Yet, for the teachers interviewed, there were tensions with regarding teaching English largely as the same as teaching functional literacy and treating the content of the curriculum as a transferable skills-set or 'box of tools'. Most expressed a love of the subject and implicit was a desire to occasionally move away from a weakly classified view of the curriculum and adopt a more substantive and strongly classified subject stance, helping pupils engage with literature and writing as human achievements and expressions of the human condition, each important in their own right. But, mostly, this difference in classification went unnoticed, largely hidden as a tension, only rising to the surface occasionally, such as when one teacher said:

> Teaching writing skills, teaching reading skills. … You are not teaching whole novels. You are teaching extracts of a novel. You teach the technical aspects of a novel and not just the novel for the sake of enjoying something from encountering English literature.

## Cultural exploration and democratic citizenship in Denmark

The subject matter of the Danish lessons observed was more strongly classified than that seen in England, as participating teachers saw Danish as a cultural practice predominantly concerned with literary analysis and text production in its own right, as well as the foundation of other cultural practices, and, in content terms, teachers emphasised pupils' gradual acquisition of broad formal skills or competences. Teaching plans were mainly concerned with formal subject goals and teacher interviews confirmed that this, to some extent, reflects the existence of National Subject Goals since 2003. In lessons, teachers repeatedly focused on subject-specific questions and considered pupils' critical development in the subject alongside their critical

development as democratic citizens able to analyse such media as television soaps, documentaries and newspaper articles. But the importance of the subject remained central, as teachers sought to inspire pupils to love Danish in its own right as a part of national culture and heritage and not just for what it offered for life outside the classroom – thus transmitting cultural values through literature and other manifestations of language.

Teachers stressed the importance of engaging thoughtfully with literature or other forms of linguistic representation as a basis for literary analysis, understanding abstractions like metaphor and developing criticality. But they also felt it important to combine subject teaching with the cultural practice of democratic citizenry. This combination was evident in a lesson where the pupils were reading and then making their own texts about a leper colony. The teacher facilitated a discussion in which a group of boys explored first how writers evoke a sense of place and then how they might discern the love of a friend from romantic love. Finally, she moved the discussion on to likening leprosy to AIDS, thereby highlighting wider insights into the human condition. When interviewed, the teacher explained that in Danish as a subject, understanding texts is essential. But so are formative, personal development experiences or *Bildung*:

> We can make parallels to the present era, and they become aware that some things may repeat themselves. The subject of Danish can show that the novels writing about the past or written in the past, what sort of view of life and society is being expressed. And this contributes to giving these children a sensibility to the fact that we are where we are in the present, because we have been where we were.

So, despite there being strong curriculum classification, this curriculum allowed a landscape to be explored rather than a specific route to be followed. It was Danish as a subject that was seen as a bounded (and so classified) cultural practice in its own right as well as the foundation of other cultural practices, particularly those concerning democratic citizenship. Enculturation into such practices was not tied to any one route through, or particular experiences within, that landscape. So, whilst teachers referred to national competence aims to justify their emphasis on formal subject competences, in a wider educative sense, such practices were seen as important in many contexts beyond school. Clearly, teachers' instructional discourse did not concern literacy as a set of acontextual tools that teachers coached pupils to use effectively, which we found in English lessons.

### Teaching practice in England

Whatever stance they adopted – skills or subject oriented – teachers and pupils in both countries had clear and distinct parts to play in classroom activity: their roles were almost always strongly classified. Yet, whilst our

study was small in scale, other differences between the instances of English and Danish teaching we observed were stark.

In assuming the ability to understand and control pupils' learning, participating English teachers framed pupil activity strongly. They placed much faith in the written curriculum, which acted as a syllabus, often linked to specific teaching methods and prescribed routes for pupil development, and in formal, criterion-referenced pupil assessments, which were seen as tools for mapping and locating pupil development. All of the English teachers observed attempted to control and micro-manage the sequence of pupil learning through this tightly defined and inflexible syllabus. To do this, they planned and taught highly structured lessons, some using *PowerPoint* presentations to regulate the pace and content of lessons. They outlined learning objectives at the start of lessons and revisited these as they went on. Although claiming that they worked flexibly, using ongoing assessment to guide their teaching, most seemed tied to their whiteboard presentations, which contained, for example, pre-prepared slides with pupil targets ticked off as achieved as the lesson progressed.

Lessons were active and pacey, dominated by a cycle of frequent target setting focusing on simple improvements building on earlier achievements: teachers modelled what students should do and students attempted the activity supported by regular, clear feedback from their teachers, and this was followed by extensive repetition and practice. All was driven towards future exam performance, positioning the teachers observed in a role akin to that of a sports coach. So, pupils were frequently reminded of personal goals and targets, both for academic attainment and for school behaviour, and teachers engendered competition both against previous bests for pupils but also to some extent against others. There was much reference to National Curriculum level descriptors with examples of what successful work at each level might look like and how a move from one level to the next might be made. One reminded her pupils that: '… people who are getting level 7s refer to evidence from their texts'. Elsewhere, another had two *PowerPoint* slides that illustrated how a descriptive text might be assessed at level 3 and level 4, respectively.

On the few occasions when teachers were subject focused, pupil activity was again strongly framed through traditional and authoritative teaching, although it was occasionally less so with teachers seeing the curriculum as a guide and allowing pupils to develop their own understandings of the subject without overly seeking to direct these towards specific correct views. This was clearly similar to the roles adopted by the participating Danish teachers.

Again, for participating English teachers, there were hidden tensions. Those interviewed frequently expressed a wish for pupils to think for themselves (implying their desire to weaken teacher framing). For example, one

teacher introduced a new poetry module to run over several lessons and stated that:

> … a lot of students lack confidence in order to say what they feel about a poem because it might be wrong, so we're going to try to move away from the idea that there is a right or wrong answer to be able to engage with our own emotions and think how it affects us as individuals.

In actuality, though, these teachers largely sought specific answers through strong framing. So, subsequently, the same teacher asked for reactions to the question of what 'poetry is' and as pupils responded she firmly marked the responses she approved of by saying, 'wonderful, absolutely perfect. Images, emotion, isn't it …', whilst being less enthusiastic about other responses, 'OK, that's interesting …', implicitly grading the worth of answers and their closeness to her ideal. Such patterns of teacher–student interaction parallel those well documented elsewhere (e.g. Wells 1993).

### Teaching practice in Denmark

In Denmark the framing of pupil subject development was often strong, although teachers also at times adopted a facilitator role, which framed pupil activity more weakly (and which we will discuss further in relation to regulatory discourse). In the first, teachers used instruction and guidance to support pupils' development in the process of literary analysis and text production. Whilst their instructional discourse referred to the gradual acquisition of formal skills or competences from those concerning linguistic correctness to being able to analyse and 'read the meaning and structure' of texts as well as to produce their own texts, these were not separated out or subject to micro-management using the stepped approaches found in the English lessons observed. So, although Danish teachers are obliged to differentiate their teaching and learning activities according to the potentials of their pupils, in practice this was variable. Clearly, differentiation did not concern pupils' movement at different rates through a pre-defined learning sequence, as was so often seen in England. Rather, it concerned assigning pupils different goals depending on their developmental needs or providing a variety of different ways of approaching the same goals suited to different individuals.

The subject-focused curriculum classification meant there were few tensions between subject and democratic citizenry teaching roles expressed by the Danish teachers, who moved between them with ease. For example, one teacher working in a school serving a disadvantaged catchment emphasised the critical citizen function of subject concepts, saying, 'at their age they find it hard to distinguish between facts and fiction, they simply believe everything they see on … television' and then pointing to the centrality of

being critical to literary analysis. In all this, classification and framing were closely interrelated in the Danish context, and fewer tensions in framing pupil activity resulted – as the path for exploration of subjects was not so fixed, the need for teachers to keep control at all times seemed less acute. They allowed pupils time to develop with an emphasis on personal formation or *Bildung*. For example, a teacher had planned a project in which the pupils were shooting and editing their own films according to their own ideas and script. This practical work was preceded by watching various movies and discussing their artistic effects. The goals of the process were stated as technical skills and knowledge of certain concepts related to film production. The practical outcome of the process was a film show for the pupils' families with an awarding of 'Oscars'. The role of the teacher in this process was that of a consultant or facilitator, indicating that responsibility for the work clearly lay with the pupils. Here, whilst the subject classification of relevant cultural practices was strong, these cultural practices helped illuminate areas of human experience beyond traditional subject bounds. And whilst skills were mentioned explicitly as education goals, in practice there was little instrumental reduction of the subject to separate transferable skills.

All this had implications. Exams, for instance, were generally not viewed negatively by the Danish teachers interviewed – their demands were balanced against other demands. One teacher working in a school serving a disadvantaged catchment with a high proportion of ethnic minority pupils was very explicit when discussing their text productions with them, challenging them according to their abilities to find other expressions and correcting errors. Whilst she considered exam demands positively in providing goals towards which she could structure pupils' work, she also pointed to the critical citizen function of subjects via the centrality of criticality in literary analysis. However, criticality was not separated from the content of narratives in which pupils were very interested – whilst they wanted to know more about what happened to the main characters of the myths and legends they studied, she helped them compare the narratives with historical evidence and religious traditions including notions of good, evil, justice and so on, as well as teaching about metaphor.

### Roles within regulatory discourse

#### Division of labour in England

In regulating the division of labour, the eight teachers observed in England frequently seemed to adopt a strongly classified entertaining role, with the teacher regarded as responsible and held accountable not only for motivating pupils but also for ensuring they learned. In this, teachers focused on motivating pupils to the extent that lessons often had the feel of children's

television programmes, with teachers performing so as to make things exciting and relevant for the children. As mentioned already, lessons were fast paced, with multiple tasks and bursts of activity, and nothing was dwelt on for too long or in too much depth. A variety of presentation techniques were used, visual, tactile and oral, to engage the children, keep their attention and focus them on what was deemed relevant to their learning and what was not, although *PowerPoint* dominated many of the lessons observed. Thus, teachers created a 'performance' designed to transmit information – knowledge was delivered by active teachers to be consumed by relatively passive pupils.

In this role, framing was also strong. Although the teachers interviewed thought of their lessons as interactive, in practice interaction was superficial and though teacher speech was questioning and seemed to encourage dialogue (as mentioned earlier), questions were either treated rhetorically or replied to by assenting nods or single words. So communication was often largely one way. When pupils did respond, however, those who responded incorrectly to questions were not told as this might have been seen as a 'put down', rather they were simply told to have another go or their answer was passed over quickly. So, one teacher asked the same question of several children. Each answered incorrectly and she repeated their answer and said 'Has anyone else got an answer?' When the correct answer was given she said 'Yes', and developed the child's answer into a lengthy explanation. Praise was liberally offered to pupils, largely for making contributions rather than for their quality. Misbehaviour was put down to lack of engagement. Thus, the teacher–pupil relationship was clearly classified and akin to one of serving customers – as consumers the pupils had rights but little responsibility (see also Pratt 2006).

Following periods of entertainment, the observed teachers frequently moved to supervisory roles, also strongly classified, where they organised and monitored pupils' individual work. Again, framing was strong, with the teacher now responsible for ensuring pupils labour but this time holding pupils to account. Now the relationships observed were akin to those of manager and worker – as workers the pupils had responsibility but few rights. Their work involved producing something, and the quality of the product was emphasised. In later interviews, some teachers asserted that work was not always enjoyable – it could be challenging and hard. In the lessons observed, the children were responsible for doing work and the teacher was responsible for organising the children so that they knew what to do and could complete their work effectively and with little confusion, and for monitoring and supervising this process. Throughout, learning was taken for granted, being synonymous with working.

Accountability was clearly centred on teachers as entertainers, whilst teachers as supervisors held pupils accountable. The first positioned pupils as somewhat passive, whilst they were expected to be more active in the

second. Clearly, there was much potential for these to be in tension, as the locus of responsibility shifted from the teacher to the children. In the second, the pace of the lesson inevitably slowed as the amount of effort required from the children increased. The teachers often complained that children were not independent enough and needed to be nagged, or that their enthusiasm during presentations was not matched by their application to independent work. Further, teachers' wishes to encourage pupils in the first were sometimes set against the inadequacy of pupils' work in the second.

### Division of labour in Denmark

This division was not seen in the eight Danish teachers, whose roles as facilitators could not be easily separated from instruction, although teacher roles remained strongly classified in relation to pupil roles. This is because both teachers and pupils were seen as engaged in the same cultural practice, with the teacher acting as the concerned more knowledgeable other, a model and support for students, sometimes engaged alongside them in practice. Hence, the framing of student activity appeared weaker in the Danish sample than in the English as students took responsibility for their own learning, although teachers were still central to the success of their joint endeavours. Yet this relationship was complex and nuanced, and the less visible framing influence of existing norms and expectations on pupils' behaviours should not be forgotten. Most of the Danish teachers referred explicitly to their role as adult companions of their pupils – a competent, empathetic adult worthy of identification with. This seemed to encompass all aspects of the calling of a teacher, with teachers emphasising a concerned professional and educational relationship with their pupils. One suggested:

> We are not supposed to be 'friends', but they must sense that we like them and respect them and whatever they do, we are there for them, and at the same time they must be quite sure, where we stand. I need to have their acceptance – and that of their parents. If they don't accept the person I am, I would never be able to maintain teaching power – or influence in the room.

Part of this is that the teacher was engaged in the subject matter of teaching. However, for some, the relations work was more important than the subject work. Another teacher said it would be okay if the pupils saw him as something else than the teacher, as 'authentic', who likes working with them:

> There's a reason why I come to work here. One thing is that I have ambitions that you should learn something, but another thing is that you give me something back, something interpersonal. There are teachers at this school who have nothing but a professional relationship to the pupils. They enter the

class, do their teaching – they are very competent subject teachers, there is no doubt about their didactical reflections, but I know that nobody would come to them with their personal problems, and that's perhaps because the personal relationship isn't there. Does a personal relationship increase their chances of learning? It's my contention that it does.

### Socialisation in England

When socialising pupils in England, the eight teachers sometimes adopted a strongly framed hierarchical relation to pupils, emphasising order and control, often within a caring ethos of concern in wanting the best for them. The observed teachers most often adopted this stance when they had a behavioural issue to deal with and, in practice, this role was often about enforcing (or policing) school structures of control placed on children, such as uniforms, timetables and class rules. However, this role was also evident when teachers acted as counsellors offering advice to children. Yet four younger teachers often adopted what appeared to be a more weakly framed democratic role, positioning themselves alongside the children and suggesting they were working together for a common good – normally the ultimate success of the children. But this was apparent, not real, as Bernstein (1996) suggests, because to concentrate only on teachers' explicit framing would be to ignore the less visible framing influence of existing norms and expectations on pupils' behaviours. Nevertheless, teachers accepted a degree of responsibility in advising without telling students how to proceed, but countered this by acting playfully, showing a willingness to have fun and let their hair down from time to time. Across both hierarchical and more democratic roles, the notion of mutual respect was important, with a number of teachers suggesting that it is through showing the pupils respect that you gain respect for yourself. For some of the English teachers, this was coupled with a desire to be seen by children as 'normal', accessible and approachable, someone the children could identify with and, unlike the Danish teachers who aspired to be competent and caring adult companions and role models, perhaps regard as a friend:

> I don't want to be seen just as the teacher. I want to be seen as a person they can relate to, which has other interest and engage in the same as they might have.

Tensions were evident between hierarchical and more democratic roles for the English teachers interviewed, most often when teachers felt that they couldn't enforce school structures, felt uncomfortable with school norms or recognised that either or both of these contradicted other aspects of their practice. For example, one teacher was dismayed by the school's emphasis on uniform and rules, which she felt was in opposition to her belief in

democratic schooling and her desire to allow children to express themselves and have a say in school decision making. However, teachers' framing was sometimes contradictory, as where a teacher discussed having a positive and mutually respectful relationship, but then seemed very much at odds with this by suggesting:

> My philosophy is about that relationship with the pupil. And if I had a good enough relationship I could pretty much get them to do anything and putting it frankly, pretty much learn anything I want them to do.

### Socialisation in Denmark

The socialising roles of the eight Danish teachers linked to their roles in the division of labour and were not clearly separated from their instructional roles. This perhaps stems from the integrated concern for pupil development, rooted in child-oriented educational paradigms that became prevalent in Denmark during the 1960s and linked to radical critical democratic paradigms in the 1970s (Hermann 2007). As a result, a concern for developing pupils' autonomy, critical sense, self-reliance and so on sat alongside a concern for subject teaching. Central to this was the notion of personal formation or *Bildung*, which bridged teachers' instructional and regulatory discourses. For one teacher this meant:

> … that you have a tape recorder in your head telling you, when everything else is going on, how you live your life, what's right and wrong, what I can do with my life to improve it – without it being said directly that you should do it like that – it's like having a sense of 'pitch', you could say … it's something you learn alongside with the subject knowledge.

In this, teachers emphasised that social interaction was a prerequisite to subject learning. Again, social learning was referenced to the notion of citizenship, although in a more functional way than we encountered earlier:

> I would like to equip them as well as possible to get on well in society, and that is why I think it is important to explain to the kids who live here, where they only meet people like themselves, what goes on in the wider society … I have to tell them, 'You know what, you can't get away with being late every day, in a work place [makes a conclusive sound] you're just out'.

Another teacher adopted a democratic approach to solving disputes. Following an incident, a pupil was asked to explain what had happened and the teacher asked descriptive questions about the nature of the situation and emphasised the rule of taking turns in speaking when several pupils wanted to contribute. Time and again, he summed up his understanding of the situation, asking 'moral' questions and engaging the pupils in valuations. After

some time, he suggested that an agreement should be reached: 'After all, it is you who should solve this, because it's you who are … [having problems with each other]. If you agree to this, we can do it.'

So, resulting from this orientation towards *Bildung*, democratic education, for example, involved learning social responsibility through training and engaging in the democratic process of conflict resolution – Danish language education involved learning grammatical structures and engaging in a critical appraisal of a text. And with all such roles, despite the teacher's instruction or facilitation, pupils were clearly held responsible and often accepted responsibility for their own actions.

### Contrasting Denmark and England

In contrast to the consistent teaching roles seen in Denmark, the teachers observed in England moved frequently between roles. As a consequence, albeit unnoticed tensions in both curriculum classification and teacher framing were identified in the teaching episodes and follow-up interviews in England, but these were not evident in Denmark. Yet when the observed English teachers were in the flow of lessons they moved smoothly between different roles in a continuous and comfortable style, easily and without reflecting any tensions between them. These teachers focused on getting things done in terms of instruction and the division of labour, managing this through socialising roles. For example, one teacher observed began the English lesson by settling the children down in a caring but firm manner (a hierarchical relation) but then, after a few minutes, with a joke she introduced a fun activity based on a children's television programme, which the class worked at in groups competing with each other (an entertaining relation). She urged them to work quickly ('go, go, go!'), counted them down to the completion of their activity each time ('5, 4, 3, 2, 1, stop!') and accepted all answers in a friendly and engaging manner. However, as soon as one group began to get too lively, she told them how their behaviour would spoil things for everyone (a hierarchical relation) and then suggested the groups organise themselves better so all children could take part (a supervising relation). At the end of the activity, she focused the children on what they had learnt and coached them on how they could have done the activity better and what the general lessons were for their future writing performance (a skills coaching relation).

### Discussion

Despite the cautions expressed earlier, we consider this study to provide a basis for future comparative pedagogic research and feel two methodological features are particularly promising: (1) the use of roles to characterise the act of teaching whilst acknowledging it as situated and reciprocal; and

(2) linking roles to pedagogic discourse (Bernstein 1990, 1996) to describe pedagogy and provide a frame through which to analyse power relations. Earlier, we suggested that roles are reciprocally constructed – students respond in their roles to those adopted by teachers, as teachers respond to students. In focusing only on teachers, our descriptions are inevitably partial. It is intended that future studies will redress this.

We can identify key differences in pedagogy between England and Denmark by viewing each of the 16 teaching episodes and follow-up interviews through the lens of dominant teacher roles. Often, the English teaching observed offered a different way of knowing to that seen in Denmark, largely emphasising process and utility in the development of skills, while Danish subject teaching focused more on the reified world of meanings, ideas and understandings. In England, well defined curricular paths specified the sequence and goals of learning and progress in pupil performance was mapped against this. A mastery learning model pervaded, as did an implied separation of learning and application. This separation was not found in Denmark, where participant teachers viewed learning as the engagement in cultural practice and explored a landscape rather than followed a single path with their pupils. Here, subject teaching coupled with democratic citizenry was expansive, asking pupils to widen their thinking and adopt an open but critical stance to the world, and teachers accepted – indeed, valorised – contention, opinion and argument.

English teachers often changed roles, albeit in a fluid and comfortable manner. However, tensions were evident when responsibility shifted from teachers in whole-class instruction to students in group or individual work. Danish teachers in contrast seemed calm and consistent and pupils largely accepted responsibility for managing learning throughout. Instruction and personal development were not separated in Denmark, both being encompassed within *Bildung*. As adult companions, the Danish teachers we observed actively supported pupils, providing positive role models, and their approaches to misbehaviour were frequently discursive and negotiated. Participating English teachers showed greater distance and reserve and often privileged their instructional roles. Hence, socialisation centred on behaviour-management strategies to ensure students engaged fully with whole-class instruction, supervisory approaches to monitor individual work and the policing of misbehaviour through rule enforcement.

Given the degree of centralised control and regular intervention in schools in England, it is not surprising that participating teachers shared many similarities, reflecting the influence of wider discourses. In particular, the rhetoric of skills development has been central to policy development in England for over a decade, with subjects such as English renamed literacy to emphasise their contribution to lifelong learning and the workplace. Similarly, that English teachers identified a strong role for themselves leading children's learning – whether entertaining or supervising – within the

division of labour is unsurprising, given the dominance of this central role in documentation, guidance and training associated with the national strategies in English (such as the Key Stage 3 Strategy [DCSF 2009a]). What is more complex is teachers' relation to socialisation – although many espoused a belief in a relatively equal and democratic relationship with their children, like that of a critical friend, in practice what was observed was far more controlling, perhaps reflecting the pressures placed on teachers to ensure pupil progress.

Until recently, when national subject goals were specified, national tests introduced and pupil development plans required, the political tradition of Danish school governance granted considerable local autonomy to schools and teachers. While the teachers interviewed here occasionally referred to political demands constraining their teaching, these were not perceived as being in overriding conflict with the teachers' priorities or goals. Indeed, some saw them as an inspiration. Nevertheless, humanist and democratic values dominated in the Danish schools visited, not, as in England, resulting from top-down government reform, but embedded in longstanding traditions and school cultures. More often, when explaining their practice, the Danish teachers referred to the local school culture and the affordances or constraints of the school environment, but rarely did they see this in terms of conflict. Teachers in schools serving less advantaged communities believed their pupils entered school less prepared for academic study and enjoyed less out of school support, but balanced this by perceiving their pupils positively in other respects. In such schools, the teachers emphasised their developmental role in promoting democratic citizenry alongside their companionship of pupils.

Pedagogy, we suggested earlier, is situated because it is partly a response to specific demands within particular circumstances. In England, noticeable tensions often arose because teachers were positioned by various normative structures in their daily interactions in ways which were contrary to their preferred ways of working and challenged their espoused identities and beliefs. For example, high-stakes testing led to an emphasis on test preparation disliked by teachers wanting to focus on understanding – an assigned position they either accepted with frustration or opposed. Similarly, school accountability systems were often highly bureaucratic and based on the scrutiny of children's work, the completion of which some teachers felt distracted from motivating and engaging pupils in learning. Finally, the use of school uniform assigned a hierarchical position to one particular teacher who had to police this even though she stated she would rather act democratically. It is our contention that such tensions in England, as with those arising from shifts in responsibility mentioned earlier, often resulted from discontinuities in framing from one teacher role to another, originating in conflicts between top-down political reforms, institutional cultures and individual preferences. The stability we found in the Danish teachers was, we

believe, because longstanding institutional cultures dominated. No doubt, should national reforms in Denmark serve to bring about an increase in teacher framing similar to that in England, most likely the incidence of such tensions will also increase.

It should be noted that we are not suggesting the teaching we observed in either England or Denmark is, in any sense, better than the other. Whilst some might see instrumental approaches as limiting, others suggest a focus on the useful and relevant allows students from lower socio-economic groups greater access to the curriculum (Cooper and Dunne 2000). And whilst many argue for critical approaches to education, others see discursive and democratic practices as privileging middle-class students (Schutz 2010). As such, it is our view that this comparative research has begun to analyse differences in pedagogy, which would benefit further evaluation from within national contexts.

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