Cover

Cecilie Rønning Haugen

Professor in Pedagogy

Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)

Institute for Teacher Education

Jonsvannsveien 82

7491 Trondheim

+47 97737392

Cecilie.haugen@ntnu.no

Title:

New Middle-Class Values and Context: Exploring an Ideological Conflict Between a Norwegian School and Parents over an American Evidence-based Programme

Abstract

As part of neoliberal reforms, evidence-based practice is increasingly influencing teachers´ work. In Norway, the American programme ´School-Wide Positive Behavioural Intervention and Support´ (SW_PBIS) has been implemented in a great number of schools. One school experienced an intense conflict with parents so that eventually it opted out of the programme. Using Basil Bernstein´s framework, this paper investigates what the conflict was about and how it can relate to class and ideology. The conflict was rooted in the ideological foundation of the programme, as well as its unintended negative effects. The teachers´ unexpectedly persistent support of the programme may be explained by the fact that it offers them a way out of taking personal responsibility for a pedagogically challenging situation. Looking into the role the specific contexts play may contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relation between class, values and practices as teachers´ hierarchical relations may be changing.

Introduction

On the international level there is political interest in improving the research base on education that uses ´evidence-based practice´ or a ´what-works´ approach (Hammersley 2006, 2002; Cochran-Smith 2014; OECD 2005). The basic idea is that evidence-based practice can improve teaching and encourage teachers to work more efficiently, both in economic and learning-outcome terms (see Haugen 2013; Ball 2006). However, the quality of such research and its relevance to the political and practice field is under debate and subject to criticism (Hammersley 2006, 2002; Ball 2006; Haugen and Hestbek, 2017). Haugen and Hestbek

(2017) argue that what at first glance could be considered the strength of evidence-based practice is also its weakness. It provides practical solutions to problems across different contexts, but this is also a basic problem, as it is not sensitive to the context within which it is meant to operate. The question of context is especially important as evidence-based programmes travel great distances, both geographically and culturally speaking.

In Norway, the use of evidence-based programmes has increased (Forskningsrådet 2016) after the introduction of neoliberal management reforms in the early 2000s, where the country followed international trends combining decentralisation of responsibility for how schools are run, strong emphasis on competence aims, output control through national testing of pupils´ basic competencies and a research-based and expert-based development strategy (Imsen, Blossing and Moos 2017). The ´National Centre for Development for Children and Youngsters´ (henceforth ´NUBU´[1]) was established in 2003 with the goal to develop and implement programmes and evaluate ´what works´ (NUBU 2018). NUBU has helped to strengthen the political agenda in favour of increasing the use of evidence-based programmes significantly, not only in Norway, but also in the wider Nordic context (Forskningsrådet 2016).

However, the degree to which NUBU´s research on the programmes they promote has been independent is now being called into question, as is the issue of whether the centre has been sufficiently self-critical:

> …very few publications from the centre open for discussions on its own programmes and on the processes aimed at implementing the programmes locally. But all the environments that work with the development and implementation of new initiatives

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[1] ´Atferdssenteret´ (´The Behaviour Centre´) changed its name to NUBU in 2017.

know that this always comes with a great number of challenges and resistance (Forskningsrådet 2016, 37).

In other words, an evaluation of NUBU requires independent, context-sensitive research on the evidence-based programmes, paying special attention to conflicts related to their implementation.

The ´SW_PBIS (School-Wide Positive Behavioural Intervention and Support´ programme developed by the University of Oregon is one of the programmes that has been promoted by NUBU. It has been translated into Norwegian and given the name ´Positive behavioural and supportive learning environment (PALS)´ (henceforth: PALS), and has been implemented in 218 of Norway's 2997 elementary schools (7.7%) (Sørlie, Ogden, Olseth and Meek-Hansen 2014). NUBU is also conducting research on the programme and its use in Norwegian schools, and the centre has concluded that on the general level the transference of PALS to Norway has been unproblematic (Ogden and Sørlie 2007), and also showing promising results (Sørlie and Ogden 2007; Ogden, Sørlie, Arnesen, Olseth and Meek-Hansen 2014; Sørlie, Ogden and Olseth 2015). However, these are very general conclusions that do not pay much attention to context-bound issues.

While the PALS programme aims ´to build a proactive and collective culture in schools, where social learning is given a broader place´, the Norwegian proponents also acknowledge that ´[s]ome of the procedures and activities we describe are not common to Norwegian schools and may be disputed´ (Arnesen, Ogden and Sørlie 2006, 10). In other words, on the general level, it could be expected that conflicts would arise when PALS is introduced in Norwegian schools.

One school in a rural municipality chose to opt out of the PALS programme after experiencing six years of intense conflicts with a relatively small group of parents. This provided a unique opportunity to gain access to experiences with PALS from an independent research perspective, as the school´s connection to NUBU was broken. The conflicts at the school in question arose even though the teachers and headmaster at the school were very satisfied with the programme. The municipal education authority's director had the following to say: ´It was a paradox that you had a programme that was supposed to work so well, but at the same time produced so much resistance among the parents. The experience was that the parents felt that this programme was terribly wrong for educating children´.

As stated in the above quotation from the municipal director, ideological issues may be at the heart of the conflict over PALS. Basil Bernstein has developed a theoretical framework for analysing how power and control work in and through education, as different power groups vie to gain influence. Different pedagogical orientations are thus considered first and foremost as an ideological conflict over forms of control between different middle-class factions, which is in focus in this paper. The question is whether and how the conflict in this case can be related to ideology and class, as described by Bernstein, and illuminate tensions related to values when the American evidence-based SW_PBIS programme is translated for and implemented in a Norwegian context.

Through a case-study approach, this paper will investigate and come to an understanding of the following problem statement:

> What is the conflict between the school and parents over PALS about and how can it be related to ideology and class?

Theoretical Framework: Class and pedagogies

´[I]nteractional practice is defined by classification and framing procedures´ (Bernstein, 2000, p. 18). *Classification* describes power relations through the degree of isolation between categories, which can be strongly or weakly insulated (+/- C). The classificatory principle can describe the relation between teachers, teachers and pupils, pupils and pupils or between school and parents. Power establishes legitimate relations between these categories. Furthermore, classification can describe ´the distinguishing feature of the context, and so orientates the speaker to what is expected, what is legitimate to that´ (Bernstein 2000, 17).

While classification establishes legitimate relations between categories, framing establishes legitimate communications within a given context, appropriate to the different categories. When the framing is strong (+F), the transmitter has explicit control over the communication, and when the framing is weak (-F), the pupil has more apparent control. Framing refers to two systems: instructional discourse (rules of the discursive order) and regulative discourse (rules of the social order). The framing of the instructional discourse refers to control over the selection, sequencing, pacing and criteria of the knowledge. The framing of the regulative discourse describes the rules of the social order:

> the rules of social order refer to the forms that hierarchical relations take in the pedagogic relation and to expectations about conduct, character and manner. … Where the framing is strong, the candidates for labelling will be terms such as conscientious, attentive, industrious, careful, receptive. Where the framing is apparently weak, then conditions for candidature for labels will become equally trying for the acquirer as he or she struggles to be creative, to be interactive, to attempt to make his or her own mark (Bernstein, 2000, 13).

Although the value of the framing can vary between the instructional and regulative discourse, according to Bernstein (2000), the regulative discourse is dominant. This means,

that if the framing is weak over the regulative discourse, the instructional discourse can still be strong, while, when framing over the regulative discourse is strong, the instructional discourse cannot be weak. Thus, if the PALS programme is very strong in its framing over the social order, it will at the same time influence the actual instructional discourse so that it is also strongly framed.

To describe different ideological positions, Bernstein developed the concepts of *visible* and *invisible pedagogies* anchored in different middle-class factions. Bernstein (1977, 2000) distinguishes between the old middle class (located in the field of production) and the new middle class (located in the field of symbolic control). The old middle class emphasises what he refers to as a visible pedagogy, characterised by a clear hierarchy between teacher and pupil, where the rules of organisation (sequence and pace) and the evaluation criteria are known to the pupils. The new middle class emphasises, on the other hand, an invisible pedagogy, where the hierarchical rules, the rules of organisation (sequence and pace) and criteria are implicit. When it comes to visible pedagogy, the teacher is the clear author and authority, whereas in invisible pedagogy the pupil is apparently the author of the practice and seems to have a considerable amount of control. The characteristics of these different ideological positions are important for analysing and understanding the rationalisation of the parents´ and school´s positions in the conflict over PALS.

Methodology

The conflict between the school and parents over the PALS programme is the case under study here. Stake (1995) distinguishes between intrinsic and instrumental case studies. An *intrinsic case* study refers to instances where the case itself is of special interest. Studying the

conflict may provide knowledge about ideologically controversial aspects when PALS is implemented in schools and how they may be related to class.

Since the aim of this study is to gain insight into the conflict between the school and parents over the PALS programme in retrospect, a narrative approach to the analysis has been used. As Cortazzi puts it, ´narrating is, after all, a major means of making sense of past experience and sharing it with others´ (Cortazzi 2001, 384). To make sense of the conflict, it is important to hear different sides of the story, giving voice to different actors to gain a deeper understanding of what the conflict is about. That is, the intention of the research is not to find out what is ´true´ but rather to understand the speakers´ motives and intentions, to give meaning to their experience (cf. Cortazzi 2001).

Data Material

To minimise misrepresentation, the aim was to undertake *data source triangulation* to investigate whether the understanding of the conflict reported from one actor changed meaning under different circumstances (cf. Stake 1995). While the PALS programme had already been abandoned by the school when this research project started, it was still necessary to obtain insights from the various actors as to what the conflict was about.

First, contact was established with the headmaster of the school and the municipal education authority's director who then suggested other actors who could provide interesting information about the conflict. One important premise for the selection of informants was to obtain voices from both ´sides´, and from different positions in the hierarchy. The headmaster represented the ´positive´ side, and suggested a teacher and a parent, whereas the municipal education authority´s director represented the ´negative´ side, and suggested an informant from the group of critical parents. It was not possible to obtain a voice from a critical teacher

as no teacher stood out as critical. The informants were chosen according to the criteria of having deep insight into the implementation process through working or having children at the school through all the six years in question. Additionally, the critical parent had a central role as she was a representative in FAU (the parents' council at the school). From her role she gained insight into how various parents (both positive and critical) experienced and valued the programme, as well as why teachers valued the programme positively. The municipal education authority´s director also had a central role, as parents who gave up trying to have a dialogue with the school came to her office to complain, and she was in a dialogue with the school about the conflict.

Interviews were conducted with the following informants:

- The municipal education authority's director (critical to PALS)

- The school's headmaster (positive to PALS)

- One teacher (positive to PALS)

- One parent (critical to PALS)

- One parent who also worked at the school (positive to PALS)

It must be stated that in addition to offering his/her own opinion of the programme, each informant also gave a picture of how they understood the conflict from both ´sides´. By collecting data from different positions in the hierarchy, and also from different opinions, one of the aims here was to secure a rich description of what the conflict was about.

The open interviews lasted from one to one-and-a-half hours where the focus was on the history of why and how PALS was implemented in the school, how it was received, how the headmaster, teachers and parents worked with it, and how various pupils responded to the programme. Furthermore, the conflict between the parents and the school was addressed as a

specific theme, as was the school's decision to abandon the programme after six years, in addition to what characterised the critical-parents group in terms of work and education.

The interviews were transcribed and coded according to what the informants raised as key conflict areas from the programme. The issues were then related to the basic principles and intentions of the programme to illuminate the relation between the intentions and the programme in action in a concrete context, as well to systematise the views of the different actors.

The stories presented from all the informants comprised a version of what can be considered to encompass the main conflicts related to the programme. The analysis of the main conflicts was followed by an analysis of how the informants rationalised (cf. Cortazzi 2001) them in terms of ideological relations (cf. Bernstein 1977, 2000).

In the following, a short history of PALS at the school will be provided before the PALS programme and the main conflicts are analysed in relation to classification and framing characteristics.

The History of PALS at the School

The headmaster explains that the background for implementing PALS in the first place was that this elementary school had experienced many behavioural problems and teachers frequently came to the office with pupils they had problems handling. The school is located in a rural Norwegian district with years 1-10 (6-16 age group) and about 500 pupils, where according to the informants, the parent group has relatively low levels of education. The school was invited by the central authorities to participate in the PALS programme, and the

municipal education authority's director was initially positive to this invitation. All the teachers at the school were positive to participating in the programme, although a few were less than enthusiastic. The positive attitude among the teachers was documented through a questionnaire. The school could thus base the implementation of the programme on a high degree of acceptance, as is required in the PALS programme. However, PALS was only implemented for the 6-13 age group.

Over time, a relatively small group of parents became very critical to the programme. This evolved as an increasingly intense conflict between the school and the parents. Furthermore, a new director was hired at the municipal education authority. This official was also quite critical of the programme so that and the headmaster lost support for it.

The conflict between the school and parents lasted throughout the entire six years and it never subsided. As a result, every parent-council meeting at the school was about the PALS programme. Other topics were ignored or pushed into the background. After a period of time, the critical parents gave up on having a dialogue with the school, stopped coming to meetings and rather raised their concerns about the programme with the municipal education authority's director. In the end, the intensity of the conflict reached such a pitch that the parents began to air their opinions in the media. The more it became a public issue, the more politicians began to take interest in the conflict. At the same time, the national papers presented a debate in which education researchers also criticised the programme. The pressure on the school was so intense that after six years it opted out of the PALS programme even though the teachers wanted to continue using it.

Analysis of the PALS programme and the conflict

The PALS programme

The PALS programme is based on 10 principles (Arnesen, Ogden and Sørlie 2006, 18-28): It is 1) an *evidence-based practice* building on knowledge of ´what works´ from ´the best accessible knowledge directed towards action´ (Arnesen, Ogden and Sørlie 2006, 19, my translation) (+C good practice, +F criteria). The programme is 2) *intervention directed towards the whole school*, describing principles for a good common practice in such a manner that it is evident which actions and activities are to be emphasised at the school (+C common practice, +F criteria). The principle of 3) *multimodal interventions* implies that the work is carried out simultaneously at different levels, for example school level, group level and individual level, with different themes and components, and both in and outside school (such as educational space, outside area and in both school and family) (+C arenas, +F criteria). The programme is 4) *adjusted to the pupils´ ´risk and functioning level´*. This means that the actions should be differentiated according to whether the pupils are categorised as low, middle or high risk according to their school behaviour (+C low/middle/high-risk pupils). The actions have also been adjusted in terms of focus, extent and intensity (+ F selection, pacing adjusted pupil category). The principle of 5) *positive behavioural support* means that the teachers should provide frequent, consistent and direct responses to pupils, combined with teaching of rules and expected behaviour (+C teacher-pupil, +F criteria). The principle of focus on 6) *action and skills* implies that teachers should be oriented towards modelling and practising good behaviour (+C teacher-pupil, + F criteria). The school should 7) *pay special attention to both problems and resources*, and the focus should be on both 8) *content knowledge and social skills* (+F instructional discourse/regulative discourse). Furthermore, it is considered important that the development should be 9) *team-based* (+C collective) and should build on 10) a *high degree of implementation* (+C collective, +F criteria). Summing up, the ten principles together constitute quite a comprehensive programme characterised by strong classification between teacher and pupil, different categories of pupils, and school and

parents. Furthermore, there is strong classification over the contexts, as the programme has clear expectations as to what counts as legitimate communication in all arenas. Bearing this in mind, there is also a strong hierarchy between the teachers and the programme, as the teachers are expected to follow what the programme has decided (cf. high degree of implementation, intervention in the whole school). Thus, it is expected that the voice of the programme is strong, but it also creates a strong teacher collective because they all agree to perform the same practice in all arenas. The framing is also characterised as strong, as criteria for evaluation are modelled and given positive behavioural support when met. The classification and framing of the programme thus establishes clear hierarchies between agents and contexts, combined with clear criteria for evaluation appropriate to the different categories. These are characteristics of a visible pedagogy, giving a strong voice to the PALS programme, and the message is strongly framed for all categories.

In the following, two main conflicts related to the PALS programme will be described, followed by an analysis of how the conflict has been rationalised by the two sides.

Conflict 1: The Quality of the Interaction Between the Teacher and Pupils through Positive Behavioural Support

The first conflict area examines the quality of the interaction between the teachers and pupils through the PALS programme. Specifically, there is great disagreement about the focus on positive behavioural support through a system of reward and punishment.

The implementation of the PALS programme in this school began with teachers modelling good behaviour in all school arenas (such as the hallway, the toilets, the classroom and so on) (+C context), accompanied by the rewarding of pupils demonstrating good behaviour (+F criteria). To reward the pupils, the teachers carried a stock of ´GOOD cards´ that they gave to

children who behaved the correct way. During a typical school day, each teacher handed out about 300 cards. At the end of the week, if the class had accumulated 1000 cards (+F criteria), they were given a reward, for example the opportunity to watch a movie during class time, to eat popcorn, read a book or other extracurricular activities. Therefore, the reward system had a collective dimension (+C collective) as each pupil contributed to a common pot and the rewards goal (+F criteria). In special cases, the school also used punishment in the system, in this case an ´expulsion-chair´. However, this practice only lasted for six months as the municipal education authority's director instructed the school to abandon this practice after complaints from parents.

While the programme was directed towards the class as a collective, some pupils were also given more individual behavioural support (+C pupil, +F criteria), with more specific rewarding of particular behaviour and tighter collaboration with parents (-C school-parents, +F criteria). The pupils were labelled as green, yellow and red (+C pupils) according to their school behaviour. Summing up the classification and framing values, the interactional practice of the PALS programme at this school was characterised by strong classification and framing, thus a visible pedagogy.

In the following, the informants´ various experiences comprise two main stories of why they liked/disliked this interactional practice. First, I will present the teachers´ experiences of this practice:

> PALS was a good systematic tool to use in specific areas. What we especially liked
> was the focus on praising and rewarding. Through PALS we changed our ways of
> behaving with the pupils. Instead of yelling and shouting, and focusing on negative
> behaviour, we focused on what was good. Through focusing on what was good, we
> established positive contact between teachers and pupils.

We had very clear rules of behaviour in all arenas. And we did NOT focus on when the pupils behaved in the wrong way, but rather rewarded those who behaved in the right way. If we praised one pupil for picking up his book and starting to read, and praised the pupil in a way so that other pupils noticed the appraisal, other pupils wanted that attention too, and also started reading in their books. We experienced that getting GOOD cards was important to most of the pupils.

Our experience was that PALS was especially positive for pupils demonstrating a lot of disruptive behaviour. These are pupils who normally receive a lot of negative responses from adults, so with this way of thinking we actually turned our attention on to what was positive.

After we stopped using PALS, we continued to focus on positive behaviour, but without the GOOD cards it becomes more invisible. The GOOD cards were a very concrete way of showing awareness of all the pupils. The rewards actually became the whole project, or the main goal in a way. It was positive to have a common goal for the whole class.

The critical parents provide a different perspective on the interaction between the teachers and pupils. In the period when PALS was used, the municipal director received many phone calls and had many meetings with parents who were anxious for their children due to the positive behavioural support. They had very different responses to the GOOD cards:

We were worried about the effects positive behavioural support could have on different pupils. Children demonstrated different and sometimes worrisome reactions to the use of positive behavioural support. Obedient girls were especially very positive to earning GOOD cards; they liked the way they were rewarded for their good

behaviour. Being proud and showing the cards to their parents. However, these girls had never demonstrated any bad behaviour in the first place, and we were worried that this constant rewarding of already good/´normal´ behaviour was not good for them. These girls were concerned about being a good pupil and doing the right thing all the time. We questioned whether it was good to focus so much on the pupils´ external motivation. We thought that these pupils needed to be encouraged to turn their attention more inwards, to their own needs, if they were to have a healthy development.

The positive behavioural support also created anxiety about not being good enough. Some pupils linked their value as a person to the number of cards they were awarded, and they were crying and nervous. Often the children did not understand why they didn´t get GOOD cards: ´Why did he get a card and not me? I didn´t get any good cards, I have no value!´ Although the teachers tried to be consistent in their reward system, it was often difficult for the children to understand why they were being rewarded or not, and they felt the system was unjust. Sometimes they got a GOOD card for sitting in their chair, other times not. And they compared themselves to others in the class, experiencing that some pupils got rewards for one kind of behaviour, while others did not: ´Does the teacher like him better than me?´

The positive behavioural support led to resistance from some pupils. Older boys laughed about the way they were treated by the teachers and did not care about getting cards and rewards. They were rather more interested in NOT getting them, or cutting them into pieces, throwing them around in the school yard. They found the system ridiculous.

Positive behavioural support could be good for pupils struggling with behavioural problems in one way. Focus on positive response could make them feel that they managed something. But what is the effect in the long run? Will they need a constant increase of the rewards? Will the good behaviour stop if rewards stop? What do they really learn from the programme?

The quality of the interaction between the teachers and pupils through the positive behavioural support is, as mentioned above, experienced quite differently by the teachers and parents. The extremely visible pedagogy from the PALS programme is the main source of conflict between the parents and the school. While the teacher finds the visible pedagogy to contribute to a positive interaction between the teachers and pupils, describing it as a ´soft´ pedagogy, the parents find the pedagogy inflexible when it comes to the pupils´ varying needs and that some pupils experience it as a ´hard´ pedagogy.

Conflict 2: The Quality of the Interaction Between the Parents and School – a Closed Dialogue

The second conflict is related to the quality of the interaction between the parents and the school through the PALS programme. As stated in the introduction, the two basic premises of the programme are that there should be an intervention in the whole school (+C context), and that there is a high degree of acceptance of the implementation. The classification and framing are strong as there are clear expectations (+F criteria) that the whole school should perform the same practice (+C practice). PALS creates strong insulation between the school and parents (+C school-parents), where the parents have little control over the communication (+F). The system also creates a strong collective context (+C context), where the PALS programme sets the rules for legitimate communication (+F). Thus, not only the parents and

pupils lose their voice in the system, but also the teachers. Consequently, the interaction between the teachers at the school and between the school and parents is also characterised by a visible pedagogy.

First, the teachers´ experiences:

> What we liked about PALS was that it was a systematic tool for the school to work with behavioural problems. There was 100% support for the PALS programme among the teachers and the programme led to fewer trips to the headmaster's office by the teachers to deal with behavioural problems. It was good for us teachers to be given concrete and clear instructions, we had clear ways of behaving and responding in all arenas. This helped us as we have many pupils and are struggling with behavioural problems. PALS made the work very easy and concrete. This is a ´we´ school where we stand together as colleagues. It was challenging that some parents did not have more faith in us and were not confident in our judgements.

The parents who were critical to the PALS programme experienced problems with this uniform and collective approach to teaching, and with how the programme influenced the interaction between parents and school:

> It was problematic that the dialogue between the school and parents was closed through the PALS programme. Teachers surrendered their professional judgements to the programme. Instead of giving professional arguments for their actions, they responded: ´because we are a PALS school, the PALS team at the school has said so, and we are loyal to the system´. The teachers had no real arguments for what they did and seemed to be unaware of how this practice was perceived. That the teachers left the professional judgements to the PALS programme made it difficult to have a

dialogue and adjust the pedagogic practice to the pupils´ varying needs. We lost our voice as parents. We were told to move to another school if we didn't like the way things were being done.

The uniformity made the teachers unclear in their communication, which due to the system of standards and cards had become impersonal. The system took over as the communication channel, undermining both the teachers´ and the pupils´ voices by prescribing criteria for who they were and how they should interact. The teacher as a person was lost in the system as there was only one voice, the voice of the programme.

The communication was closed; we gave up talking to the school. Problematising the use of PALS, we felt unwanted, as if we were a problem in the system and we felt stigmatised as difficult parents. We had to express our concerns for our children elsewhere, we had to go to higher authorities or to the media.

Thus, while the teachers felt the uniformity helped them in their professional work, making their judgements easier, the parents experienced that the dialogue between school and parents was closed off by the PALS programme. The programme established a strong classification between the school and parents, but also between the teachers and the program. Through the visible pedagogy, the differences between teachers, parents and pupils were silenced.

The table below summarises the analysis of PALS and teachers´ and parents´ experiences:

PALS	Teachers´ experiences	Parents´ experiences
+C, +F (actions, skills, all arenas)	Good, systematic tool, good to have clear rules of behaviour, easy and concrete,	Difficult for pupils to understand the system. Inconsistent rewarding.

	helped us to know what to do	
+C, +F (collective, common practice)	100% support among the teachers. A "we" school, stand together as colleagues. Reward for whole class became the whole project.	Teachers surrender professional judgements to PALS and the PALS team. Teachers unclear in their communication, lack arguments for what they do.
+C (high/middle/low risk pupils), F+ (criteria adjusted pupil category)	Most pupils respond positively, especially positive for high-risk pupils. Receive positive support instead of negative attention.	Inflexible to pupils´ different needs and pupils respond differently (obedience, resistance, anxiety). Too much focus on external motivation, what do they really learn? Stigmatising. Impersonal communication between teacher and pupil, GOOD cards = communication
-C (school-parents collaboration), +C (hierarchy school-parents), +F (criteria)	Most parents are positive to PALS. Challenging that some parents did not have faith in us, in our judgements.	Dialogue closed off, no discussion. Stigmatised as difficult parents, told to move to another school to get a different pedagogy. Had to express concerns elsewhere.

Rationalisation of the Conflict: Ideological Anchoring of the PALS Programme

In addition to the two main conflicts thematising the quality of the interaction between the

teachers and pupils and the parents and teachers through the PALS programme, focus is also

on the programme´s underlying values. Three of the informants explicitly describe the conflict as ideological. As demonstrated in the analysis, the PALS programme is based on a very visible pedagogy, anchored in the old middle-class values.

The ideological conflict described by Bernstein is about forms of control. Bernstein summarises the new middle class´s opposition to the old middle-class values according to three themes: ´...variety against inflexibility, expression against repression, the inter-personal against the inter-positional…´ (Bernstein 1975, 126 in Bernstein 2000, 178-179). In the conflict between the parents and the school these three themes are very present. The parents ask for more *variation* in how the school addresses the different pupils´ needs. They describe the PALS programme as *inflexible*, resulting in what they refer to as a dehumanising and stigmatising pedagogic practice:

> The PALS programme lacks a focus on pupils as human beings, the focus is on making them demonstrate good behaviour. The categorisation of pupils as groups based on their behaviour, and using rewards and punishment to make them behave a specific way, is basically treating children in the same way as you train dogs. The growth of the pupil as a whole person is ignored. Pupils should learn to do things because what they do is right, not because they get a reward or punishment.

> When the pupils are categorised in red, yellow and green, a pupil can be stigmatised, lose his or her self-esteem and become a label. Through the GOOD cards, both good and bad behaviour is visualised, having cards on your desk implies that you are a good pupil, and lacking cards on your desk implies that you are not good. This visibility exposes pupils to public shaming.

> The collective orientation to rewards in PALS puts pupils in conflict with each other, where pupils who only get a few cards are especially vulnerable. If you're not

contributing to the common reward, your position in the group can become difficult. Pupils should have a value for who they are, not be valued for what they do.

The critical parents claim that PALS *represses* the voices of pupils, parents and teachers, and impedes good communication. The strong classification creates a strong hierarchy, an *inter-positional* relationship between the actors. The strong framing over the social base represses different messages as the programme builds on clearly defined criteria for evaluating what counts as legitimate communication. Thus, the critiques of the PALS programme call for a weakened classification between the actors to facilitate *interpersonal* relationships and a weakened framing to facilitate the pupils´ *expressions* as the foundation for interactional pedagogic practice:

> Through PALS, the pupils´ voices are silenced, the overall goal of the system is to have all pupils behave the same way. It ignores the fact that disruptive behaviour can be a way of communicating that something is very wrong.

> Sometimes we need to talk to the pupils: what is happening, can you tell me, how are you at school, and how are you at home? For a child to tell the teacher about serious problems you need to have confidence. This confidence is built by talking with the children. They have to learn that it is all right to tell the teacher about their lives, to dare to tell. And bad behaviour can be a way for the child to tell the teacher to pay more attention to him/her. These are basic ways of communicating that you do not learn by rewarding and punishing behaviour. You cannot create a good learning environment through standardised programmes. Instead of teaching the pupils democratic values, and having them participate as real persons in school life, you silence their voices. PALS builds on a strong hierarchy, where the teacher is assigned

the role of being the police or guardian. The rewards and punishment are the way of communicating.

The need for variety in the pedagogic practice according to the pupils´ varying needs, the importance of pupils being taught to speak their minds and the importance of both teachers and pupils interacting as real persons are central grounds for the conflict that has been analysed here. It comes down to what the basic premises for communication should be and what identities pupils are given the opportunity to develop. Referring to the quotation in the theoretical framework, the conflict comes down to how the PALS programme is based on an extremely visible pedagogy. If Bernstein´s theory is right, where he says that social order dominates instructional order, then all aspects of the pedagogic work are highly influenced by the strong framing of the PALS programme. Whereas education normally builds on both visible and invisible pedagogies, there is a risk that such a strongly regulating programme as PALS will make it difficult to educate children on the values from invisible pedagogies, with the consequence of building on very limited aspects of what education should be. As stated, the parents´ evaluation of the PALS programme is that it goes against the basic values inherent in the invisible pedagogy that is a stated aim of Norwegian education, such as adjusting the education to children´s needs and abilities and fostering the children according to democratic values.

New middle class and pedagogy

In the interviews, precisely *who* the parents in conflict with the school were was also a theme. All the parents involved in the conflict were described by the informants as typical representatives of the new middle class, located in the field of symbolic control (cf. Bernstein 2000, 2001), as they had a higher education background and worked in the educational sector

(as *reproducers* and *executors*) or health sector (as *repairers*) (for a description of the new middle class, see Bernstein 2000, 2001). Based on Bernstein´s analysis, it is not surprising that these parents wanted a more invisible pedagogy than what the PALS programme was offering their children.

However, what is more surprising is that the teachers supported the programme so strongly during the six years of conflict. According to Power et al.´s description (1998), one would expect the teachers to be more critical of such a visible pedagogy as PALS. An important question is thus how this unexpected finding can be understood.

Discussion of the findings

Bernstein ´...proposed that location, hierarchical position in the field of symbolic control…would regulate distinct forms of consciousness and ideology *within* the middle class´ (Bernstein 2000, 110). His theory has, however, been both supported and criticised (cf. Power and Whitty 2002). Vincent, Ball and Kemp (2004) argue that it may be too simplistic to relate values, practices and attitudes to occupational categories, whereas Power and Whitty (2002, 597) state that ´despite the centrality of the concepts of division of labour within Bernstein´s sociology, it is not used to explain systemic shifts over time...´.

Recent research in the Norwegian context indicates that teachers´ values and professional identity are changing. Parallel surveys to teachers in 2001 and 2012 demonstrate that their pedagogic preferences are relatively progressive, but that they have changed in favour of more visible pedagogies (Imsen and Ramberg 2014). At the same time, teachers describe a teacher-identity conflict between older and younger teachers, where the latter welcome instructions from the authorities to a higher degree and have less desire to form their own work (Haugen 2018b). Yet another study indicates that teachers are generally positive to

collective approaches in their pedagogic work, and that ideological anchoring plays little role for how they consider the chosen pedagogy (cf. Haugen 2018a). Thus, this recent research from the Norwegian context supports the claim that relating values to occupational categories may be too simple.

However, the question is whether these recent findings challenge Bernstein´s basic assumption (cf. first paragraph of discussion), that is whether the change in teachers´ values and professional identity could be explained by a change in their hierarchical position in the field of symbolic control. As Bernstein (2001) also pointed out, the rationality of the economic field has gained footing in the field of symbolic control through neoliberal reforms. Through the recent reform the Norwegian teachers´ hierarchical relations have changed, as teachers are less trusted (cf. Imsen, Blossing and Moos 2017), something the political agenda of increasing the use of evidence-based practices also points to. Imsen, Blossing and Moos (2017, 575) explain teachers´ shift in pedagogic preferences with ´an increased pressure on teachers to bring about prescribed learning outcomes´, and a recent study from the Norwegian capital reveals that hierarchical relations in the school organisation have changed, as intense pressure for results is forced on to the shoulders of the teachers at the same time that their voices are silenced (Haugen 2018b).

Bearing all this in mind, to understand why the teachers value the PALS programme so positively it may be interesting to look at what they (apart from the pedagogy) say they value from the programme. The narrative points out that the school was experiencing great behavioural problems when the programme was implemented. Moreover, the municipal education authority´s director stated in the interview that although this municipality places relatively low pressure on results, the teachers ´…still experience the pressure as high enough´. What teachers liked about PALS was that it gave them clear instructions and that they stood together as colleagues with a common pedagogy. Although they received

complaints, the critical group of parents was small. One hypothesis is that the search for collective support and relief from personal pressure in a difficult pedagogic situation may override their own values. The documented 100% support for the PALS programme among the teachers and a study that finds teachers committing to programmes with very different ideological anchoring within the same municipality support this hypothesis (see Haugen 2018b). Evidence-based programmes may therefore represent a de-professionalisation of teachers´ work as it gives them the opportunity to ´surrender their professional judgement´ (cf. complaints from critical parents) and set their values aside (cf. Ball 2003).

Based on this analysis I argue that looking closer into how hierarchical relations are changing under the current policy context is an important step in understanding how the relation between interests, ideology and social class may be changing (cf. Bernstein 2001), i.e. how the characteristics of the specific context feed into what values teachers are fronting or not and how they rationalise their work (cf. Cortazzi 2001).

Finally, this study also finds that ignoring values inherent in evidence-based programmes may be deeply problematic. Establishing a univocal culture, as through the PALS programme, comes at a cost. When all the participants insist on the same values, other values are at the same time rejected or set aside. Given value plurality among parents, such development may represent more difficult democratic conditions for collaboration between the school and parents over the common task of educating children.

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