



VOLUME 19 ISSUE 3

The International Journal of

Early Childhood Learning

A Sociological Approach to the Official
Discourse on Space in the Case of Greek
Kindergarten Classrooms

GERASIMOS KOUSTOURAKIS

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING

<http://thelearner.com/>

First published in 2013 in Champaign, Illinois, USA
by Common Ground Publishing
University of Illinois Research Park
2001 South First St, Suite 202
Champaign, IL 61820 USA

www.CommonGroundPublishing.com

ISSN: 2327-7939

© 2013 (individual papers), the author(s)
© 2013 (selection and editorial matter) Common Ground

All rights reserved. Apart from fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review as permitted under the applicable copyright legislation, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process without written permission from the publisher. For permissions and other inquiries, please contact <cg-support@commongroundpublishing.com>.

The International Journal of Early Childhood Learning is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal.

Typeset in CGScholar.
<http://www.commongroundpublishing.com/software/>

A Sociological Approach to the Official Discourse on Space in the Case of Greek Kindergarten Classrooms

Gerasimos Koustourakis, University of Patras, Greece

Abstract: The teaching and learning of school knowledge are closely connected to the factors of time and space. The factor of space is very important for the teaching activities that are developed in the kindergarten schools. In this study, Basil Bernstein's theory on pedagogical discourse is used, and classroom space, according to the modern Greek kindergarten syllabus, is approached and analyzed. This syllabus specifies that the kindergarten classrooms should be divided into particular corners/areas of learning/pedagogical activities. Moreover, the new curricula for Greek compulsory education and for the kindergarten school were introduced in 2003 in order to contribute to the establishment of a European knowledge society. For this reason, specific knowledge areas, corresponding to subjects of the compulsory education curricula, were introduced into the kindergarten curriculum. In addition, the developmental and cross-thematic approach to school knowledge for each subject of the curriculum began to be promoted. The following research questions are approached and discussed: a) What is the desired division of classroom space according to the Greek kindergarten curriculum? b) What is the relationship between the classroom corners/areas and the subjects/knowledge areas of the kindergarten curriculum? And c) What are the rules that define the pedagogical use of classroom space according to the kindergarten curriculum?

Keywords: Space of Classroom, Kindergarten School, Pedagogic Discourse

Introduction

Teaching and learning activities take place in time and space, which are two important factors for the configuration of pedagogic practices. Specifically, space is a highly significant factor in the case of the kindergarten school as it constitutes the material environment which can facilitate the pupils' access to knowledge (Germanos 2005a).

In the content of the preschool curriculum there are guidelines on how kindergarten teachers can shape and manage classroom space, made up of teaching activity corners (see Kwon 2002; Tafa 2008; Toren, Maiselman and Inbar 2008). The issue of the approach to space in the kindergarten, and in particular the use of activity corners, has occupied researchers resulting in work that examines the construction of space from a psycho-pedagogic point of view and its utilization aimed at the socialization of the pupils and their adjustment to the school environment (see Bain et al. 2004; Crosser 2005; Dudek 2000; Fromberg 2006; Hughes 2010; Vong 2012). In addition, a large number of studies have traced the effectiveness of the management of the corners for teaching purposes in the attempt to develop the pupils' cognitive skills, and in particular those of a linguistic, mathematical and artistic nature (see Burke 2010; Hatch 2005; Kendrick 2003; Kwon 2002; Miller 2007; Rog 2011; Woolner 2010). However, there is a lack of studies which approach and analyse the organization and use of classroom space from a sociological perspective. This paper aims to contribute to filling this gap as it is based on a clear sociological theoretical framework and proposes and uses a model for the analysis of the official discourse on kindergarten classroom space.

The arrangement of kindergarten school space into corners and areas for games or other educational activities has occupied the content of the curricula of Greek kindergartens for a long time (Government Paper 1989, 2003; Ministry of Education 1992). Indeed with the contemporary Greek kindergarten and compulsory education curricula which were instituted in 2003, a cross-thematic approach to school knowledge was introduced which promotes a child-

centred pedagogy and this influences the way in which space is managed for teaching purposes (Government Paper 2003).

The aim of this study is to take a sociological approach, using Bernstein's theory on pedagogic discourse, to the analysis and interpretation of the official discourse found in the contemporary Greek kindergarten curriculum on the shaping and management of classroom space for teaching purposes.

This paper begins with a section on the theoretical framework, followed by the research questions and the methodology. There is then a section presenting the Results and Discussion and a final section containing the Conclusions.

Theoretical Framework

According to Bernstein's theory (1990) on pedagogic discourse, the shaping of educational policy concerning school knowledge and the pedagogic approach taken is an expression of the power relations which exist in a particular society. This is because the powerful social and political groups that control the institution of education in a particular historical period promote educational reforms, bearing in mind developments in the international field (Apple 2000, 2002; Bernstein 1990, 2000; Young 2007). To be more precise, in the contemporary era of globalization international developments in the field of the economy and symbolic control have influenced the institution of education (Giddens 2002), which is why in many developed western countries changes have taken place at all levels of education (Apple 2000; Ball 2003, 2008). The reforms to the curricula for kindergartens and compulsory education in Greece in 2003 appear to be an attempt to conform to the decisions of the European leaders in Lisbon in 2000 concerning the incorporation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the educational process and the acquisition of technological literacy by European pupils (Council of Europe 2003). Supplementary aims put forward for the changes which took place in the area of school knowledge were to improve the performance of Greek pupils on PISA tests and the contribution of the country to the creation of a European community and knowledge economy (Alahiotis and Karatzia-Stavlioti 2006; Koustourakis 2007). The curriculum reforms in the Greek kindergarten in which a cross-thematic approach to knowledge was introduced brought about changes in two areas: the quality and amount of knowledge which should be taught to pupils and the teaching approach. In the first case, kindergarten pupils are expected to acquire specific knowledge on issues drawn from the scientific areas of Language, Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Fine Arts and Computer Science (Government Paper 2003). In the second case the application of a constructivist teaching method, which makes as much use of ICT as of elements from different cognitive areas of the curriculum, is desirable (Alahiotis and Karatzia-Stavlioti 2006). In fact, the manner in which school classroom space is managed for teaching purposes is of key importance for the promotion of a child-centred pedagogy (Government Paper 2003; Dafermou, Koulouri and Mpasagianni 2006). This is because kindergarten space offers stimuli and opportunities for activities which constitute the material environment for access to knowledge (Germanos 2005a).

The concepts of classification and framing in Bernstein's theory (1990, 1996, 2000) help us focus on the structural and interactional levels of the pedagogic act, which includes the organization of school space and its utilization for teaching purposes (Morais 2002; Morais and Neves 2011).

The concept of classification refers to the structural level of the educational process and reveals the degree of the existence and maintenance of borders, which depict the extent of the realization of power in the shaping of the relations between categories of discourses, agents and spaces (Bernstein 1990, 1996, 2000). The concept of classification contributes to the analysis of the way in which school space is organized. In the case of the kindergarten where the implementation of 'play-like' activities for access to knowledge is suitable for the age of the pupils (Bernstein 1996, 2003; Tsatsaroni, Ravanis and Falaga 2003), when the classification is strong the "*space is regulated by strong rules of exclusion*" (Bernstein 2003, 153). That is why the classroom is divided into corners with specialized content, and each of these corners is

connected to the teaching of a specific knowledge area of the kindergarten curriculum, as in the corner of the Visual Arts. The link to a specific field of knowledge clearly determines how this corner must be organized and which objects may be used to equip it (Germanos 2005a, 2005b). For the effective pedagogic use of the corners which have a specialized character (strong classification), ‘recognition rules’ are required on the part of kindergarten teachers and pupils (Morais and Neves 2006). In other words, they must possess those rules which lead them to differentiate the identity and particular characteristics of the context of a specific corner in contrast to the other corners in the classroom. In addition, when there is strong classification in the way in which the classroom is organized and functions, then we have the implementation of a visible pedagogy which is connected to the activation of notional/imaginary borders during the use and exploitation of school purposes for teaching purposes (Bernstein 2003, 2004). Conversely, when the classification is weak, then “*space is regulated by weak rules of exclusion*” (Bernstein 2003, 154). In this latter case, classroom space can be used in a flexible manner and without the limitations and stereotypes of the traditional classroom, thus permitting the development of cross-thematic teaching activities (Germanos 2005a). A weak classification of space constitutes an element of an invisible pedagogy and is connected to child-centred models of teaching through which it is hoped that the competences of the pupils will be developed (Bernstein 2000, 2003, 2004).

The concept of framing refers to the interactional level of the educational process and it defines the “*inner logic of any pedagogic practice*” (Bernstein 2004, 197) which includes the various means of exploitation of space for teaching purposes. Framing refers to who controls what and reveals the embedding of an instructional discourse (ID) within a regulative discourse (RD) (Bernstein 1996, 2000). ID refers to the degree of control, on the part of either the teacher or the pupil, of the instructional management of knowledge, in which the factor of space is also involved. RD refers to the regulation of the context in terms of what is considered legitimate communication and who controls the development of the pedagogic relation (Koustourakis 2007, 134). In other words, RD refers to the degree of control of the pedagogic communication between kindergarten teacher and students, as well as to how obvious the hierarchical relations are in the context of their daily interactions. When framing is strong, then we have the implementation of a visible pedagogy where the teacher has explicit control over how space is used for teaching purposes.

Bernstein (2003) argues that the application of an invisible pedagogy is suitable for the kindergarten, where pedagogic practices should be adapted to the competences and age specific characteristics of the pupils. In this case, the teachers should arrange the context of the classroom (space and materials) and give the pupils great freedom to explore it and rearrange it. Indeed, within the context of an invisible pedagogy, the kindergarten teacher should adapt the daily teaching programme of the class in order to cater for the individual needs of each of the pupils so as to help them to develop, mature and improve their competences.

The implementation of a visible pedagogic approach in the case of the exploitation of the space and corners of the kindergarten classroom for teaching purposes is connected with one or more of the following situations or choices:

- a. The specialized content of a corner and its connection with a particular knowledge area of the kindergarten curriculum limits the pupils’ choices regarding the way in which they can use its objects and materials. In addition, in order for the pupils to be able to work effectively in the particular corner they must possess the recognition rules which determine the requirements of its own particular organizational framework (Morais and Neves 2006).
- b. The pupils are guided by the teacher on how they should use the corners since the promotion of performance pedagogy is often sought through their use for teaching purposes (Bernstein 2003; Smith and Sadovnik 2010).
- c. When pupils complete their activities in a particular corner they are obliged to return the space to its original state. This involves the application of the realization rules which reveal in practice that classroom space is being managed ‘correctly’ (Bernstein 1990, 2003; Morais and Neves 2006).

In the daily teaching reality of the kindergarten, as well as the primary school, mixed pedagogic practices are employed, which combine elements of strong and weak framing (Bernstein 1996, 2000). In other words, they draw elements as much from a visible as from an invisible pedagogy, founded on more than one teaching theory (Morais 2002; Morais and Neves 2011; Smith and Sadovnik 2010).

Research Questions – Methodology

In this work, the following research questions are addressed:

- a. What is the desired division of the classroom space according to the Greek kindergarten curriculum?
- b. What is the relationship between the classroom corners/areas and the subjects/knowledge areas of the kindergarten curriculum? And
- c. What are the rules that define the pedagogic/didactic use of the classroom space according to the kindergarten curriculum?

Our research sources are: a) the contemporary Greek kindergarten curriculum (Government Paper 2003) (henceforth in citations, KC); and b) the 'Kindergarten Teacher's Guide' (Dafermou, Koulouri and Mpasagianni 2006) (henceforth in citations, TG), which supplements the curriculum and guides kindergarten teachers on how they should organize and make use of classroom space for teaching purposes.

The research material was approached using content analysis. The unit of analysis is the sentence which is used with a 'semantic meaning' and not with the conventional grammatical dimension (Koustourakis and Zacharos 2011; Morais and Neves 2011). In other words, the sentence presents a whole proposal – a guideline for the way in which kindergarten classroom space is to be organized and exploited for teaching purposes.

The sentences which emerged from the study of the research material were placed in one of the following categories of analysis. These categories emerged from the interaction between the theoretical framework and research material.

A. Structural Level of Classroom Space and Knowledge Areas of the Kindergarten Curriculum:

From the study of the content of the kindergarten curriculum, the following three cases of correlation between classroom space and subject/knowledge areas emerged:

- C++ The content of these sentences propose that the establishment of a corner is exclusively for teaching related to the needs of a specific knowledge area of the kindergarten curriculum.
- C+ In particular corners activities can take place which aim at the teaching of topics from more than one knowledge area of the kindergarten curriculum. Consequently, these corners can be used more flexibly to meet the needs of more subjects within the curriculum.
- C- In this case, the classroom space is available for play, free activities and pupils' entertainment and is not related to the attempt to teach the topics from one of the knowledge areas of the kindergarten curriculum.

B. Rules of Operation and Instructional Use of Kindergarten Classroom Space:

From scrutiny of the research sources, the following three cases of framing emerged which reveal the way in which classroom space is to be used for teaching purposes within the context of the daily interaction between kindergarten teacher and pupils:

- F++ The kindergarten teacher shapes the classroom space and defines the rules for its management and informs the pupils of the rules.

F+ The kindergarten teacher reminds the pupils of the rules for the management and functioning of classroom space and guides them in applying them.

F- The pupils act independently and choose the corners in which they want to play, applying, nevertheless, the rules for the management of classroom space.

The sentences were placed by the researcher in the above analytic categories in four different time periods, one month apart from each other. A sentence was finally included in an analytic category once it had been placed there at least three times (the acceptable percentage of agreement being 75%) (Koustourakis and Zacharos 2011, 375; Vamvoukas 2002, 280).

It is now presented the analysis and the findings of the research which reveal the desired means for the organization and management of classroom space for teaching purposes, according to the official discourse for Greek kindergartens. It should be noted that in this work the curriculum as implemented is not addressed; in other words, we do not touch on how the classroom space has been shaped and exploited for teaching purposes at the real microlevel of contemporary Greek kindergarten schools.

Results and Discussion

From examination of the research material, 193 sentences emerged. Of those, 120 sentences (62.2%) correspond to issues concerning the classification of classroom space and 73 sentences (37.8%) refer to matters relating to the interaction between kindergarten teacher and pupils regarding the use of classroom space for teaching purposes. Consequently, according to the official discourse relating to the kindergarten, especial emphasis is placed on the presentation of the means of organizing issues which concern the structural level of classroom space, and this also constitutes the material basis for the implementation of the pedagogic work in the kindergarten.

The Structural Level of the Classroom Space

From the study of the contents of the kindergarten curriculum it emerges that ‘*space in the school classroom is organized into corners*’ (TG 2006, 22). Some corners are presented as extremely important and must exist in all Greek kindergarten classrooms:

“The corners which operate throughout the school year include: the discussion corner, the building material corner, the library corner, the art corner” (TG 2006, 60–61).

These specific corners are designed for the teaching of Language (the discussion and library corners), Mathematics (the building material corner) and Fine Arts, which are all high status in the case of the kindergarten. The first two knowledge areas increased their prestige following the reforming interventions in the curricula of Greek compulsory education in 2003, since the prerequisites for success in the first year of primary school are the cultivation of linguistic skills and the acquisition of basic mathematical concepts (Koustourakis 2007). The Fine Arts maintain the prestige which they always possessed within the context of the Greek kindergarten (Government Paper 1989; Ministry of Education 1992).

Table 1 presents the classification of sentences which reveal the official discourse for the shaping of the organizational framework of kindergarten classroom space aimed at its specialized (or not) use in relation to the knowledge areas of the curriculum.

Table 1 Classroom corners and knowledge areas of the kindergarten curriculum

Classification	Number of sentences	%
C++	87	72.5
C+	12	10.0
C-	21	17.5
Total	120	100.0

From the data in Table 1, it emerges that the objective is for the majority of corners in kindergarten classrooms to have strictly specialized content (C++ 87 sentences, 72.5%). In this way, though, the traditional means of shaping space in the Greek kindergarten is reproduced (Germanos 2005a) and prospects for its more flexible exploitation for teaching purposes may well be restricted. However, according to Germanos (2005b), the new educational policy in the area of school knowledge calls for the pedagogic redesign of kindergarten classroom space and the replacement of traditional ‘corners’ with more flexible areas for teaching activities. Nevertheless, the introduction for the first time in the case of the Greek kindergarten curriculum of clear knowledge areas (Language, Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Creation and Expression, and Computer Science) which correspond to subjects of the Greek compulsory education curricula (Government Paper 2003) ultimately appears to lead not to flexible classroom areas, but rather to the creation of corners with a particular identity and specialized teaching use (C++ and C+ 99 sentences, 82.5%). Such is the case in the following example:

“The kindergarten library is organized in such a way so as the children are in a position to borrow illustrated books with fairy tales, myths, legends, poems, tongue twisters, short plays, as well as illustrated magazines and albums” (KC 2003, 595).

For the correct daily use of the ‘specialized’ corners (C++), it is essential that the pupils are aware of the recognition rules (Bernstein 1996, 2000), which concern how they are to function according to the directions of the kindergarten curriculum (KC 2003, 321; TG 2006, 74). In fact, in the content of the Kindergarten Teacher’s Guide the rules concerning the organization of space and the placing of corners at appropriate points in the classroom are clearly defined:

“The quiet corners should be at a distance from the noisy ones. For example the building material could be next to the dolls’ house, but it would be good if it were at a distance from the library corner and the board games” (TG 2006, 63).

Moreover, the section of references to the kindergarten curriculum in the case of a weak classification of the organization of classroom space is small (C- 21 cases, 17.5%). This concerns corners which can be used more flexibly:

“The corner shop has been converted into an optician’s for the purposes of the game” (TG 2006, 151).

In the case of weak classification, it appears that the pupils’ wishes are respected regarding choice of corner and means of using the material in the corner during the game. In addition, the objective of the free activities in the corners is the pupils’ socialization and the facilitation of communication between them (TG 2006, 60).

Table 2 presents the frequency of reference to corners which can be created in kindergarten classrooms. It also presents the correlation of the corners with the knowledge areas of the kindergarten curriculum where, within the context of the relevant activities, the corners can be used for teaching purposes.

Table 2 References to classroom corners and correlation with knowledge areas of the kindergarten curriculum

Classroom Corners	Knowledge areas	Frequency	%
Library and reading	Language	29	24.2
Computers	Computer Science	15	12.5
Shop	Mathematics, Language, Free activities	14	11.7
Building material and mathematics	Mathematics	12	10.0
Discussion	Language, Free activities	8	6.7
Doctor's surgery	Language, Mathematics, Free activities	7	5.8
Dramatization	Creation and Expression	7	5.8
Arts	Creation and Expression	6	5.0
Dolls' house	Free activities	6	5.0
Games	Free activities	5	4.2
Puppet show	Creation and Expression	4	3.3
Natural sciences	Studies of the Environment	4	3.3
Music	Creation and Expression	3	2.5

Studying the data in Table 2, it emerges that, assuming the size of the classroom permits it, the kindergarten teacher is given the opportunity to create corners which can serve the teaching needs mainly of Language and Mathematics, in other words, the knowledge areas which are considered most important for the preparation of the pupils for primary school. Such corners, apart from the discussion, library and building material corners which possess high prestige, are the shop and the surgery. In these two corners, which can be used flexibly, both linguistic and mathematical abilities can be cultivated simultaneously:

“In the corner shop, the assistant rings up the price on the cash register and the shop owner prepares a hand written receipt” (T.G. 2006, 71).

The dramatization, puppet show and music corners (a total of 14 references, 11.4%) are related to creation and expression and their objective is to create a pleasant atmosphere which can help the pupils to express themselves and become acquainted with various forms of art. The corners for the dolls' house and games, which can be made available for the children's free play, although connected to the world of the children's everyday experience, can contribute to the reproduction of stereotypes regarding the two sexes. Finally, the significant number of references in the content of the kindergarten curriculum to the computer corner is connected to the attempt to help kindergarten pupils acquire technological literacy (Alahiotis and Karatzia-Stavlioti 2006; Council of Europe 2003). This clearly illustrates the influence of international factors (Apple 2002; Bernstein 1990, 2000) on the shaping of Greek educational policy regarding school knowledge (Alahiotis and Karatzia-Stavlioti 2006; Koustourakis 2007).

Interactional Level of Classroom Space

Table 3 presents the distribution of sentences which refer to the interactional relationships between kindergarten teacher and pupils during the use of kindergarten classroom space for educational purposes.

Table 3 Interactive relationships between kindergarten teacher and pupils during the instructional use of the classroom space

Framing	Number of sentences	%
F++	13	17.8
F+	25	34.3
F-	35	47.9
Total	73	100.0

Studying the data in Table 3 regarding the manner of instructional use of classroom space, it emerges that mixed pedagogic practices are implemented. In particular, in the majority of sentences (F++ and F+ 38 cases, 52.1%) it appears that the role of the teacher is decisive for the shaping of classroom space and informing and reminding pupils of the recognition rules regarding the requirements for the functioning of the corners. In addition, in terms of encouraging the pupils to move within the classroom space and to act independently, applying the realization rules which determine the ‘correct’ pedagogical use of the corners is considered equally significant (F- 35 sentences, 47.9%).

More specifically, from the qualitative analysis of the research material, it emerges that the teacher is called on to apply the realization rules which concern the organization of classroom space (application of classification in practice). In particular, the teacher, working on the basis of the principles of an invisible pedagogy (F++) is obliged to arrange the classroom space according to its size. In the case of small classrooms, priority should be given to the creation of the library corner, the discussion corner and the building materials corner (KC 2003, 595; TG 2006, 24, 34, 59). In addition, the corners should be placed at suitable points so that the noisy corners are not in close proximity to the quiet corners (TG 2006, 63). Furthermore, the teacher is obliged to equip the corners with suitable materials, as determined precisely in the contents of the Kindergarten Teacher’s Guide (TG 2006, 62–63), and to place the materials at a suitable height so that they are visible to and accessible by the pupils (KC 2003, 595; TG 2003, 64). Finally, teachers are to ensure the flexible use of the classroom space when their classroom is small and/or pupils with special needs attend (TG 2006, 34, 116).

Another highly important goal is the teacher’s motivation of the pupils to participate in the educational process and apply the realization rules (F+ 25 cases, 34.3%) which concern:

- a. safe use of the corners:

“The children learn to sit properly in front of the computer (their chest in a line with the H on the keyboard)” (KC 2003, 615);

- b. the procedure which must be followed for the use of the materials in the corners, such as the borrowing of a book from the library corner:

“The teacher settles on some days of the week for borrowing, or an hour during the day as book borrowing hour” (TG 2006, 134).

Moreover, the teacher is called on to try to involve the children in daily pedagogic practice by guiding them to apply rules of operation for the corners (F+ 25 sentences, 34.3%). To be successful, the teacher must frequently remind the pupils that the classroom rules were formed with their participation:

“The teacher encourages the children as they arrive in the morning at the kindergarten to notice which corners are working, to look at the notice boards that have been placed in each corner to remember the class decisions concerning the number of children that can participate in them” (TG 2006, 67).

Furthermore, according to the contemporary Greek kindergarten curriculum, the pedagogical effort should lead to situations where pupils act independently to choose the corners in which they want to work. And they should also work there in an autonomous way and without requiring the intervention of the teacher (F- 35 sentences, 47.9%). A prerequisite for this is the implementation by the pupils of the recognition rules which concern the expected use of classroom space. In this case it appears that one of the learner-centred teaching theories is chosen (Koustourakis and Zacharos 2011; Morais 2002; Morais and Neves 2011) where the teacher observes the pupils' activities discreetly. Consequently, in this particular case, the pupils are able, as protagonists should be within the context of the daily instructional activities, to read the signs of the rules of using classroom space, which they are then obliged to apply:

“Below the notice boards the children who choose each corner write their name and make sure that their number does not exceed the number they have agreed on” (TG 2006, 66).

A characteristic example of the application of the realization rules by the pupils is the restoration of the corner space in which they have been working:

“The tidying up is the final part of the game in the corner. In this way the children learn the nature of their obligations. They learn to be responsible” (TG 2006, 71).

Therefore, at the interactional level of Greek kindergarten classrooms, the implementation of mixed pedagogies for the management of pace is promoted. This is a finding which corresponds to the research data which come from the reality of international educational studies (Hatch 2005; Miller 2007; Morais and Neves 2011; Rog 2011; Smith and Sadovnik 2010). In addition, the teaching approaches applied are drawn in part from a visible pedagogy, which is supported by theories of teaching which focus on the teacher (Bernstein 2003; Morais and Neves 2011). In this case, for the educational process to begin, the initiative of the kindergarten teacher is essential for the shaping and arrangement of classroom space and to teach the pupils the recognition and realization rules which concern the use of the corners and their materials within the context of the daily pedagogical reality (strong framing) (Bernstein 1990, 2000). In addition, for the pedagogical use of classroom space, elements are also drawn from an invisible pedagogy, which is based on theories of teaching which focus on the learner, these now being considered the most appropriate for pupils of a pre-primary age (weak framing) (Bernstein 1990, 2004). In the latter case, the aim is to give the pupils the freedom to act independently, working in the various corners of the classroom on the precondition that they apply the realization rules which determine the limits and the possibilities for the use of each particular space for teaching and learning.

Conclusions

In this study we analysed the official discourse concerning the organization and use of preschool classroom space in Greece. From the analysis and interpretation of our research material we arrive at the following conclusions:

- Kindergarten classroom space should be made up mostly of specialized corners (strong classification) (Bernstein 1990, 1996). This determines exactly what equipment in the form of objects and materials may exist in each corner, as well as the way in which they are to be used for teaching and learning purposes.
- The creation of the corners is aimed at aiding the teaching of the knowledge areas of the kindergarten curriculum and in particular Language and Mathematics (strong classification) (Bernstein 1990, 1996). This is also why greater prestige is given to the library corner, the discussion corner and the building material corner, which are linked to the latter two knowledge areas.

- In the interactional framework of the kindergarten classroom, the aim is the application of mixed pedagogical practices for the use of space (Bernstein 1990, 2003; Smith and Sadovnik 2010). In this case the teacher is regarded as a powerful figure controlling and directing school work, implementing the official guidelines for the shaping and functioning of classroom space (strong framing, F++ and F+). More specifically, the teacher is called on to decide on the corners which will be created in the classroom and to equip them. In addition, visible pedagogical approaches oblige the teacher to make visible to the pupils the recognition rules (Morais and Neves 2006) which concern the recognition of the particular organizational and functional characteristics of each corner (F++ 17.8%). However, for the teaching interventions to be effective, the teacher needs to motivate the pupils to participate in the educational process and to guide them to apply the rules for the operation of each corner (F+ 34.3%). This is because the ultimate objective, according to the official discourse, is for the pupils to be able to work autonomously and apply the realization rules (F- 47.9%) which correspond to the 'correct' – according to the official discourse – use of classroom space (Bernstein 1996; Morais and Neves 2006).

Consequently, according to the official discourse, the specialized shaping of classroom space into corners of educational activity, connected to particular knowledge areas of the curriculum (strong classification) is sought. Moreover, as far as the pedagogical use of the corners is concerned, the aim is to achieve a shift from a visible pedagogy in which the pupils, through the action of the teacher, acquire the recognition rules of each corner, to an invisible pedagogy. In the latter case, the pupils have considerable freedom in their use of classroom space, implementing the rules for its safe and acceptable use according to the kindergarten curriculum (activation of the realization rules). However, the organization of preschool classroom space according to the contemporary Greek kindergarten curriculum is not particularly flexible and reproduces traditional models for the arrangement of the kindergarten classroom. This cannot meet the needs of a curriculum the objective of which is the cross-thematic approach to knowledge acquisition (Germanos 2005a, 2005b). Thus, we point to a lack of harmony between the official propositions on classroom space arrangements and the choice of the official pedagogy on the teaching of preschool knowledge.

In conclusion, the continuation of this research exploring the approach to the curriculum as actually implemented, which concerns the organization and pedagogic use of space in the contemporary kindergarten, is also of significant interest.

REFERENCES

- Alahiotis, Stamatis, and Eleni Karatzia-Stavlioti. 2006. "Effective Curriculum policy and cross-curricularity: an analysis of the new curriculum design of the Hellenic Pedagogical Institute". *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 14 (2): 119-147. doi: 10.1080/14681360600738277.
- Apple, W. Michael. 2000. *Official Knowledge. Democratic Education in a Conservative Age*. New York: Routledge.
- Apple, W. Michael. 2002. "Does Education have Independent Power? Bernstein and the question of relative autonomy". *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 23 (4): 607-616. doi: 10.1080/0142569022000038459.
- Bain, K. Sherry, Theresa Arceneaux Rheams, Young Ju Lee, & Elizabeth Benhayon McCallum. 2004. "Generalization and Maintenance Efforts in Social Interaction Interventions for Preschool and Kindergarten Aged Children". *Journal of Applied School Psychology* 20 (1): 103-130. doi: 10.1300/J370v20n01_07.
- Ball, Stephen. 2003. *Politics and Policymaking in Education: Explorations in Policy Sociology*. London: Routledge.
- Ball, Stephen. 2008. *The education debate*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Bernstein, Basil. 2003. *Class, Codes and Control. Volume III. Towards a Theory of Educational Transmission*. London: Routledge.
- Bernstein, Basil. 1990. *The Structuring of Pedagogic Discourse: Vol. IV Class, Codes & Control*. London: Routledge.
- Bernstein, Basil. 1996. *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity. Theory, Research, Critique*. London: Taylor & Francis Ltd.
- Bernstein, Basil. 2000. *Pedagogy, Symbolic control and identity. Theory, Research, Critique. (Revised edition)*. N.Y.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bernstein, Basil. 2004. "Social class and pedagogic practice". In *The RoutledgeFalmer reader in sociology of education*, edited by Stephen J. Ball, 196-217. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Burke, Anne. 2010. *Ready to Learn. Using Play to Build Literacy Skills in Young Learners*. Ontario: Pembroke Publishers.
- Council of Europe. 2003. *Learning and teaching in the communication society*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Crosser, Sandra. 2005. *What Do We Know about Early Childhood Education? Research Based Practice*. Clifton Park, NY: Thomson Delmar Learning.
- Dafermou, Chara, Pinelopi Koulouri, and Eleytheria Mpasagianni. 2006. *Kindergarten Teachers' Guide*. Athens: OEDB (in Greek).
- Dudek, Mark. 2000. *Kindergarten architecture*. London: Spon Press.
- Fromberg, Doris Pronin. 2006. "Kindergarten Education and Early Childhood Teacher Education in the United States: Status at the Start of the 21st Century". *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education* 27 (1): 65-85. doi: 10.1080/10901020500527145.
- Germanos, Dimitris. 2005a. "Themes of space organization to create an educational environment for Cross-thematic Curricula". In *The Cross-thematic approach to teaching and learning in the preschool and first school age*, edited by Dimitris Germanos, Eleytheria Panagiotidou, Konstantinos Bikos, Kafenia Botsoglou, and Maria Birmpili, 40-51. Athens: Ellinika Grammata.
- Germanos, Dimitris. 2005b. "Pedagogic redesign of the space and improvement of the educational environment in the kindergarten school". *Contemporary Kindergarten* 45: 74-80.
- Giddens, Antony. 2002. *Sociology*. Athens: Gutenberg.
- Government Paper. 1989. *Presidential Decree no. 486. Curriculum of preschool education. Volume A*, 208, 26-9-1989: 4469-4479 (in Greek).
- Government Paper. 2003. *Cross Thematic Curriculum Framework and Curricula of Primary School and Gymnasium. Volume B*, 303, 13-3-2003: 3827-3841 (in Greek).

- Hatch, J. Amos. 2005. *Teaching in the New Kindergarten*. Clifton Park, NY: Thomson Delmar Learning.
- Hughes, Fergus. 2010. *Children, Play and Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kendrick, Maureen. 2003. *Converging worlds: Play, literacy, and culture in early childhood*. Oxford: Lang Press.
- Koustourakis, Gerasimos. 2007. "The new educational policy for the reform of the curriculum and the change of school knowledge in the case of Greek compulsory education". *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 17 (1/2): 131-146. doi: 10.1080/09620210701433878.
- Koustourakis, Gerasimos, and Konstantinos Zacharos. 2011. "Changes in School Mathematics Knowledge in Greece: a Bernsteinian Analysis". *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 32 (3): 369-387. doi: 10.1080/01425692.2011.559339.
- Kwon, Young-Ihm. 2002. "Western influences on Korean Preschool Education". *International Education Journal* 3 (3): 153-164. <http://iej.cjb.net>.
- Miller, Kimberly Keller. 2007. *Play and Literacy Learning in One Urban Early Childhood Classroom*. PhD Dissertation. Ohio: The Ohio State University. Accessed May 12, 2012, from <http://etd.ohiolink.edu/send-pdf.cgi/Miller%20Kimberly%20K.pdf?osu1190063031>
- Ministry of Education. 1992. *Kindergarten Activity Book. Kindergarten teacher's book*. Athens: OEDB (in Greek).
- Morais, M. Ana. 2002. "Basil Bernstein at the Micro Level of the Classroom". *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 23 (4): 559-569. doi: 10.1080/0142569022000038413.
- Morais, M. Ana, and Isabel P. Neves. 2006. "Teachers as creators of social contexts for scientific learning". In *Knowledge, Power and Educational Reform. Applying the sociology of Basil Bernstein*, edited by Rob Moore, Madeleine Arnot, John Beck, and Harry Daniels, 146-162. London: Routledge.
- Morais, M. Ana, and Isabel P. Neves. 2011. "Educational texts and contexts that work: Discussing the optimization of a model of pedagogic practice". In *Knowledge, pedagogy and society: International perspectives on Basil Bernstein's sociology of education*, edited by Daniel Frandji, and Phillipe Vitale, 191-207. New York: Routledge.
- Rog, Lori Jamison. 2011. *Read, write, play, learn: Literacy instruction in Today's kindergarten*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Smith, Stephanie, and Alan R. Sadovnik. 2010. "Social class, race, and pedagogic practices: An analysis of the effects of early childhood programs on low-income African American children". In *Sixth Basil Bernstein Research Symposium, July 2010, Brisbane, Australia*. Accessed May 25, 2012, from http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/224226/smith-sadovnik.pdf
- Tafa, Eufimia. 2008. "Kindergarten reading and writing curricula in the European Union". *Literacy* 42 (3): 162-170. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-4369.2008.00492.x
- Toren, Zehava, Diana Maiselman, and Sara Inbar. 2008. "Curriculum Integration: Art, Literature and Technology in Pre-Service Kindergarten Teacher Training". *Early Childhood Education Journal* 35 (4): 327-333. doi: 10.1007/s10643-007-0197-0.
- Tsatsaroni, Anna, Konstantinos Ravanis, and Anna Falaga. 2003. "Studying the recontextualization of science in preschool classrooms: Drawing on Bernstein's insights into teaching and learning practices". *International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education* 1 (4): 385-417. doi: 10.1007/s10763-005-1049-2.
- Woolner, Pamela. 2010. *The Design of Learning Spaces*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Vamvoukas, Michalis. 2002. *Introduction to psycho-pedagogical research and methodology*. Athens: Gregoris.
- Vong, Keang-Ieng. 2012. "Play – a multimodal manifestation in kindergarten education in China". *Early Years* 32 (1): 35-48. doi: 10.1080/09575146.2011.635339.

Young, F.D. Michael. 2007. *Bringing Knowledge Back In. From social constructivism to social realism in the sociology of education*. London: Routledge.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Gerasimos Koustourakis: Dr. Gerasimos S. Koustourakis is an assistant professor in sociology of education at the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, University of Patras, Panepistimioupoli, 265.00 Rio Patras, Greece. He, also, is a Tutor in the Faculty of Humanities of Hellenic Open University teaching Open and Distance Learning. His research interests center on historical and comparative sociology of education, sociology of school knowledge and pedagogical practices, open and distance learning, and sociological approaches of the information communication technologies in education.

The International Journal of Early Childhood Learning is one of ten thematically focused journals in the family of journals that support The Learner knowledge community—its journals, book series, conference and online community. It is a section of *The International Journal of Learning*.

The journal investigates the dynamics of learning in the first seven years of life.

As well as papers of a traditional scholarly type, this journal invites presentations of practice—including documentation of early childhood learning practices and exegeses of the effects of those practices.

The International Journal of Early Childhood Learning is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal.

ISSN: 2327-7939

