"Definitions don't matter" : digital literacy and the undoing of Subject Media?

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Abstract

The recent Translit report on media and information literacy policies in the UK calls for more research into the relationship between "Media Studies and media /digital / information literacy in order to provide robust evidence of the need for training and legitimation for the subject as the preferable 'conduit' for digital citizenship in the 21st century" (McDougall et al 2014). This paper draws on empirical material collected towards an exploration of further education teachers' talk about digital literacy to begin these conversations. We put to work ideas from Gee (2011) to map the discursive terrain that shapes ideas, concepts and practices relating to digital literacy within the college context and share our emergent thinking about how digital literacies, and identities for teachers, students and disciplines, are constituted, and constituting within an institutional setting. Towards concluding we invoke Hobbs' provocation to the Media Education Summit that perhaps "definitions don't matter" and that digital literacy is less a 'something' than an opening up, for teachers, teacher educators and policy makers both in the UK and in the wider international education community, to begin to imagine differently.

Introduction

The recent Translit report on media and information literacy policies in the UK calls for more research into the relationship between "Media Studies and media /digital / information literacy in order to provide robust evidence of the need for training and legitimation for the subject as the preferable 'conduit' for digital citizenship in the 21st century" (McDougall et al 2014). This paper draws on empirical material collected towards a wider study of further education[1] (FE) teachers' talk about digital literacy to begin these conversations. We put to work ideas from Gee (2011) to map the discursive terrain that shapes ideas, concepts and practices relating to digital literacy within the college context and share our emergent thinking about how digital literacies, and identities for teachers, students and disciplines, are constituted, and constituting within an institutional setting. We make use of Bernstein's (2000) notions of classification and framing to explore teachers' sense making as they work/grapple at the epistemological boundaries of their "Subject" disciplines, Media Studies, English and ICT, to make new meanings for digital literacy. We argue that the insulated spaces (after Bernstein), that is to say the orthodox narratives and certainties, of the "schooled subject" disciplines are challenged and undone by the *un*-assimilated, *un*-disciplined 'otherness' of digital literacy raising, for us, important questions about the sustainability and usefulness of the bounded "subject" in the context of new media environments. Towards concluding we invoke Hobbs' provocation to the Media Education Summit that perhaps "definitions don't matter" and that digital literacy is less a 'something' than a starting point for new conversations about "subject" futures that may have resonance for teachers, teacher educators and policy makers both in the UK and in the wider international

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[1] Further Education in England has traditionally referred to tertiary or post compulsory education undertaken after the age of sixteen. However recent policy changes over the last two decades have shifted the remit of FE colleges in the UK quite considerably. Young people of compulsory school age have been able to attend FE colleges to access specialist vocational education and train for some time and from September 2013 all young people are required to remain in some form of education or training until the age of eighteen.

education community.

Our discussion in this paper focuses on empirical material collected through an online survey undertaken as the first phase of a case study exploring conceptualisations of digital literacy within the FE context. The survey was circulated to over 900 teachers at a large general FE college in the Midlands of England. Through the survey teachers were invited to define literacy and digital literacy and to share their views on how and where in the FE curriculum digital literacy might be taught. For the purposes of this analysis we have extracted and will focus specifically on contributions from a small number of participants who self-identified as teachers of English, Media or ICT from the initial group of fifty four who participated in the initial phase of the survey. Although teachers across the college were invited to participate, and we have contributions from colleagues working across the broad range of the college's curriculum portfolio, we have chosen to focus first on the ideas of those working within these specific disciplinary areas because they seem to represent for us the locations within the curriculum where we might expect to find a more self-conscious attention to literacy, digital media and digital practices. As such we were keen to explore how the kinds of ideas extended in the TransLit report are being consumed and mediated within these disciplinary contexts. Interestingly none of these teachers reported teaching in more than subject area, although the survey did give them the option to do this. It is possible however, and indeed likely in the case of Media teachers (McDougall, 2004), that they have taught across subject boundaries over their career course but are reporting a preferred affiliation. Teachers concept-making about disciplinary boundary crossing/making and subject identity are discussed below and this is a theme that will be explored further in the next phases of the project. This first phase of the study aimed to offer starting points for a sector specific cases study of teachers' conceptualisations of digital literacies through qualitative analysis of teachers' own accounts of their everyday working definitions and understandings. Through this work we hope to open more in-depth conversations about the factors that shape meaning making and influence practice in relation to digital literacy in different disciplinary cultures. Our discussion here makes use of participants', often tentative, descriptions of their own definitions,

what Gee (2011) might call their figured worlds about digital literacy, to describe the positions they take up in relation to Gee's idea of 'Big D' Discourses (1990, 2011), that is to say those that are dominant, public and institutional, and to consider how this might begin to pattern and frame the everyday enactment of literacies and disciplines.

Stories about digital literacy – mapping 'Big D' discourse

In very simple terms 'Digital Literacy' (DL) is often used an umbrella to refer to the collection of things people might do with and through literacy in digitally mediated spaces. However such simplicity eludes the rich complexity of concept making around both the meanings of the conjoined DL and the key constituent concept of literacy, rendering a stable, fixed definition difficult to superimpose. Here we sketch an outline map of the concept-making terrain as a context within which to explore teachers' figured world meaning making.

Big D discourses of digital literacy adopt varying and competing positions and emerge from a range of discrete epistemological narratives with each inferring their own perspectives and nuances. Such epistemological proliferation arguably makes DL a field of study rather than a discretely bounded, easily defined 'thing' which, as we shall illustrate below, seems to present particular challenges for education curricula founded on the modernist narratives of 'schooled subjects'. Schooled subjects, for the purposes of this paper *Subject English*, *Subject Media* and *Subject Information and Communication Technology*, are the representations of a discipline manifest within the/a college context, the "institutionalised framing of the subject" (Bennett et al, 2001:1), and the particular ways of doing, being and seeing they privilege and reify (Peim, 2002). Here we trace these evolving and competing narratives of digital literacy before moving on to consider how they are played out in the everyday figured worlds of teachers in practice contexts.

Big D 1, Digital Literacy, technology, skills

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Digital literacy, argues, emerged alongside an "upsurge of hyphenated forms of literacy" as a response to the inadequacy of 'literacy', with its associations with traditional print forms of textual experience, to take proper account of "new modes of expression" (2008: 173). Drotner understands digital literacy as a one of a spectrum of literacy conjoinments (visual literacy, teleliteracy, computer literacy, media literacy, internet literacy) which evolved, she contends, in relation to particular forms and modes of technology.

Early concept-making about 'digital literacy' can be traced to the field of Computer and Information literacy offering definitions that appear, retrospectively, rather crude, 'literacy as we know it in the context of computers'. Reflecting the then emergent nature of digitally mediated spaces, digital literacy spoke about "the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers" (Glister, 1997). This work drew heavily on a skills discourse of literacy, what Street had described as the 'autonomous model' (Street 1999) within which literacy is re-presented as a de-contextualised 'tool-kit', a free-standing (or autonomous) set of skills, in reading, writing, speaking and listening, that, once acquired, enable the holder to function effectively across a range of contexts and settings, what we might call literacy domains. Although at first glance simplistic, digital literacy was nevertheless understood to encompass more than 'keystrokes,' and to demand a 'special kind of thinking' that extended beyond simple skills,

> "...Digitally literate people are quick on their feet in moving from one kind of medium to another ...know what kind of expression fit what kinds of knowledge and become skilled at presenting information in the medium that their audience will find easiest to understand" (Lanham 1995:198).

But as Bawden (2008) argues early definitions offered limited ways of understanding real world practice. Tied to the technology of the time, she contends, they remained restrictive, prescriptive and formulaic. Bawden goes on to argue that the proliferation of new technologies across all aspects of professional and social life

inevitably manifested new academic interest in meaning making around literacy. Drawing on ideas from (1999) and Lankshear & Knobel (2003) among others, Merchant (2007) cautions against the imposition of an old/new binary, arguing that that this kind of linear reading misunderstands the complex nature of literacy work, both 'old' and 'new', an idea that we shall explore in more detail below.

However dualist discourses of difference continue to find traction in political and policy (Eynon and Geniets, 2012) narratives in the UK and elsewhere surfacing most explicitly in relation to meaning making around young people and their cultures and practices. Although substantially critiqued, Prensky's (2001) old/new notion of the 'digital native/digital immigrant' binary has been cited heavily across digital literacy literature, particularly in reference to the teaching of digital literacy to young people. The digital native characterizes young people as homogenous "native speakers" of digitally mediated experience. In direct opposition are digital immigrants, "an older generation who try to adapt the new digital environment, but always retain, to some degree, a foot in the past" (Prensky, 2001). Although much critiqued (see for example Helsper and Eynon, 2009) the discursivity of the 'exotic digital youth' continues to surface with very real effect. For example as Drotner (2008) suggests, teachers, 'othered' in their digital immigrant difference, "might be less inclined to incorporate these technologies within the classroom through the fear that their skills would be insufficient to teach."

Whilst compelling, what these linear, grand narratives of technological evolution, complemented by concurrent skill development tend to overlook is the complex overlay of social, political and economic contingencies as they play out in the everyday realities of lived experience. The National Literacy Trust for example has expressed concerns about a 'digital divide' (2009) between those who have access to and the knowledge to utilize digital technologies and those who don't. NLT identifies two at risk groups: those without the financial resources to facilitate access and those without a clear understanding of the centrality of new media to ideas about citizenship and social participation. Education, the NLT argues, be it 'light touch' informal learning opportunities, formal adult education or statutory schooling are

essential to bridging a 'digital divide', a 'solution' which perhaps frames the digital exclusion as a 'problem' as framing the 'problem' of training and awareness.

Fine-grained qualitative studies of digital exclusion however offer more nuanced insights that illuminate the substantial influence of social and cultural capital on digital participation. Such studies suggest that the way individuals position themselves, or are positioned by others, in relation to digital literacy practices is inextricably entangled with 'social inheritance' (Grenfell and James, 1998:16), what we might call an individual's 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1985), that is to say a person's "individual history…but…also the whole collective history of family and class that the individual is a member of" (Reay, 2004: 434). As Peter and Valkenburg (2006) remind us,

> Adolescents with greater socio-economic resources were more likely to use the Internet for social purposes than adolescents with fewer socio-economic resources. Adolescents with greater socio-economic and greater cognitive resources were more likely to use the Internet as an information medium compared to those with fewer socio-economic and cognitive resources, while adolescents with lower socio-economic resources and lower cognitive resources used the Internet more frequently for entertainment. (cited in Eynon 2011:3).

Eynon and Geniets' (2012) work on 'lapsed' internet use further illustrates this point. They suggest that up to 10% of young people aged 17-23 would describe themselves as 'lapsed users', that is to say that they had used the internet at some point in the past but no longer do. Whilst some cited reasons for their lapsed participation that chimed with the NLT assertions above, lack of access to resources, hardware or internet connectivity, others raised psychological concerns about safety and online bullying or the outcome of a previous negative online experience as explanations for changes in behavior. Eynon and Geniets suggest that internet non-use is a multi-faceted issue related to the complex interaction of five key factors that "together define the technological resourcefulness of a young person and determine his/her

ability to access and meaningfully interact with the Internet" (2012:3). These factors are: psychological - attitudes, motivations and agency towards the Internet and everyday life; cognitive - operational skills, critical skills, literacy and awareness of opportunity); physical - quality of Internet access, access to, and use of, other technologies); socio–cultural - family, friends, peers, school, work, community; material - occupation, income, education (ibid). This works pushes us away from a focus on 'skills' and 'technologies' and towards an interest in people and practices and the alternative narratives of a '*new* digital litera*cies*' paradigm.

Big D Discourse 2 – New Digital Literacies

As we have described elsewhere (Kendall and McGrath, 2012) researchers working in this paradigm draw on discursive positions that treat language and literacy as social practices rather than technical skills learned exclusively in formal education. This means studying language and literacy "as they occur naturally in social life, taking account of the context and their different meanings for different cultural groups" (2001: 17). Barton and Hamilton's (1998:7) five tenets offer a useful summary of the principles that underpin these alternative positions:

- literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts;
- there are different literacies associated with different domains of life;
- literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies become more dominant, visible, influential than others;
- literacy is historically situated;
- literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making.
  Barton and Hamilton (1998:7)

What is central to these ideas is that literacy is not understood as a context free, technical skill-set but as practice embedded in social and cultural relations. Literacy is about how we produce and make texts, or what Lankshear and Knobel (2006a) call 'literacy bits', but these "do not exist apart from the social practices in which they

are embedded and within which they are acquired. If, in some trivial sense they can be said to exist (e.g. as code), they do not *mean* anything. Hence they cannot be meaningfully taught and learned as separate from the rest of the practice" (Lankshear and Knobel 13:2006a).

Conceputalising literacy as always already complex and pluralistic in this way problematises the usefulness of dualist readings, discussed above, that characterizes literacy and digital literacy as simply different in their familiarity or novelty (old/new). Understood through this lens then, digital literacy, literacy that is mediated by/in/through digital contexts is not a 'thing' that might be easily captured and defined but merely "shorthand for the myriad social practices and conceptions of engaging in meaning making mediated by texts that are produced, received, distributed, exchanged etc., via digital codification" (2006b:17). As such Lankshear and Knobel continue "digital literacy is really digital *literacies" (ibid).*

A note on identity

Each of the narratives explored above open up quite different opportunities for meaning making about identity. In the autonomous model a fixed, stable, humanist subject (the neo-liberal subject?) develops his/her self through acquisition of an autonomous skills set towards more effective and efficient participation. By contrast in the social practice model 'listener/reader, speaker/writer, [is] seen not as an isolated individual, but as a social agent, located in a network of social relations, in specific places in a social structure.' (Kress: 1990:5) as such identity is made and re-made at the nexus of agency and structural relations and the subject "complex…relational…[and] framed by embodiment, sexuality, affectivity, empathy and desire as core qualities (Braidotti, 2013: 26). Like literacy, identity is generative, prolific and always already in flux, identit*ies* perhap*s* rather than identity?

Exploring Figured Worlds Discourse

In this section we draw on critical discourse methodologies (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2011) to explore the 'little d' (Gee 2011) figured worlds of our teacher participants, that is to say their "socially and culturally constructed ways of recognising particular characters and actors and actions and assigning them significance and value" (ibid: 205), and the ways these accounts play in, out and with the complexity of the Big D discourses explored above.

Making sense of literacy/ies

In common with participants in previous studies we've undertaken (Kendall 2008, Kendall & McGrath 2012) participants 'free text' responses to the question 'what is literacy' drew heavily on a (big D) discourse of 'skills', the autonomous model discussed above. Literacy is functional and transactional: reading, writing, and sometimes gestures and speech, that support "effective" and "clear" transmission, "communication and comprehension" between people. For some a literal encoding of the real into a universal symbolic;

> *Refers to visual representation e.g.; real item, symbol and word (IT/ICT teacher);*

Whilst the context of transmission was expanded beyond individual subject towards some notion of participation in "society"

> *The ability to communicate within society, in the written, verbal and gestural sense. Mostly associated with reading and writing (Media Teacher)*

by those immersed in the cultures of Subject Media and Subject ICT the implied structural exchange of coding and de-coding meaning through the application of some kind of constant/describable "ability", literacy, that might be mastered - "confidently", "adequately", competently – appeared to remain a constant. With the exception of a single reference to gesture literacy 'work' was mostly associated with the textually mediated practices of schooled litera*cy*, reading, writing and understanding, which might in turn be seen in progressive, linear, chronological relation to an oral (pre-literacy/ate?) tradition.

> *The ability to read, write and speak to communicate clearly with other people (Media Teacher);*
>
> *The way in which we communicate – verbally and in written forms (reading, writing and understand[ing] (Media Teacher);*
>
> *English- reading and writing. the ability to effectively communicate and comprehend information in various formats evolving from the oral tradition, through print and toward digital, 3d and beyond (English Teacher);*

As we have found elsewhere Street's (1999) 'ideological' narrative, where literacy equates to acquisition of a neutral skillset that enables the homogenously 'literate' individual to navigate and orientate a complex world transcending social contexts and cultural domains, continues to pervade teachers concept-making :

> "Being able to confidently and adequately use certain skills" (IT/ICT teacher);

> "An understanding/ability in a certain topic most commonly language" (IT/ICT teacher).

Conceptualising digital literacy

Digital literacy was conceptualised as offering new spaces and places, in the sense of locus, for literacy transactions, like those described above, to occur:

> "Ability to participate in a digital society, Read, create and send digital messages communication."

> "Digital literacy primarily focuses on the ability to use information and communicate effectively through technology (beyond the Gutenberg Parenthesis when book was king)." (English Teacher)

These spaces, "digital environments", were mediated by information technology and manifestations of a notion of the "modern world". As such 'literacy as competency' – core skills for living - was understood to be central to "functioning highly", perhaps successful, agentive participation in "society today"/"modern society".

This new environment, for some a singular, unitary "world" for others something more apparently pluralistic was seen to be at once revelatory and hazardous and ideas about 'staying safe' projected in two ways: epistemologically and physically. In the first instance, epistemologically, concerns focused around the security, validity and reliability of knowledge encountered a concern about being able to "evaluate online information" effectively. In the second an implicit concern, articulated as a common sense, for the safety of the centred humanist subject/body as it chartered, in an embodied way, these new, perhaps for many participants unfamiliar environments – "it [digital literacy] encapsulates many different areas that many people would not even realise."

Teaching and learning digital literacy

'Big D' discourses about safety, neo-liberal performance of self/the humanist subject and social learning were invoked through figured world concept making about teaching and learning digital literacy.

As described above, keeping safe in the face of unspecified hazard was a key teaching and learning priority "they need to be using digital media safely outside of work". Beyond this certainty narratives about how digital literacy might be taught were notably nascent and hesitant:

> "Am not overly sure what it encompasses however for my students learning needs to be relevant to everyday life, hence my choice;"

> "Unsure a flexible, adaptable, relaxed space where people can learn-Both!";

> "Formally-Not sure-It should form part of the lesson".

> "It should be part of the curriculum, delivered formally, but it should also be socially and informally taught (as in most cases this is how they will benefit from being digitally literate the most*)"*

Digital literacy might have been an 'inside' or 'outside' activity, an aspect of formal or informal learning undertaken with or without a teacher who's role in teaching and learning was seen to be uncertain, contingent and equivocal,

> "Am not overly sure what it encompasses however for my students learning needs to be relevant to everyday life",

with convictions about relevance and longevity of learning instead driving a rationale for, and commitment to, some form of inclusion in the formal spaces of the curriculum, "I think it should be taught through a mix of formal and informal teaching". An ambiguity about the role of the teacher in relation to teaching and learning digital literacy implicitly invoked distinctions about what constituted 'in' (legitimate?) and 'out' (illegitimate?) of college learning with 'value' most commonly aligned to, or associated with, out of college experience.

> "Socially/Informally (guessing twitter, Facebook??)….my students learning needs to be relevant to everyday life, hence my choice;"
>
> "Not sure-It should form part of the lesson;"
>
> "Socially/Informally- An area outside of the classroom where students can sit with friends and use devices (with internet) and perhaps talk about work over eating/drinking/coffee! "

In this way competing discursive positions seemed to collide: on the one hand digital literacy is represented as central to and constituting of a new world order which students must embrace and inhabit if they are to be functionally active in the "modern world" yet at the same time digital literacy is a social world (life-world literacy?) phenomena distinct from and in extreme cases oppositional or other to college-world epistemes and identities:

"Social media has overtaken society. The media promotes an "all about you" mentality. "We want to hear from you". Tweet us and like us. Learning is much more than pictures of your daily life. "

"Learning" and "daily life" might be represented as binaries, not only different but oppositional, competing and hierarchically related as more (former) or less (latter) serious, valuable and legitimate each overlaid with a typology of self: the naturalised, centred self set in opposition with a becoming self performed through affiliation, allegiance and projection.

Epistemological mapping : locating digital literacy in the FE curriculum

The question of where and how students might explore digital literacy through the FE curriculum generated dilemmas and uncertainties, suggesting that meanings for 'digital literacy' have not yet been assimilated in to epistemological 'Subject' (Literacy, Media or ICT) narratives. English teachers suggested that digital literacy might find a place in "Media" or perhaps provide an "enriched experience" (in opposition to core?) in English, whilst Media teachers drew on a notion of "functionality", to describe the kind of being and doing in the world discussed above, to suggest a place beyond 'Subject-ness':

"Again it can encompass all areas of living (lifelong learning, functional skills)";

"All subjects. All subjects, at some point will use technology";

"Functional skills – Across all really but it is a functional skills really – which means it is essential for life and work".

Teachers of technology were divided between digital literacy being taught "separately in its own area" and in "all subjects…all subjects will use technology in some form and where it is possible learners should be encouraged to use it. It would also be useful to have its subject area to deal with specifics."

Concept-making about the relationship between digital literacy and the curriculum explored above raise interesting questions about the nature of epistemological practices in the FE context – with likely implications for the schools sector too. Bernstein's notions of *power*, *classification*, *insulation* and *regionalisation of knowledge* offer useful tools for thinking through the discursive dilemmas outlined above.

How, Bernstein asks, does power and control "translate into principles of communication" (2000:4), ways of thinking, being doing and how, in turn, do these principles of communication "differentially regulate forms of consciousness with respect to their reproduction and the possibilities of change?" (ibid). *Power*, Bernstein argues, generates categories and creates dislocations "to produce punctuations in social space" (ibid, 5) such as the disciplinary epistemes that we identify in the schooled context, for the purposes of this conversation we might think about Subject Literacy, Subject Media and Subject ICT as punctuations in social space, epistemological categories that we 'know' and recognize as distinct and distinctive. *Classification* is the means by which we are able to distinguish those categories one from the others, the defining attributes not *of* a category but *between* categories. Classification is the way that we understand Subject Literacy in its *difference* to Subject Media, "it is the dislocation of the potential flow of discourse which is crucial to the specialisation of any category" (ibid 6). This notion of dislocation is, for Bernstein, a dynamic, generative impulse – a disrupting and re-disrupting of 'flow' – that insulates one episteme from it's 'others', that is to say those against which it is negatively/positively defined.

> we can say then, that the insulation which creates the principle of the classification has two functions: one external to the individual, which regulates the relations between individuals, and another function which regulates relations within the individual. So insulation faces outward to social order, and inwards to order within the individual (ibid7).

As such insulation effects what Bernstein calls *regionalization of knowledge,* singular manifestations which we come to know as epistemological realities that we can recognize (know) and recontextualise (reproduce in new contexts) as say Subject Literacy, Subject Media or Subject ICT:

> regions are the interface between the field of the production of knowledge and any field of practice and, therefore, the regionalisation of knowledge has many implications. This is a change in the classification of knowledge the classification has become weaker and we shall see that, as the classification be4comes weaker, we must have an understanding of the recontextualising principles which construct the new discourses and the ideological bias that underlies any such recontextualising. Every time a discourse moves, there is space for ideology to play. New power relations develop between regions and singulars as they compete for resources and influence. (Ibid, 9)

Insulation is then the 'boundary work' that takes place between knowledge regionalization, work that, Bernstein argues, is necessarily dynamic, unremitting and relentless as pedagogic discourse/code is produced and reproduced through the entanglement of Big D knowledge production – curriculum specifications, examinations, teacher education – and little d world figuring at the site of individual agency.

The degree of 'Insulation' between categories, Bernstein argues, determines the degree of classification, weak or strong, and precipitates thereby less or more specialised 'discourses', 'identities' and 'voices'(Ibid. 7):

> We can say, then, that the insulation which creates the principle of classification has two functions: one external to the individual, which regulates the relations between individuals, and another function which regulates relations within the individual. So insulation faces outward to the social order and inwards to the order within the individual. (Ibid. 7)

Thus the act of positive definition of a category is always an act of suppression of the "unthinkable, the yet to be voiced" (ibid. 7) and categories are, and must, be sustained through a process of constant creation, "although classification translates power into the voice to be reproduced…the contradictions, cleavages and dilemmas

which inhere in the principles of classification are never entirely suppressed, either at the social or individual level. (2002:15).

Classification he suggests always carries power relations which might be 'strong' or 'weak'. Where classification is 'strong' epistemes are both highly distinctive and substantially differentiated from one another, each characterized by knowledge regimes that lead to

> …dislocation in the transmission of knowledge because, with strong classification the progression will be from concrete local knowledge, to the mastery of simpler operations, to more abstract general principles, which will be only available later in the transmission. When children fail at school, drop out, repeat, they are likely to be positioned in a factual world tied to simple operations, where knowledge is impermeable. The successful have access to the general principle, and some of these – a small number who are going to produce the discourse – will become aware that the mystery of discourse is not order, but disorder, incoherence, the possibility of thinking the unthinkable. But the long socialisation into the pedagogic code can remove the danger of the unthinkable, and of alternative realities (ibid 11).

This contrasts to "weak" classification where "there is a re-ordering of specialised differentiation…[which]… can provide a new social basis for consensus of interest and opposition" (ibid 12).

What we want to argue here is that teachers' concept making about digital literacy draws attention to strongly classified, heavily insulated pedagogic discourses that produce epistemological ways of knowing that are characterized by order, coherence, impermeability and 'knowability'. The '*something*' that is digital literacy is difficult to place, assimilate and comprehend with the epistemological thinking tools made available by the 'Subjects'. This is in spite of our teachers ' generally firm commitment to a certainty that digital literacy is a 'good thing' and 'a something that is central' to students' on-going success and well-being not just in the immediate college realm but in the imagined spaces of futures beyond college.

Based on our analysis, thinking through our empirical material with Bernstein's ideas, we would like to make three provocations. Firstly that the hyper complexity (slippery otherness) of 'digital literacy' as a multi-disciplinary phenomena provides a key opportunity, a moment, space and place, for little d conversations about the limits and fragilities of Big D discourses. For Bernstein drawing attention to permeability generates a potential for instability, the always already possibility or trace of divergence, difference, the 'unthinkable' that is vital to a notion of change. Secondly we would like to suggest that self-conscious concept making about digital literacy offers an opportunity for 're-figuring' worlds at the little d locus, an occasion for teachers to be reflexive about the insulating work they do and what/how they might like to do differently. And thirdly we would like to argue that we need new tools to help us, as teachers and teacher educators, make sense of the ways digital literacy impacts on our own, and our students', lived experiences. Our analysis would seem to suggest that the heavily insulated (hyper-modern) narratives of the Subject disciplines and the Big D narratives about literacy that permeate them, the epistemological turn that has shaped, patterned and framed our experience of further education, are an insufficient apparatus for sense making about the everyday realities of lives lived digitally. Instead we would like to gesture towards an ontological turn that re-positions teachers and students as dynamic, reflexive readers of the Subjects and the knowledge propositions, values and identities they make available for different agents and subjectivities (teachers and students).

Towards a conclusion we invoke Renee Hobbs' controversial assertion to the International Media Education Summit that perhaps "definitions don't matter" (Hobbs, 2014). Although a stimulus for much discussion and debate we concur with Hobbs' sentiment, not because we think definitions aren't important but that they are, in themselves, less interesting than the *work they do* to fix, define, refine, pattern frame and insulate. As such Hobbs' provocation might be read as an invitation to surrender our fixation with definitions (in particular Schooled Subjects and the reified epistemes that pattern them) and the colonising and territorializing work that they impose on young people's learning experiences and a gesture instead towards the co-construction of new possibilities and imaginaries.

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