

# Chapter 5

## New Literacies in the Intellectual Field of Education: Mapping Theoretical Perspectives in Scientific Publications

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### ABSTRACT

*This article studies the theoretical perspectives about new literacies that are dominant in the intellectual field of education at an international scale. The baseline assumption is that this is the primary field in which discourses are produced and then recontextualised (selectively dislocated and relocated) as curricular contents in teacher education (Bernstein, 1993). Our identification of theoretical perspectives is based on the analysis of scientific publications in education from 2007 to 2010. The study combines the exploration of more than 1500 texts, 70 of which were analysed in depth. The main objective was to graphically represent the different perspectives, showing the relationships within and between each one of them, as well as the agents who produce and legitimatise them. The identified perspectives and the constructed dimensions of analysis have been used in further stages of research in order to study national and regional curricular documents. This chapter reflects on what these perspectives can contribute to the field of Engineering and Architecture Education.*

### INTRODUCTION

The need for including technology into education from kindergarten through college has been a persistent request for the last 20 years. These needs stem from structural economic, social and cultural changes that have shaped the nature of

being and doing in contemporary society. From a historical point of view, technology inclusion in educational policies was related to the promise of improving education and solving teaching problems. However, proposals have not always been successful nor spurred significant changes in the way education is understood. Numerous authors

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have pointed out the limitations of these promises (Burbules & Callister, 2008; Cuban, 1986; Cuban, 2001 are among the best known) and they have historically shown how the introduction of each new technology triggers a new cycle of unfulfilled expectations (Buckingham, 2007). This type of reform assumes that intervention is progress: it is expected that a “new world” will emerge as a result of new programs, new technologies and new organizations (Popkewitz, 1991).

In this context, various international organizations (UNESCO, OAS, EU) have called for educational systems to develop new literacies that enable the formation of active and critical citizens in contemporary culture. Many voices demand a revision of the concept of literacy beyond the numbers and letters which were imperative for the survival of industrial society but not enough for the so-called information or knowledge society. Thus, the concept of literacy has been reconsidered and expanded in light of the social, cultural and economic conditions of the 21st century. Literacy is considered to be a skill for deciphering texts of various kinds, and for expressing thought; however, textual language is one modality among others. Today we incorporate multiple forms of images; music; body movement; social relations and all human expressions where thought and feeling are manifested as a part of life. Understood in this way, literacy can not be limited to text but must include “the skills to construct ideas in any of the forms that they are used culturally to create and express thought” (Eisner, 1991-1992:17). It is a question of literacy that includes digital aspects, but also exceeds them, as it involves the deeper meaning of contemporary culture and the conditions under which it is produced, to understand our place in the world we live in. Indeed, it implies a discourse where the educational practices required by contemporary culture gain meaning.

However, the study limits and perspectives of what is specifically called new literacies and

how they translates into the education field is still blurred. Many authors from different fields of knowledge have made important contributions, but there is still no clear view of the perspectives adopted or the contributions made by basic disciplines to the field of new literacies. This chapter presents the results of the study of the theoretical perspectives about new literacies that are dominant in the intellectual field of education at an international scale. The baseline assumption is that this is the primary field in which discourses are produced and then recontextualised (selectively dislocated and relocated) as curricular contents in education (Bernstein, 1993).

The objective is to describe what each perspective considers as object of study, how they are named and defined, what methodologies are legitimate, who the representatives are, ultimately, what the boundaries are between what can be conceived and what can not, and who are the ones that can define it. These perspectives are produced by specific agents and agencies, which struggle to exercise power and control over the definition of pedagogical discourse. In this paper, we map and position each perspective showing the relationships in relation to the agents that produce and legitimate them.

This paper aims to clarify the field and thus provide indicators so it can be introduced into the curricular sphere of the different levels of education. In the university specifically, content needs that arise from cross sectional competencies present in all study plans curriculum and which are in some specific cases underdeveloped (Gewerc and others, 2010).

To do so, in the next section we review some specific antecedents that have been the basis for the design of this part of the study, and then we describe in detail the key decisions in the methodological process. The final sections present our findings and how them can contribute to the field of Engineering and Architecture Education.

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