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The British Dental Association Regional Group Guest Lecture

9th March 2021

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Senior Lecturer
Head of Digital and Lifelong Learning
Aim, Objectives and Outcomes

**Aim:** to provide delegates with a deeper understanding of the role that education, in all its forms, has had on the professional journeys of those who go on to achieve elite positions in the dental sector.

**Objectives:**

**Identify:** the link between on-going study and the key features of the professional evolution of dental occupations.

**Apply:** the principle of Higher education, research, to the context of an evolving professional journey of dental professionals.

As a result of this presentation/session, the delegates will have a broader understanding of:

How positions of influence within the dental sector are achieved and are maintained.

Linking to GDC Outcomes B, C and D
Doctor Reed... and a story of education, empowerment, autonomy and power...
Prompted By...

• Interest in the practice of dental professionals

• Who is claiming what...
  – Knowledge and ‘territory’
    • for their own...
    • and why..
    • and what does that say...

Best way to explain is to tell you a story – the story...
Context...

Doctoral Research

Sociology Of The Professions

Basil Bernstein – Educationalist

Narratives established through story telling
Purpose Of The Research

- To demonstrate how professional journeys within the dental sector are restricted or enabled by educational strategies and tools.
- Professions and the position of occupational groups within them are always in flux; dentistry is no exception.
Increasingly, there are occupational groups within the dental professions, who pursue professional parity and an equivalent opportunity to influence the dental sector.

The research focuses on understanding the elites’ positioning within the dental sector from the perspective of theories of professionalisation and knowledge acquisition.
The sociology of the professions provided a background which shows how occupations differentiate, some acquiring professional status and others not.
The term ‘professionalisation’ is defined as the processes an occupational group undertakes when determined to achieve professional status.

[1] Collective Cohesion and Patronage

[2] Epistemic Controls and Claiming Knowledge

[3] Exclusion and Closing the Market
Background

The research was located within the sociology of education, using the concepts of Basil Bernstein to analyse professional enculturation... in terms of what is transferred during exclusive dental-elite professional educational exchanges, with peers and superiors, and which steers knowledge gathering over the course of a professional lifetime.
Basil Bernstein

Bernstein’s theory proposes that what knowledge is selected for curricula (termed ‘classification’) and how it is transmitted (termed ‘framing’) shapes, and can change, society...
Aim of the Research

...to inform the professional journeys of other aspiring dental occupations seeking to achieve elite, that is to say, influential positions in the future.
The 3 Research Questions

1. How are the professional journeys of influential dental sector elites characterised?

2. What typifies the relationship between powerful and dominant agents/ agencies that influence the formation, distribution and communication of professional knowledge in dentistry and those who go on to establish elite professional positions within the dental sector?

3. What are the implications of a Bernsteinian analysis for the emerging professionalising dental occupations?
The questions were addressed by qualitative exploration of the educational and professional lives of nine influential elite professionals working within the dental sector.

Influential elites who have held positions of national influence within the National Health Service, the Department of Health or other government office,

or who had been the national representative of one of the registered dental professional bodies in a role related to the development of the dental workforce and dental workforce strategy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Key Influential Roles</th>
<th>Brief Narrative Appendix 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Clair</td>
<td>Ex-Dean of the Royal College of Surgeons Faculty of General Dental Practice.</td>
<td>a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angus</td>
<td>Academic and ex Chair of General Dental Council and British Dental Association.</td>
<td>b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter</td>
<td>Ex-NHS Postgraduate Dental Dean and member of COPDEND. Committee member of Royal College of Surgeons Faculty of General Dental Practice.</td>
<td>c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigella</td>
<td>Department of Health, past deputy Chief Dental Office and a committee member of Royal College.</td>
<td>d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>Civil Servant – Department of Health.</td>
<td>e.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbie</td>
<td>Academic and past Chair of the Dental School’s Council.</td>
<td>f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>Ex-NHS Postgraduate Dental Dean, Chair of COPDEND and invited member of Royal College of Surgeons Faculty of General Dental Surgery.</td>
<td>g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>Ex-Associate Dean of Royal College of Surgeons Faculty of General Dental Practice and committee member of the General Dental Council.</td>
<td>h.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne</td>
<td>NHS Postgraduate Dental Dean, member of COPDEND and a lead in the current NHS Advancing Dentistry Project.</td>
<td>i.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casey</td>
<td>The composite narrative of the fictional character.</td>
<td>j.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methodology and Methods

Narrative Methodology

Methods: interviews & life grids
Plus, historical and policy documents
Findings ...Dental Elites are...

Continuous Learners

Adding to the professions reservoir of knowledge by building their own repertoire

Committed to a ‘pedagogised career’

Fit together fragments of knowledge into a coherent scheme, which constitutes a curriculum which...

...transmits a range of deeply-embedded messages which are both open and concealed, accessible to some but not others.
Findings

The findings showed that such messages influenced the receiver of education:

[1] a sense of who they were;

[2] their limits in terms of options as to what they were permitted to do.

Knowledge might fade or be replaced, but relationships were enduring and relied upon by the influential dental-elite to gather further knowledge in the future.

• This is how a system of practices, norms, values, and worldviews that the professional curriculum conveys, are presented.
Research Argued

Those who transmit knowledge exert powerful influence

It is through repeated and prevailing educational interactions and encounters that relationship groups form.

These groups are intentionally pervasive, functioning to ensure the group’s mutual interests and influence are projected and preserved, to the exclusion of others outside the group.
The lesson for others

Journey of Dental-elite Acquisition of Knowledge

A model against which your own pedagogic structures might be evaluated.

...with a view to identifying how these structures might be strengthened to support those who wish to achieve positions of influence within the dental sector of the future.
Model of the Journey of Dental Elite Acquisition of Knowledge

Figure 6.2

Acquired Knowledge

Start of journey

Destination

Others

Self
Model of the Journey of Dental Elite Acquisition of Knowledge

- Home & Family
- School & Learning Institutions
- University & Work Mentors
- Peers Networks & Professional Affiliations
- Self & Selected Influences

Acquired Knowledge

Start of journey

Destination

Self

Others
Model of the Journey of Dental Elite Acquisition of Knowledge

Acquired Knowledge

Home & Family
School & Learning Institutions
University & Work Mentors
Peers Networks & Professional Affiliations
Self & Selected Influences

Start of journey
Others
Destination

Self
Dependent
Intra-dependent
Inter-dependent
Co-dependent
Independent
Model of the Journey of Dental Elite Acquisition of Knowledge

Acquired Knowledge
Model of the Journey of Dental Elite Acquisition of Knowledge

Animated Model
11 minutes in length
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYqt1pfORTA
The Journey of Dental Elite Acquisition of Knowledge
Implications:
Micro (Practitioner) Level

Understanding of Professionalisation
The study furnishes practitioners with a foundation for understanding key information and direction to locating evidence sources and historical insight...

Tool for Reflection
The study offers practitioners a tool with which to punctuate their day-to-day activity...

... conversational spaces for deeper reflective consideration of how development and educational opportunities...

... specifically related to postgraduate study and professional credentials, have advantaged others in the past.
Implications: Meso (Organisational) Level

• Model of *Journey of Dental-elite Acquisition of Knowledge*

• As a model for professional organisations and educational stakeholders.

What is the current nature of the organisation?

What are the organisation’s positions, both strategic and operational?

What position does the organisation need to adopt to ensure members’ interests are represented going forward?

Are the vision, values and strategy enough to reflect the purpose of the organisation and its relevance in the future?
Implications:  
Macro (National) Level

- The transformation of the dental workforce is an ongoing project.
- For those seeking to bring about workforce transformation in terms of future dental sector influencers

First, identify and understand 'who' (organisations, positions and individuals) controls and transmits knowledge …

*de facto* those who exert powerful influences on those with whom they come into frequent and prolonged contact. Then...

Second, develop a strategy (and associated policies) that aim to establish routes to ensure that these arenas are ‘opened up’ so that all occupational groups…

....enable a presence, with legitimate rights to be part of decision-making and to contribute to powerful, multi-professional dental arenas.
Contributions to the Dental Professions

The role of influential knowledge, which binds the dental-elite together

How that knowledge is acquired

How influence is sustained

The research has generated understanding about...
Contribution to Professions

...illustrating how one (dental) profession has established control through professionalisation.

...if inequalities in knowledge and educational distribution continue, there will be a resultant continuation in stratification within the (dental) professions.

...illuminated the potential effects of educational stratification, such as access to powerful groups through a credentialing system, which permitted access and contribution...
Theoretical Contribution

...how the elite of the dental workforce propel themselves through career-long knowledge acquisition and pedagogical relationships

...characterises the career journeys that lead to positions of power and the influences

...illuminate the potential effects of educational stratification, such as access to powerful groups through a credentialing system, which permitted access and contribution for some but not others.
**Aim, Objectives and Outcomes**

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As a result of this presentation/session, the delegates will have a broader understanding of....

How positions of influence within the dental sector are achieved and are maintained.
the acquisition of sacred knowledge from certain ‘others’ through pedagogic devices, produces a dental-elite professional.

Although located within the context of dentistry, this approach could be applied to any occupation seeking professional standing.

...the struggles occupations experience to gain professional status
...what is transferred during exclusive elite professional educational exchanges, with peers and superiors...
...which steer knowledge-gathering over the course of a professional lifetime
Questions?

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Research Gate

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Senior Lecturer
Head of Digital and Lifelong Learning
Survey question/s

- To what extent were you previously familiar with the content of the webinar?

- To what extent did the webinar add to your appreciation of professional practice within the dental sector?
References

  • https://repository.royalholloway.ac.uk/file/dba85db6-3e09-48f5-9721-804021cee27c/1/10098404.pdf


• The Lancet – On-Line Archive Accessed September 2018
