

Knowledge-Building: Educational studies in Legitimation Code Theory

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Knowledge-Building is an accessible introduction to the theoretical foundations and practical applications of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), an increasingly influential sociological theory which is likely to have a significant impact on all fields of education, including English language teaching.

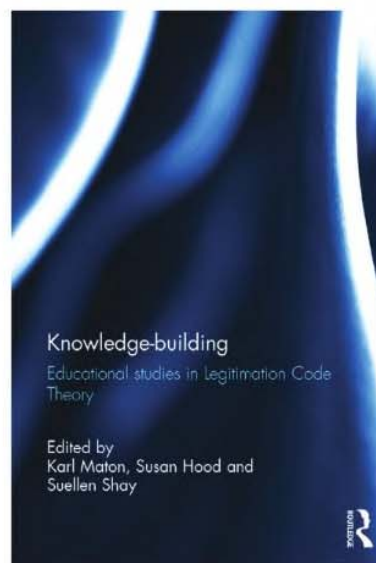
The book contains 12 chapters. The first of these provides a concise outline of LCT. Following this, the book is separated into three distinct parts. Part 1 is a practice-oriented section which details the theory's enactment in research. Part 2 presents the results of LCT research, and exemplifies its effectiveness in analysing pedagogic practice. Part 3 includes recommended further reading and a glossary.

Chapter 1, 'Legitimation code theory: Building knowledge about knowledge-building', introduces the LCT framework and its primary aim: to enable transparent and insightful analysis of both formal and informal educational practices. Building on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein, LCT posits that underlying every aspect of society are sets of 'organising principles' (p. 7). These principles dictate which social and educational practices, as well as perspectives, are seen as legitimate and therefore acceptable. Through the study of real-world problems, LCT aims to reveal both the diverse nature of knowledge and the processes which valorise some forms of knowledge and some characteristics of those who claim knowledge (referred to in LCT as 'knowers') rather than others. The integration of the findings of LCT research into its explanatory framework enables knowledge-building: the cumulative process of understanding the diverse ways in which societies and their members structure, transmit and privilege different forms of knowledge and attributes of knowers.

This introductory chapter provides an effective entry point into LCT for readers not familiar with the theory and ensures that the following chapters can be read with relative ease. It is, however, necessarily short and so some readers may find it valuable to engage with more substantive accounts of LCT, such as Maton (2014), in order to be completely satisfied with their grasp of the theory.

The four chapters comprising Part 1 of the book focus on the application of LCT. Unlike most accounts of academic research, these chapters examine not the results of research, but the research process itself. The focus is on the ways in which LCT has been employed in order to challenge some of the false dichotomies which pervade research in education, including theory/data, qualitative/quantitative research, and theory/practice.

The last of these research-process oriented chapters (Chapter 5) will probably be of most interest to ELT professionals as it examines the interdisciplinary relationship between LCT and systemic functional linguistics (SFL). This chapter describes a research project which aimed to overcome some of the difficulties faced by high-school science and history teachers in explaining to students how language is used to construct knowledge in these very different academic fields. The authors demonstrate how LCT and SFL can provide distinct yet complementary understandings of real-world educational problems, thus increasing the 'explanatory power' (p. 94) of both theories (see also Martin & Maton, 2016; Maton & Doran, 2017).



Part 2, entitled 'Knowledge-building in education and beyond', presents the results of studies which have used LCT to analyse academic and pedagogic practice. The diverse contexts which these chapters examine include the use of story genres to represent legitimate ethnographic knowledge, the effectiveness of a design curriculum and its assessment tasks, and the linguistic construction of knowledge and knowers in English literature, physics and music.

In each of these studies, success is shown to be dependent upon a learner's ability to understand the knowledge structure of their field while also demonstrating that they have the attributes of a legitimate knower. Effective pedagogy and curricula are therefore dependent upon teachers having a thorough understanding of not just

the facts which comprise their subjects, but also of the processes through which knowledge is demonstrated and valued.

Part 3, 'Resources for knowledge-building', is the book's coda. It includes a useful summary of work influencing and enacting LCT, as well as a glossary of the many key terms that are employed by researchers using the theory.

Although none of the studies in *Knowledge-Building* directly examine the ELT classroom, the book's scope and contents make it a valuable resource for English teachers and researchers. It is an excellent primer for those interested in engaging with LCT and enacting it in either action research or academic research projects. These research projects should be inspired by the most salient concept of *Knowledge-Building*: that all forms of knowledge and social practice, including therefore those of the ELT classroom, are founded upon culturally valued ways of doing and being. *Knowledge-Building* demonstrates that, for pedagogy to be effective, the nature of what is being learnt must be paramount and so a failure to recognise that ELT imparts knowledge which has a unique structure and form results in a pedagogically-damaging 'knowledge-blindness' (Maton, 2014).

While content-based models of language teaching have to some extent oriented English for specific purposes towards increased disciplinary understanding, reflection on the research contained within *Knowledge-Building* suggests that the knowledge practices of the ELT classroom are at best little understood. Teachers, methodologists and materials writers are often preoccupied with the mechanics of teaching but ignore some of the most pressing questions: To what extent do ELT practitioners value and reward metalinguistic insights? How are students' dispositions and behaviour valued? Does cultural background affect how students are positioned as (un)successful learners? These are questions which need to be addressed if we are to better enable English language learners to be academically successful and to integrate more successfully into English speaking cultures. The value of *Knowledge-Building* is that it demonstrates many of the research tools that are needed to discover the answers.

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