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The purposes and practices of intellectual work

A reply to Galbraith

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Abstract *The Galbraith article gives us the opportunity to think out loud about the purposes and practices of field activity, and in responding this article argues that Galbraith is more concerned with the technical application of a method rather than investigating knowledge production. Using Bourdieu's theory of practice enables critical evaluation to be a social practice and the author positions herself as a knowledge worker concerned to describe and understand the interplay between agency and structure. Chaos theory enabled the author from the mid-1990s to problematise systems theory as the preferred way of generating leadership and management prescriptions for educational professionals. This remains relevant today and it is argued that Galbraith's continued reliance on improving systems theory means that the opportunity is lost to examine the exercise of power within and surrounding complex organisations.*

When we read an author we can draw on a range of resources to be able to critically evaluate arguments and evidence. At one level we could react according to taste or even ideology, and so denounce what we do not like or even engage in bad behaviour by building boundaries and digging trenches from where we could undermine a text. As knowledge workers we would wish to position ourselves and to conduct our professional practice in a more productive way. Consequently, authentic critique is based on a more rigorous analysis; first, to assess accuracy regarding the methods used; and second, to locate a text within the social practice of knowledge production. The first type of critique is technical, while the second is sociological. The first type claims objectivity and epistemological purity, while the second locates knowledge production with faces in spaces and places. The first claims transferability through generalisability and the second relatability through recognition. The first claims to be about application, while the second is about engagement. In this article I intend to show that Galbraith's critique of "Jurassic management: chaos and management development in educational institutions" to be located within the first type and to produce a reply located in the second. In doing this I will draw on Bourdieu's theory of practice to provide tools which will be used to describe and explain the purposes and practices of intellectual work.

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Critical enagagement

Galbraith's critique of the four papers is based on the contention that the authors have attempted to apply chaos theory to educational administration

and not only have we not done it correctly but we should not be doing it in the first place. We are taken to task for the misapplication of the butterfly effect to educational administration, and for associating non-linearity with the complexity of human systems. Central to this argument is: first, the purity of mathematical knowledge means that "... 'non-linear', 'complex systems', 'systems thinking', 'feedback' ..." have "essential properties" (pp. 9-10) that exist outside of the people and the contexts in which they are being used; second, and connected to the first argument, the purpose of knowledge production is to build and test models using equations that can give "some understanding of the behavioural consequences of changes in the operating environment" (p. 19). Indeed, Galbraith builds a "policy analysis" (p. 20) model and the equations "... are solved iteratively to simulate behaviour over time" (p. 19) to show the "problem of matching teacher supply and demand" (p. 18). This application of the model enables Gabraith to show particular types of behaviours (e.g. adjusting vacancies for training due to a shortage of teachers results in a rise in the demand for university enrolments) which show "... that sensitivity to initial conditions is *not* necessarily (indeed not often) a property of non-linear systems behaviour, and the behaviour is not necessarily chaotic" (p. 21). Such an approach is based on Popper's claims that problem solving must be through technical refutation of what does and does not fit the logic of mathematical argument. Knowledge evolves through the identification of errors and the inadequacy of the ideas presented, and hence the job of critique is to do what the quotation at the top of Gabraith's article says: "you may help me by criticizing it as severely as you can". My first critique is that Gabraith is applying mathematical procedures to the complexities of the human condition and the politics of position in ways that are a distortion and are unhelpful. The production of a simple computer model to simulate complex activity enables the model builder to make assumptions and to input data in such a way as to produce interesting scenarios that may be mathematically pure but are highly questionable largely because the politics of the process is not made explicit.

The problem of matching teacher supply and demand should not only be conceptualised as a mathematical equation but as a power process that is fraught with claims and counter claims. For example, it is argued that the model can be used to show behaviours regarding "an increase in teacher numbers reduces the shortage ratio, resulting in less attractive job prospects, leading to a reduction in university intake to teacher education courses, leading (after a delay) to fewer graduates seeking employment as teachers, and hence eventually to a decrease in teaching numbers" (p. 19). If only it was this simple: first, how is the cultural context in which teaching is regarded as a career taken into account? Second, how do local conditions such as the cost of living in certain parts of the country affect recruitment? Third, how does the fact that universities in England are not the only providers of teacher training impact on the manipulation of supply and demand? Fourth, how does the operation of site

based management impact when teachers who resign may not be replaced by teachers but by other members of the school workforce such as teaching assistants and managerial staff? Galbraith does not go into this territory because it is dangerous. Such territory would upset the neat and tidy modelling process, and it would take him into areas that are highly political, contested, and require values to be up front. Hence the severity of my critique is not built on a technical refutation of the accuracy of the model to education, but on a failure of Galbraith to take responsibility for the politics of knowledge production. To use Silver's (1983) terms, Galbraith has been very "busy" but is "blind" to the social practice of education (p. 245).

Intellectual work

For a knowledge worker to engage with research as a social practice requires us to think in other ways than just the cold and sterile application of assumptions through a computer assisted tool. Such tools only have value through a wider engagement with knowledge production, through which we can ask questions about what it means to know and be in the know, and what is regarded as worth knowing and demonstrating that you know. We are not empty conduits through which the truth emerges as the result of the application of the correct method, but are real people, with real lives, and come to research with biographies that shape our dispositions to be interested, to be bored, to want to think, to want to talk, and to want to work for change. Hence, problem solving is itself problematic. It has a disciplinary function by keeping the tidy minded busy because it enables difficult situations to be dealt with smoothly (Cox, 1981). In other words, Popperian Science is not *socially* critical (Smyth, 1993), and does not ask the question "whose problem is it, and who is defining the problem?" It seems that this is territory that the Popperian researcher steers clear of because it would require the problem solver to theorise about, and take a position on, the relationship between agency and structure. In Bourdieu's (1990) terms the problem solver reveals habitus or dispositions that are embodied in the response taken to: is it my problem and what is my position? Furthermore, it requires a reorientation of policy away from it being an artefact to being conceptualised as an inclusive dynamic process that is contested and struggled over (Ozga, 2000; Seddon, 1999). As Bourdieu (1990) would argue education policy is a field of struggles in which positioning and repositioning takes place over and around capital. The production of evidence that this or that policy should be adopted, can be used to intervene in practice but as Seddon (1999) has shown it cannot determine it.

Consequently, theory is metaphor and metaphor is theory, or "representations of other experiences which are available as possible resources for the re-interpretation of experience" (Winter, 1991, p. 477). In drawing on these resources, Ozga (2000) states, we need to be aware that they

"... are not all of the same size, weight, complexity or quality..." and she goes on to say:

> Theories may be quite limited in their scope; for example, they may explain individual cases (a burnt-out colleague, a recalcitrant pupil) or they may point to patterns of phenomena (high wastage rates among experienced teachers, low rates of pay in the "caring professions"). We need to get to grips with theory ... because theories help us to sort out our world, and make sense of it. Beyond that, theories provide a guide to action and help to predict what may happen next. We should not, in my view, think about theorizing as though it was an extraordinary or exceptional activity, to be engaged in only in certain conditions, and those to be as far removed as possible from "normal" life. Nor should we hand over responsibility for theorizing, or for developing perspectives informed by theory, to some specialized group of researchers who are disconnected from educational practice (p. 43).

We routinely live, talk and write in ways to develop meaning through theories and use metaphors to describe and explain these meanings. An organisation can be a machine or organism, and as such we simultaneously illuminate and distort. Hence the blurring noted by Galbraith (p. 11) between metaphor and model is not problematic in itself, and is only constructed as such if there is only one type of modelling (i.e. meaning which can be objectified and computerised) that is both right and preferred.

No doubt mathematicians are deeply challenged by the idea that we are located in the research that we do and hence how do we control bias? We can only make claims that there is a danger of bias if we think it is possible to be unbiased. It is not possible. Our responsibility as researchers and as knowledge workers is to follow the guidance on agreed ethical practice (BERA, 2003) and be methodologically rigorous, but we must also make explicit our position. The reflection and reflexivity demanded here is not easy, and Bourdieu (1999) in talking about interviews explains this:

> If its objective of pure knowledge distinguishes the research relationship from most of the exchanges in everyday life, it remains, whatever one does, a *social relationship*. As such, it can have an effect on the results obtained... Of course, by definition, scientific questioning excludes the intention of exerting any type of symbolic violence that could affect responses. Yet it remains the case in these matters that one cannot trust simply to one's own good faith, and this is true because all kinds of distortions are embedded in the very structure of the research relationship. It is these distortions that have to be understood and mastered as part of a practice that can be reflective and methodical without being the application of a method or the implementation of a theory.
>
> Only the reflexivity synonymous with method but a *reflex reflexivity* based on a craft, on a sociological "feel" or "eye", allows one to perceive and monitor on the spot, as the interview is actually taking place, the effect of the social structure within which it is occurring. How can we claim to engage in the scientific investigation of presuppositions if we do not work to gain knowledge [*science*] of our own presuppositions? We can do so principally by striving to make reflexive use of the findings of social science to control the effects of the survey itself and to engage in the process of questioning with a command of the inevitable effects of that process.

> The positivist dream of an epistemological state of perfect innocence papers over the fact that the crucial difference is not between a science that effects a construction and one that does not, but between a science that does this without knowing it and one that, being aware of work of construction, strives to discover and master as completely as possible the nature of its inevitable acts of construction and the equally inevitable effects those acts produce (p. 608, author's emphasis).

We could use Bourdieu's theory of practice because it is good to "think with" (Jenkins, 1992) or to "think against" (Nash in Delamont *et al.*, 1993), and so by engaging with the emancipatory capacity within Bourdieu's work we can open up more interesting possibilities in doing intellectual work. As Connell (1983) argues if you see yourself as being in receipt of frameworks which have already decided the answers, and so you apply rather than critically evaluate, then there is no intellectual work to be done:

> Intellectual work is not necessarily radical, but it must always be subversive of authority in its own domain. There is nothing exotic about this, it is implicit in the very notion of intellectual *work* (p. 250, author's emphasis).

We need to ask questions about where the spaces are that will enable us to engage in "the logic of intellectual life" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 9), so that we do not suffer "the effects of canonization, an eternization that dehistoricizes and derealizes..." (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 84). In particular, we must guard against "scholastic illusion" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 30) where we read a text as canonical through the "ritual embalming" of the author and the truths presented as universal truths (p. 48). Sociological reflexivity of knowledge production about the social enables us to witness and give witness to the game that we are all a part of through which we stake capital for our position within the field. Cultural capital is gathered through education and the ways of being in the world for the individual, the object and the institution:

> Individuals are conferred with this capital through exhibiting an educated character, based on their knowledge, refined accents, dispositions to learn and value education highly, and so on. Objects such as books, qualifications, and "knowledge machines" such as computers are laden with cultural capital. And institutions such as libraries, elite schools and universities carry this form of capital (Webb *et al.*, 2002, p. 110).

Symbolic capital is about "...glory, honour, credit, reputation, fame", and is a form of domination "... which implies dependence on those who can be dominated by it, since it only exists through the esteem, recognition, belief, credit, confidence of others, and can only be perpetuated so long as it succeeds in obtaining belief in its existence" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 166). Bourdieu argues that all capital is symbolic, but in its particular configuration it is about consecration that is attributed, and so whatever we claim as distinct is "misrecognized as capital, that is, a force, a power or capacity for (actual or potential) exploitation, and therefore recognized as legitimate" (p. 242).

If Galbraith had undertaken a sociological critique of the four papers by thinking through the interplay between the agency of the author and the

structures that we inhabit (e.g. biography, organisation, culture) then he would have been able to ask questions about why within the space of a few years four papers are published which seek to draw on work labelled as chaos theory. This would not only have enabled him to ask questions about our own individual orientations and interests, but also to ask how our habitus is being revealed through field activity. What is a field, why do we locate our work within the field through publishing in a journal that is central to field history and purposes, and how does the publication process impact on the knowledge claims in the field? Why has Galbraith written his article now? This is an important question and we need to see how his habitus is revealed within a field that is struggling over the legitimacy of knowledge claims (Gunter and Ribbins, 2003; Ribbins *et al.*, 2003). It seems that he does not question the cultural capital of the university in which his knowledge production is taking place, nor his acceptance of his position as a knowledge worker with particular knowledge claims that require us to misrecognise through symbolic consecration. Fundamental to this is that by engaging in a sociology of knowledge production then Galbraith would have not only been able to put our work within the historical setting in which it was constructed and relate his own deconstruction to the context of his reading, but also he had the opportunity to read our work since the papers were published and so examine how the papers are located within a professional portfolio of work. Finally, and perhaps, more importantly, he had the opportunity to extend his enquiry from the printed disembodied text to the professional life story of the researcher and publisher through interviews and dialogue.

Critically evaluating chaos theory

I freely admit that I failed to apply chaos theory mainly because I did not set out to do this. I would want to argue that in social practice we do not apply theory in the positivistic sense but we use and produce it. Application, in the way that Galbraith uses it, is about model building and testing at a distance from real life practice, and so the actual activity of application (formulating a hypothesis, and identifying the variables), and the actions taken (thinking, typing, seeing), is not affected by and does not impact on the complexities of real life. This scientific approach to application is one that the field in North America worked for up to the 1960s in the Theory Movement but this rapidly fell apart, particularly through the challenge of humanistic work by Greenfield. What has been the tradition in England is that of application that is sociological through recognition of agency and structure, with some knowledge workers giving more emphasis to one or the other. There are those who focus on the role of the state in determining practice in educational organisations and so are interested in how issues of social justice are worked through in school and colleges, while there are those who are interested in enhancing the agency of the practitioner through management and leadership models of practice

(Gunter, 2001). Hence, the tradition that I am located is one that seeks to understand within the realities of practice through the social sciences, and this is illustrated by Hughes *et al.* (1985) who introduce their text on educational management, which includes contributions from practitioners, in the following way:

> There is thus a basic paradox in the way in which we respond to the constantly recurring and legitimate challenge to relate theory to practice. On the one hand, this is a book which is theoretical, in the sense that its concern is to assist readers to reflect more critically upon their own management practice and that of others, and to use concepts and theories from the social sciences when doing so. On the other hand it is also practical in its intention, first that such reflection should contribute to better management practice, and second that practitioner experience and viewpoints should be taken into account to a substantial extent in the text, so that the reader's critical reflection can have a broader practitioner base than it would have, and thus contribute more effectively to an appreciation of better managerial practice (p. xiii).

When combined with an academic-practitioner habitus revealed through locating professional practice in a range of educational sites (schools, colleges, local government) in addition to the university, the field member in England has a strong orientation towards the description, understanding, and explanation of practice, and an embodied understanding of what it means to take responsibility for educational processes and outcomes. The article entitled "Jurassic management: chaos and management development in educational institutions" is a product of an increasing unease about what I and others were witnessing regarding our engagement with the professional practice and concerns in education in the 1990s. My own agency and interests in enquiring into the knowledge claims of the field was a product of my experience as a knowledge worker in both school and higher education, and my move to Keele University enabled me to engage in sociological and historically informed research that became my PhD (Gunter, 1999).

In writing an intellectual history of the field I took on the task to read field outputs in the form of books and articles, and on one foggy November day I spent many hours in the library reading books on how to market, how to run your self-managing school, and how to strategically plan. I was left asking "is this all that there is to support a workforce who have an increasingly demanding job to do within a restructuring education system surrounded by a hostile media?" A rundown of particular events that led from this to the paper have been lost in time, but the motivation to ask whether we could do better than this, and how might we engage with theory and practice in more productive ways was formulated then and has shaped my project ever since. My concern at the acceptance of rational knowledge claims regarding systems theory and the lack of personal and institutional histories in how we understand change is why chaos theory attracted me. It provided a metaphor for how we might relate the realities of practice that we experience and could know about with how we might both exercise our agency and read the structures that enhance and stifle that agency. I engaged with chaos theory

through using what it had to say about knowing and knowledge in ways that generated perspective about professional development and how we both prepare people for educational leadership and how we enable deeper understandings about practice. I was particularly interested in why I witnessed self-organising groups in my everyday work, but reading about teams seemed to present efficient and effective procedures and behaviours that did not connect and indeed could strip away our humanity. It seemed to me that teachers are interested and interesting people, who have a political disposition that can be used for good or ill, but functional and behavioural team behaviours and processes didn't seem to be the answer. Rather than provide the answer my approach was to illuminate the possibilities that the way forward was within professional practice rather than ringbinders:

> This article has defined Jurassic management as the attempt to control an organization by:
>
> - creating a vision of the future;
> - a leader articulating that vision;
> - a leader using the vision to drive for change;
> - building commitment to the vision by a shared culture and consensus;
> - using the vision to determine the long-term planning and resource management priorities and choices;
> - living the vision in day-to-day behaviour and activities; and
> - marketing the vision outside the organization.
>
> *Jurassic Park* shows that this management philosophy which currently runs through educational management text and training is giving permission to managers in educational institutions to feel happy with a different way of controlling the organisation compared with traditional bureaucratic methods. However, Jurassic management is leading schools and colleges into decline. While short-term management in the day-to-day context requires order and rationality, what is needed for the longer term is for education managers to break free from the seduction of stability and consensus in order to create the future. This will only happen if management development recognizes the importance of political activity, a climate of open debate, and the capacity for people to self-organize, to be self-motivating and to be tolerant. For this to happen all participants need to break out of the managerialist and consultancy mind set of "how to do it" for prescriptive action. As Sawada and Caley (1985) have argued, there are no guarantees, and after years of "quick fix" training manuals this statement is a learning process in itself (Gunter, 1995, pp. 17-19).

I went on to pursue my interest in chaos theory (Gunter, 1997) and have developed my interest in the knowledge production in the field through work on history, theory, and the contexts in which knowledge is produced and used (Gunter, 2001, 2002a). More recently a productive collaboration with Peter Ribbins has enabled us to devise a framework in which knowledge production within the field and about the field can be organised and conceptualised

(Ribbins and Gunter, 2002; Gunter and Ribbins, 2002). Through the benefit of hindsight where a curriculum vitae can be constructed as linear and rationale, I am able to see a project emerging through which my interest in chaos theory was underpinned by democratising tendencies and a desire to work for knowledge and knowing that recognised the vitality and legitimacy of educational knowers, and to work for a wider recognition of who is in the know and why they know. Work that does this is noted within the paper and the book but there is also a fund of knowledge and knowing that does support this trend and I did not give enough attention at the time to work such as that on gender (Hall, 1996) and on humanistic accounts of practice (e.g. Ribbins, 1997; Southworth, 1995).

Galbraith's preoccupation with the mechanics and fit of application rather than the dynamics of engagement means that he has missed an opportunity to critique the paper sociologically. What was missing from the article in 1995 was an explicit and worked through theory of power regarding my own position within the process, and how the agency of the "practitioner" was to be enhanced or stifled through structures such as Jurassic management. The place of social justice in this argument was to a certain extent explored, but how we place ourselves as knowledge workers in this process is under developed. In particular, there are normative sediments in my approach that are the legacy of having experienced Jurassic management, and as such I have not until quite recently begun to work through what it means to be a knowledge worker located in higher education researching and writing about fellow field members in other sites (Gunter, 2002b). We might ask "what is our role, is it to emancipate or to mediate, and are these binaries?" Certainly I did not expect the whole edifice of Jurassic management to come tumbling down, and it could be argued that over the years that have followed the structures that have created and sustained this approach have become stronger. Certainly, I cannot stand outside of these structures and am deeply implicated by virtue of locating my professional practice within an educational institution. Nevertheless, I can through my practice and reflection within and on that practice, know and understand many of the issues involved, and want to engage in dialogue and reading that can generate the possibilities of an alternative approach to living and working in education. In this sense, I would want to continue my project on the basis that "what the social world has done, it can, armed with ... knowledge, undo" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 629), and so description through narrative, understanding through dialogue, and explanation through theorising the interplay between agency and structure, is the approach to knowledge production that gives sustenance to my intellectual work.

Who knows?

A key aspect of Galbraith's argument is that there is an alternative to chaos theory through Senge's promotion of systems thinking within a learning

organisation. Galbraith argues that Senge's (1990) *The Fifth Discipline* "provided an impetus for a reconceptualisation of organisational leadership, and the way that this has impacted on education is interesting" (p. 10). He argues that it resonated with educationalists and this leads him to put the learning organisation at the centre of an alternative proposal because it is a "concept that seeks alignment informed by systematic understanding, together with collegiality in leadership and management in the search for profound and sustainable change" (p. 26). He presents this argument more by critique of chaos theory than by a robust explanation of the learning organisation. In particular he associates the use of chaos theory with heroic leadership, while in my paper (and book) I associate it with an alternative understanding of heroic leadership. For Galbraith the butterfly effect is a potentially dangerous concept because arguments in favour of it "... stand to encourage megalomaniacs to introduce bizarre policies on the grounds that a flap of their wings will create an organisational thunderstorm to change the face of the future" (p. 26). For myself the engagement with the butterfly effect is based on a different ontology, that is, that it has the potential to enable the structurally othered in organisations and society to realise that they can make a difference.

Understanding Galbraith's exhortation of Senge's work has required me to journey beyond the paper and in his work on planning in higher education the arguments are laid out in more detail. Galbraith (1999) investigates management systems in higher education as a complex system that is "inherently difficult to manage" (p. 3). He advocates systems thinking as a means of improving decision making, and his analysis of business failure leads him to argue that:

> A significant aspect was that failing corporations were not run by amateurs, but by trained managers steeped in the traditions of their industry and highly likely to possess management qualifications. What happened was that their decision making, rational as it seemed, and sincere though it was, did not contain the insights or the actions necessary for long-term survival. Such insights include an understanding of how decisions and policies enacted today influence future options and capacities not just one or two, but five ten or fifteen years hence (p. 11).

Systems thinking enables us to locate the organisation such as a university within a complex process of "the interaction of close chains of causality (feedback loops) that together define the system structure and hence how the system behaves over time" (p. 3). Positive feedback loops reinforce the situation but unchecked growth is prevented by planned or unplanned constraints. Negative feedback stabilizes a situation but the delay in the loop (even a technical one such as the thermostat example given by Galbraith) means that control is not technically exact. Multiple loops in systems "sharing some variables in common and containing a variety of delays, is the source of complexity that makes social systems so difficult to predict and control" (p. 3). Our ability to change the system by altering variables is limited and so:

> ... in the absence of such leverage changing system behaviour involves changing the system structure i.e. the number and strength of feedback processes. An alternative is to learn to live with the existing behaviour if it is not destructive but this may involve changing expectations of time frames over which certain results can be achieved (p. 4).

Galbraith draws from Senge the importance of mental models because they are "crucial in developing system models that can give insight into the medium and long term consequences of managerial policies and operating environments" (p. 4). This is based on values as numbers rather than moral purposes. What matters is the inclusion and use of data and while struggles over resources is recognised as inherent through gains and losses there is no explicit theory of power. What is promoted is the centrality of mental models to policy and management:

> The problem in management of systems is that separate mental models of different parts of systems and associated policies, are unreliable guides to outcomes that are the result of the combination and interaction of the policies. It is relatively easy to form a mental model of a single process – for example, an increase in students will, other things being equal, generate an increase in income. However, the prediction of outcomes when several such processes interact is not straightforward: that is, simple mental models can be misleading by delimiting the field of view. Mere aggregation of a discrete set of mental models is insufficient to support an understanding of systemic behaviour which requires the integration of the models – the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (p. 9).

The example given is of handling debt by not replacing a member of staff. If a simple mental model is used then a salary saving is achieved in contrast to a more complex but realistic model that sees the loss of a member of staff = loss of research = loss of specialist area = loss of income. Mental modelling enables us to think about the consequences of our actions and so the learning organisation learns. The failure to relate this to moral values means that educational institutions as sites of political activity are not developed. Hoyle (1999) has shown that decisions such as income and staffing are not rational processes within a unified goal orientated system but are essentially micropolitical. An educational institution is a site of conflicting interests between staff (struggles over status, remembered histories, and bad behaviour). Educational organisations are also places where external political processes are worked through regarding social structures such as class, gender, and race, and ideological disputes regarding knowledge to be taught and learned. This perspective means that decision making can take place because of or in spite of our mental models, and our capacity to predict can only be sensibly understood through attention to agents (with their goodwill and flaws) and to structures (that can enhance and stifle). The questions raised by Hoyle (1999) are: "is this a theory for understanding that enables us to recognise the existence and impact of micropolitics or a theory for action that enables us to exercise our political literacy?" As political activity is the stuff of organisations then it is simultaneously both about understanding and action, and the interplay between them is through Bourdieu's theory of practice in which our

dispositions are revealed within the staking of capital within a field of struggles.

Summary

Both Galbraith and I have, along with others, a concern with the advocation of management solutions that direct activities in ways that are failing education and those who work within it. I would agree with Galbraith that:

> The artificial world of strategic plans, performance indicators, and management styles is a bleak repository for stimulating ideas (p. 26).

Where we part company is in how we position ourselves in working through the possibilities and traps in alternative practices. I began the paper and book about Jurassic management with a critique of systems theory because it is underpinned by rational, linear, technical and unitary claims to organisations. While Galbraith recognises the problematics of instrumental decision making the arguments are based on an epistemology that is consistent with the weaknesses he observes. Galbraith is concerned to make systems theory work technically better rather than ask deeper questions about organisations as places of human activity.

The field is a territory that is vast enough to accommodate a range of knowledge claims. Testing the boundaries through critical analysis afforded by Galbraith's paper is the stuff of field activity so that we can challenge the illusions generated by "scholastic posture" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 59). In doing this we should put more emphasis on engagement than application, on critical analysis than technical prowess, on reflexivity than certainty, and on theorising than theory testing. In doing this we could be playful and serious, provisional and rigorous, secure and dynamic. What is more, acknowledging that intellectual work is a social and socialising process not only acts as an experiential resource for understanding the context and activity under our gaze, but also enables us to draw on the social sciences to generate perspectives on the exercise of power.

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