Reforming Educational Reform

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INTRODUCTION

This is a very good time for the educators of Thailand to be discussing the idea of educational reform. I am afraid events have taken unfortunate directions elsewhere and this is an opportunity to share experiences. It is especially refreshing for me to return to Thailand and to see many Thai educators using the ideas of participatory action research to bring about changes in their practice. They are foreshadowing some of my conclusions about educational reform based upon my Australian and United States experiences. My aim in this paper is briefly to trace the Australian history of reform, and to identify some problems and opportunities in educational reform in theory and practice. I argue that commitment to critical participatory action research as we now understand it practically, theoretically, and as disciplined participation, is the preferred way to bring about authentic educational reform. I hope that my experiences will help Thai educators to avoid some of the pitfalls of reform which have compromised educational values and practices elsewhere. My work with colleagues in Khon Kaen, Bangkok and Prince of Songkla, though it happened more than ten years ago now, reassures me that we share the aspiration to work with our respective communities to provide the best education we can in schools, colleges and universities.

The paper is structured as follows:

Overview: Changing concepts of reform
Phases in educational reform
Curriculum
Management

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Overview: Changing concepts of reform

There is an extensive literature of educational 'reform' of about forty years duration beginning in the post World War Two period. In historical perspective, that reform era was distinctive. Its clear focus was curriculum reform in Western science education in particular. Case studies of that genre of reform, for example Popkewitz, Tabachnick and Wehlage (1982), showed how such educational innovation could be stifled, or reinterpreted in ways antithetical to the intentions of advocates. Subsequent overviews of educational change by Fullan (1982, 1989, 1993) showed that this was not unusual. Educational reform was not easy to control.

After the post-War period, the nature of reform began to change. The concept of reform was increasingly linked to a succession of ideologies of management and control - bureaucratic rationality, mass production (Fordism and the emergence of a distinctive industrial rationality), scientific management (Taylorism), and economic rationalism and corporate managerialism. The shift in the dominant discourse of reform, from curriculum to management, reflected a shift in all forms of public life from trust in education professionals to regimes of measurement and accountability.

The succession was not absolute, and educational reform reflected aspects of each ideology with different emphases at different times, but nevertheless indicated increasing control on education, curriculum, and teachers. Teachers were bounced around in the

ambiguous and contradictory space between the middle class (bourgeoisie) of respected and knowledgeable professionals and the working class (proletariat) as service professionals implementing the political platform of successive governments. Complex links emerged among the needs of educational managers, state bureaucrats and treasury technocrats to control teachers. Governments drifted away from the checks and balances of the Westminster system and the reflective shell of professional bureaucracy and towards the weakly informed battleground of ministerial entrepreneurialism. In response, there was a complex insistence among teachers for professional autonomy on the one hand and industrial solidarity on the other which marked their ambiguous class status. This inconsistency eventually weakened them politically and the basis of valuing shifted as a result.

Different approaches to control included content centred textbook prescription,standardised curriculum reform and achievement testing, increased measurement of performance and latterly proposals for incentive payments to reward 'good' teachers. The curriculum and assessment regimes were increasingly seen as a social technology to control teachers. In other words, the curriculum itself became a working condition, and the relationship between teachers and employers became more industrial. Teachers were increasingly employed on contracts, especially early in their careers. Principals were too and their conditions of employment echoed the trappings of CEOs of small companies. The hard technologies of post-War industrial expansion and the software technologies of the information era transformed work and workers. In professions such as teaching and nursing, social technologies of behaviour prescribing how they were to work had the potential to deskill them just as new technologies, social and technical, had functioned to deskill other workers (Bernard, 1982, 1991).

The approaches to control in education roughly follow those thought to be successful in commercial enterprises. Increasingly business discourses and economic values encroached upon the world of education. Schools began to market themselves and loosened their historical bonds with their local communities. No university strategic plan was complete without its 'key performance indicators' (KPIs) or 'operational performance targets' (OPTs). Strategic plans of educational institutions resembled those of McDonalds or the Central Intelligence Agency (Watson 2003). Arguments to split the profession of teaching into a small number 'master teachers' supported by an army of lower paid 'paraprofessionals' is one expression of twenty first century capitalist labour force differentiation. Neo-conservative educational reform explicitly naturalised this trend. Corporate managerialism and economic rationalism were beginning to make bureaucratic rationality look benign.

These changes have not occurred without trenchant critique. A central theme of early resistance was emphasis on the diversity of stakeholders in educational change. Another was the crucial importance of teachers at the

centre of the dialogue among stakeholders. These themes were evident in several strands of of educational research. Findings of Fullan's later work (1989, 1993) converged with the studies of the 'new wave evaluators' and their fellow travellers (Parlett and Hamilton, 1976; Apple, 1982; Eisner, 1967, 1969; MacDonald, 1976; Jenkins, Kemmis, MacDonald and Verma, 1979; Stake 1967, 1975,1978; Stufflebeam, 1973), and the advocates of action research Elliott and Adelman, 1973; Carr and Kemmis 1986; Kemmis and McTaggart 1988a, 1988b, 2000, 2005). Complementary critiques emerged in the sociology of educational work which drew upon the history of the labour process (Watkins, 1992a) and fuelled contestation about the inevitability of the received view of educational reform. New practices emerged to influence the direction of reform.

For a while, in the 1980s, collaborations among teacher unions, teacher subject associations, parent organizations, curriculum specialists in state educational departments, and academics in teacher education shaped a new generation of educational reform in Australia in particular. To a significant degree these collaborations were over-run in the 1990s and 2000s by the introduction of corporate management in systems and schools. These changes were sometimes accompanied by the language of devolution, for example, 'self-managing schools'. However, system-wide accountability strategies reflected the growing economic rationalism of the era and so educational management at a distance continued in a different guise. This reflected emergent changes in the globalisation of business: strict management of large networks of smaller companies using a small number of economic parameters, such as growth and profitability. The educational context changed too - including advocacy for curriculum control, increasing pressure for nationwide testing, media claims, often spurious, about literacy and numeracy, and ministers of education intent on quick and simple reports to cabinet and parliament. This reflected a national trend to belief in business models to manage schools and systems - corporate managerialism.

Phases in educational reform Curriculum

The 'modern' concept of educational reform appeared almost overnight in 1957 as the Soviet Russian Sputnik beeped its way over, well over, Western airspace. Cold War anxiety motivated vast efforts to suddenly improve science education, especially physics education as intercontinental ballistic missile technology and the United States military-industrial complex reached their peak of importance. National curricula for secondary science education were launched to quell palpable public fear. The approach was centralised, standardised and only made possible by a compliant public and education workforce. Its impact on hope for state intervention was more robust than it was on curriculum. It certainly brought reform into the realm of 'national interest' in political and economic terms.

A demand for curriculum evaluation studies arose, the kind of studies which would

alleviate public anxieties about the new curriculum (especially in mathematics); and about the investment of such huge sums of money. There was a pervasive concern for accountability for public expenditure of all kinds. The idea of 'economy of scale' (for example in the mass production of textbooks) was reaffirmed as part of educational thinking. But it is important to note that the conjunction of interests of publishers, curriculum developers, and educational researchers had been recognised as early as 1900 (de Castell and Luke, 1987). The difference by 1960 was that these interests were substantiated by an unprecedented preoccupation with direct intervention in education by the state on a national scale in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia. The expansion of state intervention, especially in science education was never completely uniform, but its international quality was unprecedented.

In these Western countries, improving education meant providing a uniform program across the nation. The interests of national security, military and economic, demanded that excellence be conceived as a great push forward. Excellence in the form of the aggregation of distinctive individual achievements left too much to chance. As it had been for Henry Ford in car production, standardisation was the key to quality control in education (Apple, 1982, 1984). The approach to nationwide improvement in education which was adopted was congruent with the orientation of the academy. Educational researchers looking for legitimacy and state funding had long sought general principles which, when applied, would guarantee the improvement of education. Challenges to the feasibility of deriving these principles (for example, Cronbach [1975]) were a long way into the future. 'Scientific' educational research made allies of the professors and the policy-makers. Educational research was to provide and verify the basic principles by which nationwide improvement could be achieved. The culminating role of researchers was to publish; to publish the findings which policy-makers (and administrators) anywhere could apply. The political economy of knowledge production in the colleges and universities meant that the science of education would follow the well-trod path of the natural sciences. In this socio-cultural context educational reform was only guaranteed by the methods of mass production.

It is na?ve to think that the post-Sputnik approach landed in the Western world without precedent. State interventions in education were in place already. The ideology of the colonial office and the parish outpost with their European procedures had already introduced standardisation and certain forms of centralisation as approaches to quality control in service provision. Bureaucratic rationality was rudimentary and benign, but provided an ideological cushion for acceptance of intervention, standardisation, centralisation and quantification, the assumed instruments for rapid national response. The problem was that none of this worked as state and national planners had wanted it to.

The problem is fundamentally simple. Educational reforms on the grand scale were easily derailed by non-compliance anywhere in the educational system (House, 1974). Educational systems are loosely coupled (Weick, 1976) giving any stakeholder a virtual 'right of veto'. Put simply, this means that any stakeholder can resist or disrupt change without much effort. Active resistance is not required. Quite passive non-compliance is all that is necessary and remains almost invisible. The reasons for non-compliance are numerous. Communication is poor, staff development is fitful, support is dismal, leaders are not persuaded, sanctions are weak and rewards are sparse. Labels may change, but practices remain the same. Why? Because the approach to reform does not engage participants or those involved and affected. People do not 'buy in' because they cannot, or will not - they do not see roles for themselves.

Some teachers crash through all of this because they are inspired, or compliant. All too often, however, the 'reform' exists only in the minds of others, and resembles nothing like the solution to any problem a teacher is actually experiencing. Inspired teachers can be advocates, but the need for advocacy is really a symptom of a 'non-rational system' (House, 1974; House and Lapan, 1975). Educational reform as it was understood then demanded a particular kind of bureaucratic rationality where what was decreed actually happened. In any case 'lighthouse teachers' are not typically good advocates. They like to move on, and find burdensome those who are not persuaded quickly of the virtue of the particular reform. They see their role as teachers, not teacher educators, not principals, not reformers, and certainly not 'tall poppies' (McTaggart, 1989; Lortie, 1975). Like others involved and affected, they have little sense of ownership of, or engagement with, reform conceived in this way.

MANAGEMENT

Bureaucratic rationality and industrialisation

The rational basis for the formation of organizations has a long history. What we now call 'bureaucratic rationality' had its origins in the formation of armies, religious orders, public offices and colonial offices roughly in that order and were sedimented in most recognisable form in the bureaucracy of the tradition of the Westminster. Max Weber defined the features of bureaucracy as (i) clearly defined division of administrative labour between people and offices and , (ii) a personnel system with stable, linear careers often shaped by seniority, coupled with uniform systems of recruitment, (iii) hierarchy among offices so that status and authority are distributed differentially among employees, and (iv) formal and informal networks that connect employees through communication and cooperation. Bureaucratic organisation and rationality were distributed through an increasing diversity of organizations during the twentieth century and the benchmark standard of bureaucratic rationality became versions most influenced by those in commercial corporations.

Though characterised these days as less than benign for workers, bureaucratic rationality was praised by Weber (1961) because it was superior to the disorder and lawlessness of organizations which preceded its influence. As industries grew during the industrial revolution, bureaucracy moved into the private sector and was influenced by practices and tensions there. Bureaucratic rationality was influenced by Fordism and the requirements of mass production, notably in the automobile industry in Ford's case. This meant that less skilled workers could if suitably organised into the steps of standardised mass production. Ford doubled the wages of his workers at the time, but deskilling had obvious long term effects on workers' income and sense of job satisfaction. Taylorism, the 'scientific management' movement, named after F. W. 'Speedy' Taylor the time and motion study advocate was another key influence as the industrial technologies inspired the social technologies of standardisation to support them. As mass production changed in character because it was cumbersome when markets became larger, wealthier and more fussy, new forms of management evolved to cope with more 'flexible specialisation' (Williams, Cutler, Williams and Haslam, 1987). Bureaucratic rationality was eventually superseded by different expressions of industrial rationality, economic rationality and corporate managerialism as standardisation strained to embrace entrepreneurialism and flexible specialisation. Quantitative monitoring of outcomes became more important as processes diverged and was more difficult to monitor for quality control. Gradually, discourses of education began to conform with the requirements of the business discourses which increasingly colonised the educational world (for examples see Swales, 2004; Fairclough, 1993).

The state of reform at this point can be summarised with the question, 'What happened to curriculum?' The answer is straightforward. The curriculum was given over to the essentials of capitalism at the expense of its traditional role in social democracy.

Advanced capitalism has several tendencies to crisis and the cooption of public sector institutions is a reaction to that (see Habermas, 1976). A key aspect of the tendency to crisis as been summarised recently in this way:

In many ways, capitalism is an absurd system: wage-earners have lost ownership of the fruits of their labour as well any hope of ever working other than as someone else's subordinate. As for capitalists, they find themselves chained to a never-ending and insatiable process. For both of these protagonists, being part of the process of capitalism is remarkably lacking in justification. Capitalistic accumulation requires commitment from many people, although few have any real chances of making a substantial profit. Many will be scarcely tempted to get involved in this system, and might even develop decidedly adverse feelings (Chiapello and Fairclough, 2002, p. 186).

It is little surprise then that Chiapello and Fairclough also point out here that it is the role of ideology, the 'spirit of capitalism, to

justify people's commitment to capitalism. Even less surprising is the way this ideology is slipped in to the discourse of a key institution responsible for the exposure and critique of the excesses of capitalism. The threat to educational discourse in institutions established for education is clearly a matter for serious concern.

The science of measurement

Companion to the shift devaluing of educational discourse was the emergent science of measurement which, according to Nussbaum (1990, p. 56) relies on the idea that some single standard of value can be found and that all rational choice can be recast as a matter of maximising our quantities of that value. She argues that the science of measurement can be broken down into four distinct constituent claims:

1. Metricity: In each situation of choice there is some one value, varying only ibn quantity, that is common to all the alternatives, and the rational chooser weighs the alternatives using this single standard.

2. Singleness: In all situations of choice there is one and the same metric.

3. Consequentialism: the end of rational choice is that chjoices and chosen actions have value not in themselves, but only as instrumental means to the good consequences they produce.

4. Combining Consequentialism with Metricity produces the idea of maximisation: that the point of rational choice is to produce the greatest amount of the single value at work in each case. Combining both of these with Singleness produces the idea that there is some one value that it is the point of rational choice in every case to maximise Nussbaum (1990, p. 56).

For those responsible for making educational judgments it may come as some relief to know that Nussbaum reported that:

Aristotle rejects all four of these components of the "science of measurement," defending a picture of choice as a quality-based selection among goods that are plural and heterogeneous, each being chosen for its own distinctive value (Nussbaum (1990, p. 56-57).

Regrettably too few of our government managers have read Aristotle. Readers of critical theory will recognise that choices such as these are framed by a range of social, historical, cultural and linguistic conditions not indicated here. Nevertheless, Aristotle takes us far enough to see that the move to quantification quickly makes it difficult to make value judgments of the complexity needed in fields such as education. This obviously raises concerns about reductionism as business discourses frame educational practices. The measurement movement was aligned with a focus on outcomes, standardisation and centralisation, shifts associated with entrepreneurialism and flexible specialisation, business discourses generally and the dominance of economic valuing in education. This was not just something which happened accidentally.

Economic values

Economic rationalism is not merely a concept which suggests the primacy of economic

values. It expresses commitment to those values in order to serve particular sets of interests ahead of others. Furthermore, it disguises that commitment in a discourse of 'economic necessity' defined by its economic models. In United Kingdom Prime Minster Margaret Thatcher's famous words, it pretends that 'There is no other way'. This illustrates how easy it is to move beyond the reductionism which leads all questions to be discussed as if they were economic ones (de-valuation) to a situation where moral questions are denied completely (de-moralisation) in a cult of economic inevitability (as if individual and collective greed had nothing to do with it). Broudy (1981) has described 'de-valuation' and 'de-moralisation' in the following way:

De-valuation refers to diminishing or denying the relevance of all but one type of value to an issue; de-moralization denies the relevance of moral questions. The reduction of all values -- intellectual, civic, health, among others -- to a money value would be an example of de-valuation; the slogan 'business is business' is an example of de-moralization (Broudy, 1981, p. 99).

The shift of school system cultures towards economic rationality had differential effects. The 1960s curriculum reforms were picked up in different ways in different schools making their cultural capital accessible to some but not others. Some schools and systems had enough material, political and cultural capital to adopt at least some features of planned reforms. By the early 1980s it was apparent that poorer schools and systems were becoming relatively worse off and less able to benefit as needed programs of reform were rolled back.

Impact of economic rationalism

The selective impact of the shift from bureaucratic to economic rationality in the West during the 1980s has been described by United States scholar Michael Apple:

The United States and British economies are in the midst of one of the most powerful structural crises they have experienced since the depression. In order to solve it on terms acceptable to dominant interests, as many aspects of the society as possible need to be pressured into conforming with the requirements of international competition, reindustrialization, and (in the words of the National Commission on Excellence in Education in the United States) 'rearmament'. The gains made by women and men in employment, health and safety, welfare programmes, affirmative action, legal rights, and education must be rescinded since 'they are too expensive' both economically and ideologically ....

Social democratic schooling is being rolled back, along with other parts of the welfare state, because it costs too much in a context of fiscal restraint (i.e. where state resources are targeted to non-education priorities such as economic development, tax concessions and bailing out private investors) and because 'people must be convinced that their belief that person rights must come first is simply wrong or outmoded given current realities' (Apple, 1989, p. 4)

Seddon (1991) and McTaggart (1992) have pointed out that these trends were also mani-

fest in Australia. The booming economies of the 2000s were built on the backs of significant structural unemployment in preceding two decades. Shifts in the mode of production demanded fewer highly skilled workers as control systems were technologised and jobs exported. However, fears of hours of leisure time evaporated as the world economy picked up as Asian 'dragons' recovered, and China, Taiwan and India began to stimulate world economic growth.

Employment improved in the 2000s but its structure moved toward lower skill levels, less stability and increased casualisation. There were nevertheless shortages in several professions, some due to the growing economy, for example engineering and accountancy, and some due to the aging population and poor human resource planning in the health sciences, for example, medicine, nursing, dentistry and occupational therapy. Shortages of social workers in some regions were also occurring. Despite these shortages, the overall shift was to lower skills, due for example, to the growth in the service sector and lucrative work for unskilled labour in the mining and building trades. Boys in particular did not enter university in regions close to the mines.

By the beginning of the new century secondary, university and further education was locked into vocationalism. The private sector had conveniently blamed public sector education for the unemployment of the 1980s and 1990s. However, real cause was lack of structural adjustment and the slow start to the Chinese economic boom which began to drive the commodities market in Australia in the 2000s. Despite the causal link between employment levels and the global economy, the culture of blame persisted and the purposes of schools and universities were increasingly considered economic. Anxieties about unemployment among individuals were exacerbated as safety nets were stripped away and work conditions were eroded. Employment performance by school and university graduating cohorts made it easy for economic values to seem a natural priority for education at all levels. The psychology of the Australian nation was changing. Education first and foremost was about the economy, not the good and just life of citizenship which had motivated educators in the post-War period. As Pusey put it, the nation state was changing its mind. More accurately, it was having its mind changed for it.

Ideology and inevitability

The economic rationalist exhortations to change Australian education were quite well known in the 1980s and seemed an irresistible force. The first manifestations of the ideology appeared as new corporate managerial administrative systems within the states which since federation had controlled school education (McTaggart, 1988). Bessant (1987-88) saw moves to install corporate management in the state of Victoria as an effort by the state (and especially the minister) to regain control after some of the power of the bureaucracy had been eroded by a variety of devolutionary impulses (which were in fact, fairly limited in effect (Kynaston, 1984)). Nevertheless,

the changes were national, cultural and imposed on a nation persuaded by superficial argument of economic inevitability apparently related to 'globalisation'.

The commitment of influential Australian economists to the forms of economic rationalism espoused in the 1990s by the World Bank is explicit. Australian Treasury Secretary Tony Cole attributed his own enthusiasm for the practice of 'rational economics' within Australia to his professional experience at the World Bank itself (Cole, 1991). The Australian Education Council's (1991) emphasis on such concepts as 'profiles', 'standards', 'key competencies', 'consistent approaches to assessment and reporting' indicates a significant movement of the federal government into the management of every local school. The movement was also an expression of economic rationalism in two senses. First, it seeks to ensure that schools become 'a means through which national, economic priorities might be achieved' (Watkins, 1992b), an effect on curriculum content. Second, it borrowed from business 'scientific' or 'corporate' management, a mode of administration which gives primacy to economic values:

Underpinning corporate management is a 'rational', technical approach which stresses management by objectives and the implementation of operational goals within narrowly defined resources parameters. Administration in this context takes on an economic imperative which is likely to reduce educational considerations to the effective, efficient and economic management of human and financial resources (Watkins, 1992b).

Clearly this was an effect on the context of curriculum realisation and constitutes a message system in its own right. Economic values began to permeate curriculum. Curriculum at schools and universities became increasingly vocational. Individuals succumbed silently, but willingly, as curriculum debate slumped into inevitability. As the society became a market, individual labour became a commodity. To be competitive, individuals needed 'work-place related skills' ahead of ideas about the fundamental purposes of work and the forms of life it determined. Humanities departments closed down, and science courses not explicitly linked to jobs were failing to attract students. In universities, competition for students was increasingly seen from a market perspective and market values contested academic values in the definition of quality. Brown (2007) showed the danger presented to educational quality in British university education in the following way:

In a market it is consumers - students, parents, employers, and governments acting or claiming to act on their behalf - whose expectations dominate the discussion. Quality is seen in terms of the fit between any individual program/institution and the needs of those consumers. This is a fitness for purpose view where consumers determine both purpose and fitness. Quality is judged largely in terms of student satisfaction.

Under the academic view, it is academic staff whose expectations and norms are decisive. Quality is seen in terms of the extent to

which individual students fulfill certain prescribed academic requirements and norms. Here it is the academy that determines the worth/value both of those requirements/norms and of the student's achievement in relation to them. Quality is ultimately determined in terms of an academic view of what it is to be an educated person in, usually, that particular discipline or field of practice. This is a fitness of purpose view as well as a fitness for purpose one (Brown, 2007, p. 8)

The application of economic values continues to threaten educational values (Marginson, 1993, 1997). In Australia, how educators talk about their work was already prefigured by the political successes, at least for the time being, of the economic rationalists in the national capital (Pusey, 1991).

My point here is not a comprehensive historical analysis of the concept of reform. Rather, I think the two phases of reform driven by bureaucratic approaches to curriculum reform, and managerialist approaches to reform of schooling have sequentially cut educators and other stakeholders out of the reform agenda. There is a way forward by recognising the importance of these stakeholders. However, it is necessary to develop approaches which do not leave young people hostage to populism, ignorance and conspiracy among teachers, parents and community members. Recovering disciplined debate and collaboration in changing education is essential to confront the alarming emergence of simplistic fundamentalisms of all kinds. New forms of critical participatory action research present a way of recreating forms of educational life which are just, well-informed, rational, reasonable, coherent, satisfying and sustainable (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000, 2005).

Participatory action research for educational reform

Early arguments

From one perspective it is curious that managerialism of the North American genre has dominated educational innovation and research. Better ideas about reform arose there quite early in the twentieth century. Many were introduced by John Dewey, an educational philosopher who profoundly influenced the progressive educational reform movement. He was the first twentieth century thinker to argue that participation in educational enquiry was a pre-requisite for educational reform. Dewey had presented his vision for educational research as early as 1910 in How We Think and then again later in The Sources of a Science of Education:

The answer is that (1) educational practices provide the data, the subject matter, which form the problems of enquiry. ....These educational practices are also (2) the final test of worth of scientific results. They may be scientific in some other field, but not in education until they serve educational purposes, and whether they really serve educational purposes can be found out only in practice. (Dewey, 1929, cited in Hodgkinson, 1957, p. 33)

The central role for teachers was recognized at the time:

The teacher has opportunities for research which, if seized, will not only powerfully and rapidly develop the technique of teaching but will also react to vitalise and dignify the work of the individual teacher. (Buckingham, 1926, p. iv)

For Dewey, enquiry into educational practices was the instantiation of the more general 'method of intelligence' or 'Complete Act of Thought' or 'CAT' (Broudy, 1981, p. 4; Dewey, 1910). As Broudy (1981) went on to argue, the importance of the method of intelligence for schooling lay in the claim that everyone could bring it to bear on questions of fact and value. Indeed, by making students adept at the use of the Complete Act of Thought it was argued that schools could produce and sustain a rational and democratic society.

Dewey's demystification, domestication and democratisation of the scientific method was a direct challenge to the professionalisation of research. Dewey's legacy was a powerful idea. In any democratic society Dewey saw it as essential that ordinary citizens could join with professionals in respectable programs of enquiry and reform.

The three concepts even today provide a useful entr?e to the ideas of participatory action research. Dewey was concerned with the demystification of research. Increasingly it was the domain of professional researchers ensconced in the university. His goal was to expose the academy and other institutions to critique by citizens. The academy was not to prescribe solutions for education. This created the need for domestication of research skills, making them available to the populace to use to understand better the problems they faced. This was not aimed at taming wild ideas, but harnessing to tools necessary to make use of them. Dewey's aspiration was democratization in the active sense of the term - participation in the work of theory, organisation and practice - politically adept, thoroughly informed and morally motivated participation in disciplined educational change.

In order to give some structure to the concepts of discipline and participation in participatory action research as an approach to educational reform the first step is to consider the idea of 'practice'.

The idea of practice

In our chapters for the second and third editions of The Handbook of Qualitative Research (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000, 2005), we argued that research on practice has frequently proceeded with impoverished views of practice as an object of study, and that it was necessary to understand practice in a more multi-dimensional way. Practice should be viewed from at least the five perspectives sketched in Figure 1. Each of those perspectives conformed to a cluster of research approaches as summarised in Figure 2. Each research approach contributes something to understanding, but only the perspective which combined the four others and understood their relationship to each other to comprehend practice with sufficient manifoldness to be an adequate resource to transforming it. This perspective and its research implications are

summarised in the bottom right hand corner of Table 1 and Table 2 respectively. Only if we understand practice as socially- and historically-constituted, and as reconstituted by human agency and social action can we articulate a view of action and research which address unjust, uninformed, irrational, unreasonable, incoherent and unsatisfying social practices. The theoretical underpinnings of this view of research as a form of social practice are critical theory and critical social science.

Focus: / **Perspective:**	***The individual***	***The social***	***Both: Reflexive-dialectical*** view of individual-social relations and connections
Objective	**(1)** Practice as individual behaviour, seen in terms of performances, events & effects: behaviourist and most cognitivist approaches in psychology	**(2)** Practice as social interaction - e.g., ritual, system-structured: structure-functionalist and social systems approaches	
Subjective	**(3)** Practice as intentional action, shaped by meaning and values: psychological *verstehen* (empathetic understanding) and most constructivist approaches	**(4)** Practice as socially-structured, shaped by discourses, tradition: interpretive, æsthetic-historical *verstehen* & post-structuralist approaches	
Both: Reflexive-dialectical view of subjective-objective relations and connections			**(5)** Practice as socially- and historically-constituted, and as reconstituted by human agency and social action: critical theory, critical social science

Figure 1: Relationships between different traditions in the study of practice

Focus: **Perspective:**	***The individual***	***The social***	***Both:*** ***Reflexive-dialectical*** view of individual-social relations and connections
Objective	**(1)** *Practice as individual behaviour:* Quantitative, correlational-experimental methods. Psychometric and observational techniques, tests, interaction schedules.	**(2)** *Practice as social and systems behaviour:* Quantitative, correlational-experimental methods. Observational techniques, sociometrics, systems analysis, social ecology.	
Subjective	**(3)** *Practice as intentional action:* Qualitative, interpretive methods. Clinical analysis, interview, questionnaire, diaries, journals, self-report, introspection	**(4)** *Practice as socially-structured, shaped by discourses and tradition:* Qualitative, interpretive, historical methods. Discourse analysis, document analysis.	
Both: ***Reflexive-dialectical*** view of subjective-objective relations and connections			**(5)** *Practice as socially- and historically-constituted, and as reconstituted by human agency and social action:* Critical methods. Dialectical analysis — combining multiple methods.

Figure 2: Methods and techniques characteristic of different approaches to the study of practice.

Viewing practice, participation and action research together in this way means commitment to work which is intellectually, emotionally and politically demanding. Each aspect of this work requires disciplining ourselves to think, feel, act and work together in carefully considered ways. We need to create the social conditions which allow us to conduct the work of participatory action research. There are therefore four related disciplines of participatory action research to work on. These are not 'disciplines' in the conventional sense of

the term, but rather refer to developing and committing to shared understandings about the work to sustain the rigour of all aspects of participatory action research.

There are four kinds of social processes - in participatory action research we are disciplining:

1. objectification of experience - considering the theoretical interpretations of facts and observations - in Habermas' (1974, p. 32) terms, 'the formation and extension of critical theorems, which can stand up to scientific discourse' with the aim of 'true statements'.

2. subjectivity: affect/feeling/dissatisfaction - establishing the links between genuinely felt concerns and their theoretical significances - in Habermas' terns, 'the organization of processes of enlightenment, in which such theorems are applied and can be tested ... by the initiation of processes of reflection ... within certain groups' with the aim of 'authentic insights'.

3. subjectivity: agency/action/politics - establishing the moral sureness and political viability of plans for change - in Habermas' terms, 'the selection of appropriate strategies, the solution of tactical questions and the conduct of the political struggle' with the aim of 'prudent decisions'.

4. participation and social relations for rigour through agreed principles to effect 1-3 - in Habermas' terms the creation of 'public spheres'.

Objectification of experience

The objectification of experience is fundamentally the 'research' aspect of participatory action research - finding and interpreting the 'facts of the situation' including observations of how others involved and affected. In critical participatory action research the perspective taken on practice is the integrative one summarized in 5. in Table 1 above. Practice is seen a social and historically constituted and as reconstituted by human agency and social action. This is the basis of a critical social science that addresses unjust, uninformed, irrational, unreasonable, incoherent and unsatisfying social practices.

The objectification of experience is not then a form of enquiry governed by methodological rules, procedures and canons. It is not the exclusively the prevail of specialist researchers. The information it seeks, values and analyses is not solely aimed at the distillation of truths, but must also be educative and reflexive, having the capacity to inspire, challenge, shock or motivate people to change. The objectification of experience asks 'Which interpretive perspective most comprehensively informs what we plan to do next?'

Subjectivity: affect/feeling/dissatisfaction

The sense in which subjectivity is used here refers to humans as knowing, feeling and acting subjects. In this section emphasis is placed upon the affective or 'feeling' aspect and

the participatory action research commitment to exploring people's satisfactions, dissatisfactions, feelings, concerns and blind spots. There are two key elements to the disciplining of subjectivity. The first relates to clarification of affective states, the second re-

lates to the interpretation of their meaning. It is important first to differentiate between authentic disaffection, unreasonableness, madness, selfishness and similar dysfunction. However, it is essential to recognize that there are dangers in the dismissal of views and the individuals through the attribution of such labels. This is a situation were self-reflection is paramount.

The second element, which will often occur in parallel with the first involves recognizing shared attitudes and dispositions. This assists the emergence of group identity and the possibility of collective action. It also allows the recognition that issues are not idiosyncratic. Others have addressed them in other cases; and these cases might allow extrapolation (or 'naturalistic generalization (Stake, 1995) to the case participants are living through. Further, theoretical understandings possibly, but not necessarily derived from similar cases, can be useful to interpret the causes of problems and to formulate plans informed by the experience of others. Engaging theoretical understanding by distilling and harnessing of feelings into shared understandings - cognitive and empathic - is described in Habermas' earlier work as the 'organization of enlightenment'.

Subjectivity: agency/action/politics

This is the basis of the 'action' component of participatory action research and refers to the acting aspect of the feeling, knowing acting subject. It is the disciplining aspect of political agency - ensuring that plans for change are considered, subjected to critique by informed others to ensure that what is planned is wise and prudent in the circumstances of each participant. Disciplining this aspect of subjectivity builds on emerging understandings, cognitive and affective, to plan action in the individual, collective, institutional and community domains - what Habermas called 'the conduct of the political struggle'.

It is the area of participatory action research where participation is most crucial and commitment to participation by all those involved and affected must be ensured. There is risk involved in changing one's own practices, and individuals must opt in only in the full understanding of their own situations.

As with the other activities described above, there is is overlap. Here the planning of action must include the gathering of more information about the practice, about the effects change is having and about the situation as action transpires. Planning the extension of the theoretical perspectives, resources, to inform action as it evolves.

Participation and social relations for rigour

The foregoing indicates that participatory action research is not simply a process where groups of people just get together to talk about a few things, try our something new and get together again later to chat about how things went. There is need for a discipline of participation to replace the sometimes romantic attachment to a soft and liberal view of democracy. It follows that it helps to have a practical and theoretical basis for disciplining individual and community practices, the forms of life

which make these three preceding activities authentic, robust, sustainable and capable of producing persuasive exemplars to others. There is serious work in participating in the struggle to make social practices more just, informed, reasonable, rational, coherent, and satisfying. The rationale for participation in participatory action research has been developed by Stephen Kemmis in particular (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000, 2005).

Concepts for participation as a discipline

The concepts of disciplining objectification and the two aspect of subjectivity will be familiar to most students of participatory action research. The fourth discipline, establishing the participatory agreements which make that work possible, will be less familiar. Many people who have worked with action research approaches recognize the need for a clear sense of the concept of participation (Reason, 1994), but until recently this experience has not been interpreted theoretically. The concepts of 'communicative action', 'communicative space', and the 'public sphere' help to define a new generation of critical participatory action research and the conditions to support it.

Communicative action and communicative space

Using Habermas, Kemmis and McTaggart (2000, 2005) described communicative action as conscious and deliberate effort:

- to reach intersubjective agreement as basis for
- mutual understanding in order to
- reach unforced consensus about what to do in their particular situation.

The questions which establish the validity of practices which constitute communicative action are:

- Are participants' understandings of what they are doing comprehensible to them?
- Are they true, accurate in accord with what is known?
- Are they sincerely held and stated (authentic)? And
- Are they morally right and appropriate in participants' circumstances?

These commitments to communicative action also open communicative space so that the disciplined work of participatory action research can occur: Communicative action also:

- opens communicative space between people
- builds solidarity, and
- underwrites understandings and decisions with legitimacy.

A crucial feature of the work of participatory action research is that it considered legitimate by participants. Legitimacy can be achieved through communicative action and is only guaranteed when people are free to decide individually, for themselves:

- What is comprehensible to them.
- What is true in the light of their own and shared knowledge.
- What is sincerely held and truthfully stated (authentic), and
- What is morally right and appropriate, proper in participants' circumstances.

It is important to note here that as we begin to define the work of participatory action research we simultaneously put foremost participants' understandings, needs and willingness to act as the definitive criteria for legitimacy. Hark back to educational reform - can we now begin to understand its patchy record?

Given the primacy given to legitimacy and participants' central role in accomplishing it, how do we go about creating legitimacy? Kemmis and McTaggart (2000, 2005) argue that legitimacy arises in 'public spheres'.

Ten key features of public spheres

1. Actual networks of communication among participants: There is not just one public sphere. In reality there are many public spheres, constituted as actual networks of communication among actual participants.

2. Self-constituted: voluntary and autonomous: That is, they are outside (often marginal or peripheral to) formal systems (like the formal administrative systems of the state) and systems of influence that mediate between civil society and the state. On another scale, they might be teachers, parents, environmentalists, university teacher educators, working together on community sustainability issues. Public spheres are constituted by people who want to explore a particular problem or issue - that is, around a particular theme for discussion. Thus, communicative spaces or networks organised as part of the communicative apparatus of the economic or administrative subsystems of government or business would not normally qualify as public spheres.

3. Come into existence because of legitimation deficits: That is, public spheres are created because potential participants share a view that there are doubts, concerns, problems or unresolved issues about the legitimacy of laws, policies, practices, plans or perspectives.

4. Constituted for communicative action and public discourse: This includes not only face-to-face communication but also communications between participants who are unknown to one another or anonymous from the perspective of any one individual. Public discourse has a similar orientation to communicative action: it aims towards mutual understanding and unforced consensus about what to do. Thus, communicative spaces organised for essentially instrumental or functional purposes - to command, to influence, to exercise control over things - would not ordinarily qualify as public spheres.

5. Inclusive and permeable: To the extent that communication between participants is exclusive, doubt arises about whether it is in fact a 'public' sphere. Public spheres are attempts to create communicative spaces that include not only the parties most obviously interested in and affected by decisions, but also people and groups peripheral or marginal to (or routinely excluded from) discussion in relation to the topics around which they form. Thus, essentially private or privileged groups, organisations and communicative networks do not qualify as public spheres.

6. Communicate in ordinary language: As part of their inclusive character, public spheres tend to involve communication in ordinary language. Public spheres frequently seek to break down the barriers and hierarchies formed by the use of specialist discourses and the modes of address characteristic of bureaucracies that presume a ranking of the importance of speakers and what they say in terms of their positional authority (or lack of it). Public spheres also tend to have only the weakest of distinctions between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (they have relatively permeable boundaries), and between people who are relatively disinterested and those whose (self-) interests are significantly affected by the topics under discussion. Thus, the communicative apparatuses of many government and business organisations, and organisations that rely for their operations on the specialist expertise of some participants do not ordinarily qualify as public spheres.

7. Presuppose communicative freedom: In public spheres, participants are free to occupy (or not occupy) the particular discursive roles of speaker, listener and observer, and they are free to withdraw from the communicative space of the discussion. Participation and non-participation are voluntary. Thus, communicative spaces and networks generally characterised by obligations or duties to lead, follow, direct, obey, remain silent or remain outside the group could not be characterised as public spheres.

8. Generate communicative power: Public spheres create the possibility that communication networks constituted for public discourse will generate communicative power - that is, that the positions and viewpoints developed through discussion will command the respect of participants (not by virtue of obligation, but by intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding and unforced consensus about what to do - in other words, by the force of argument alone). Communication in public spheres thus creates legitimacy in the strongest sense - the shared belief among participants that they can and do freely and authentically consent to the decisions, positions or viewpoints arrived at through their own participation in public discourse. Thus, systems of command or influence, where decisions are formed on the basis of obedience or self-interests would not ordinarily qualify as public spheres.

9. Indirect impact on social systems: Public spheres do not affect social systems (like government and administration) directly; their impact on systems is more indirect, and mediated through systems of influence (like voluntary groups and associations in civil society). Thus, the media and political parties would not ordinarily qualify as public spheres.

10. Often associated with social movements: Public spheres frequently arise in practice through (or in relation to) the communication networks associated with social movements - that is, where voluntary groupings of participants arise in response to a legitimation-deficit, or a shared sense that there is a social problem has arisen and needs to be addressed. It is nevertheless the case that the

public spheres created by some organisations (like Amnesty International, perhaps) can be long-standing and well-organised, and that they can involve notions of (paid) membership and shared objectives. On the other hand, many organisations (like political parties and interest-groups) do not ordinarily qualify as public spheres for reasons already outlined in relation to other items on this list, as well as because they are part of the social order rather than social movements.

These ten features of public spheres describe a space for social interaction in which people strive for intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding and unforced consensus about what to do, and (the new element identified by Habermas in Between Facts and Norms (1996)) in which legitimacy arises. These are the conditions under which participants regard decisions, perspectives and points of view reached in open discussion as compelling for - even binding upon - themselves. Such conditions are very different from many other forms of communication - for example, the kind of functional communication characteristic of social systems (which aims at achieving particular ends by the most efficient means) and most interest-based bargaining (which aims at maximising or optimising self-interests rather than making the best and most appropriate decision for all concerned). The conditions constitute a fourth discipline, ways of thinking and acting which make it possible for people to study their experience, analyse their reactions to their own and others' practices, and plan ways of bringing about authentic changes in practice.

CONCLUSION

These theoretical proposals summarize much of what has been learned by many people who have worked in participatory action research over several generations. As I have indicated, these are not entirely new ideas in participatory action research, or in educational thought. Key leader of the participatory action research movement in Latin America Orlando Fals Borda has summarized the evolution of some of these ideas:

In the 1970s it was heretical to preach horizontal relationships in the research adventure.... It became clear to me however that sociological investigation should not be autistic but a rite of communion between thinking and acting human beings, the researcher and the researched. The usual formality and prophylaxis of academic institutions had to be discarded and space given to some sort of down-to-earth collectivization in the search for knowledge. This attitude I called vivencia, or life-experience (Erlebnis) (Fals Borda, 1997 p. 108).

We now have well-developed principles derived from decades of theory and practice of participatory action research. When we compare these principles with the way educational reform has been conducted, and with the forms of rationality which guided its conceptualization, we can understand the patchiness of its success. Most of the key elements of bureaucratic rationality, its embodiment in industrial rationality, economic rationalism and

its bedfellow, corporate managerialism, are contested by these principles for educational reform. So, if we are to develop reforms which return education to its rightful place as a distinctive field requiring distinctive forms of relationships, forms of work and hence forms of institution, these concepts summarise challenges for all of us. Some might attempt to dismiss them as mere rhetoric, but that would be unwise. The principles capture the views of seasoned practitioners and draw upon the theoretical distillations in the best of theory. If they have a rhetorical flavour, so be it; but let them be the rhetoric to lead a new reality. It was always so that participatory action research would be about new knowledge, new practices and new forms of relationships. That is difficult, disciplined and sometimes dangerous work. A conceptual map is crucial for that, but equally important is working through our ideas in practice, together. As our Latin American colleagues would say:

Viva la vivencia!

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