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REVITALIZING UNIVERSITIES BY REINVENTING THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Bildung and Action Research

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Doing social science is, among other things, a form of contextualized institutional social practice. This banality, taken to its obvious conclusion and set in the context of contemporary academic social science, yields a number of consequences that most academic social scientists will not like. One implication is that theoretical and methodological approaches must be interpreted within the institutional contexts and social practices where they are embedded and practiced. If the desire for theoretical and methodological development is genuine, then this means the social sciences cannot proceed without developing and advocating an understanding of how universities, research institutions, and disciplinary structures shape the contexts and practices of their activities. Academic social scientists' engagement in autopoetic theoretical and methodological efforts disconnects them from society at large. Research and teaching agendas are motivated more by what is fashionable in the professionalized arenas of institutionalized social science than by the aim of addressing pertinent societal problems. Since the larger organizational structures and processes of universities, campus administrative structures, national and international professional societies, and national and international ranking systems currently are inimical to the development of socially meaningful theories/practices in social sciences, then those structures have to be analyzed and changed as well.

We make a situated, pragmatist analysis that examines university organizational structures, power relations, discourses, and external relations as they affect social research methodologies and practices. Doing this creates an epistemological, political, methodological, theoretical, and ethical necessity to go beyond conventional organizational analyses of the academic professions and analyze actual social science behavior in concrete contexts. Academic social scientists have to confront existing choices about university organizational structures and the larger extra-university context in which social science research operates. Social scientists have the tools to reveal the contours of these problems and the obligation to use them in playing a role in the pro-social reform of those structures. Leaving the changes to professional administrators, their consultants, and outside policymakers has already undermined universities in significant ways.

We pretend no neutrality on these matters. We believe that universities as something more than vocational schools and research shops are in real jeopardy. Current methods, professional practices, and organizational structures make the academic social sciences almost impossible to justify to increasingly hostile publics, funders, and policymakers. Since the Tayloristic structures of university organization are inimical to more than cosmetic institutional reform (e.g., strategic planning without any significant organizational change), we challenge them directly. We believe that universities matter and are therefore worth reforming, but only as loci for the formation of citizens; the analysis of complex technical, social, and ethical issues; and the support of meaningful efforts toward the solution of society's most pressing problems. Such universities could thrive only by means of fluid, multidimensional relationships within their own structures and with the nonuniversity worlds that are the source of their legitimacy and funding. We believe that the social sciences should have a

privileged position and a core responsibility in bringing about the necessary changes.

Four important elements in practicing social science emerge as fundamental issues to be addressed if social science were to regain a solid foothold at universities and in society as a whole.

Multiperspective research. Social science research at universities has to include relevant social science, humanistic, and scientific professional expertise in multiperspective research on key societal problems. This multiperspective cogeneration of knowledge is vital in mobilizing the array of expertise found within the existing disciplines to generate meaningful and useful social knowledge and reform and to develop valid theories and methods in the fields of the participating academic partners. Fundamental reforms in teaching are also required to engage students, early and often, in multidisciplinary team research on complex problems. Doing so requires a significant reorganization of university operations and a revised set of ways of connecting intrauniversity worlds.

Methodological diversity. We necessarily support disciplinary and methodological diversity. For example, we believe that qualitative and quantitative methods are mutually necessary in the study of any important social problem (See, e.g., Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Clark, 2007). Significant problems do not come neatly divided into quantitative and qualitative dimensions. It is up to the researchers to combine these dimensions whenever necessary in comprehensive and actionable frameworks.

Academic social scientists want to believe that theory and practice can be neatly separated and that they should be (Eikeland, 2008). We disagree, and we assert that theory can best be generated in practice and can be properly tested only in practice. This means that the comfortable campus office/library/laboratory life is an insufficient context for the practice and further development of the social sciences. This is problematic since many academic social scientists have become academics precisely to withdraw from direct encounters with the nonacademic world.

Inclusiveness of stakeholders. While it increases both theoretical and methodological demands, nonuniversity stakeholders should be included in social science research. Contrary to the widespread view within academia, creating mutual learning opportunities between universities and nonacademic stakeholders does not lower the expectations for theoretical and methodological rigor in the social sciences. Rather, it increases those demands because the researchers are forced to deal with more complex, multidimensional problems than most academics want to address (and are rewarded professionally for studying), and they must do so in ways that are persuasive to nonacademic stakeholders whose personal well-being is at stake.

Changes in social science teaching. Much social science teaching has become antisocial. Lecturing on general theory and method to passive students, equating social science development with theoretical and methodological elaboration in the absence of practice, and privileging the critique of the latest journal articles rather than evaluating the substantive contributions to understanding and managing social problems are standard practices. They sever the connection between the social sciences and everyday social problems. Our own experiences have shown us that sustained linkages between social science theory and method and work on concrete social problems with local stakeholders help students and their teachers become more competent theorists and practitioners.

To achieve this, teaching must depart from the abstract presentations of lectures on theory and methods. Formal presentation has its place but must be accompanied by supervised social research practice in multidisciplinary team situations with multiple stakeholders who are internal and external to the university. Teaching must create learning opportunities built on real-life problems where theory and method are challenged and also used to broaden understandings.

These changes are directly opposed to the hegemonic Tayloristic logic of academic organizational structures. To meet the tests of complexity, applicability, and trustworthiness in social research requires multidisciplinary research and teaching that redefines departmental boundaries and professional identities and that recontextualizes the relationships between universities and extra-university stakeholders. This involves radical changes in universities, in the social sciences, and in the ways these interact with society at large.

Action Research

The changes proposed here form the core elements in the kind of social research we have practiced for decades, action research. We know that the approaches we recommend work. If they are possible and they work effectively, it is scientifically unacceptable to ignore them, particularly when the social sciences are at risk with all but their internal professional constituencies.

This chapter is our third contribution to the *Handbook of Qualitative Inquiry.* The main thrust in the previous two contributions was to argue that action research is a viable research strategy enabling a balance between rigor and relevance and that it has great transformative potential. In our first contribution, "Reconstructing the Relationships Between Universities and Society Through Action Research" (Greenwood & Levin, 2000, pp. 85–106), we began with a limited presentation of the problems created by the disconnectedness between social sciences and society at large and advocated addressing it through action research as the core approach to university social research. In doing this, we briefly laid out the basic

elements in action research built on a pragmatic philosophical position.

In our second contribution, "Reform of the Social Sciences and of Universities Through Action Research" (Greenwood & Levin, 2005, pp. 43–64), we tightened the focus on what counts as scientific knowledge in universities and developed arguments for action research as a genuinely scientific practice. We claimed that action research could be institutionalized as the principal model for research and teaching in universities. Action research would, we believed, support a closer linkage between academic knowledge creation and enhancement of concrete problem solving for all engaged stakeholders. We argued that action research is a research and teaching strategy that both could reform social science knowledge production and create a closer link between social research and society. The core idea was the creation of a research and teaching praxis that integrated researchers (teachers) and relevant stakeholders in the same knowledge acquisition process.

During the time since our first contribution and especially since 1998, when we published a synthetic introduction to action research (Greenwood & Levin, 1998a, 2007), we noticed that these arguments about action research have had no visible effect on university social science behavior. Parochial academic professionalism, ranking by peer review within disciplinary specialties, the separation of qualitative and quantitative research as methodological specialties, the separation of theory and practice—all of these continue. An understanding of action research as a major alternative strategy for social research is nowhere visible. The current financial crises of higher education have resulted in even more bunkerism among the disciplines, subdisciplines, and specialties. The standard administrative approach to financial problems has been to distribute the cuts according to the strengths and weaknesses of different departments, which creates even fewer incentives for cooperation across disciplines. As a result, we are once again "introducing" action research before we can proceed to our core arguments about universities. However, we do so more briefly than in the previous contributions. The reader can turn to those or the second edition of our *Introduction to Action Research* (Greenwood & Levin, 2007) for a more extended treatment.

In our book, *Introduction to Action Research,* we defined action research as follows:

> AR is a set of self-consciously collaborative and democratic strategies for generating knowledge and designing action in which trained experts in social and other forms of research and local stakeholders work together. The research focus is chosen collaboratively between the local stakeholders and the action researchers and the relationships among the participants are organized as joint learning processes. AR centers on doing "with" rather than doing "for" stakeholders and credits local stakeholders with the richness of experience and reflective possibilities that long experience living in complex situations brings with it. (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 1)

Action researchers link praxis and theory in social research. Social research that is not applied cannot meaningfully be called research, we believe, because theories not tested in context are merely speculations. We reject the notion that there can be applied research practices that are not explicitly connected to theories and methods. So action research rejects the theory/practice dichotomy on which most conventional social research relies (Greenwood & Levin, 1998a, 1998b, 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Levin & Greenwood, 1998).

To many social scientists, action research is "mere" activism and is viewed as a retreat from rigorous theories and methods. The justification given for this position is that greater relevance requires less rigor (an extensive counterposition is found in Argyris & Schön, 1978, 1996). Our experience shows us that this view is wrong, although it conveniently allows conventional social researchers to reside in their universities without the "rigors" of connecting with engaged social actors in the world beyond.

The philosophical foundations for our action research position come from the pragmatism of John Dewey, William James, Charles Sanders Peirce, and others (Diggins, 1994). We have laid out this position in other publications and will not repeat the arguments here. Pragmatism builds a direct link between theory and praxis. Reflection proceeds from acting in a real context, reflecting on the results, and then acting again. This is necessarily a group process involving diverse stakeholders with different experiences and knowledge of the problems at hand. Pragmatic inquiry results in "warranted" assertions that guide both action and theory/method developments.

Pragmatism is intimately connected to democracy; it is the social science approach to democratic deliberation and action. We take the betterment of democratic societies to be a core mission of the "social" sciences. We believe that action research is "scientific" (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, Chapter 5) because it leads to results tested in action and evaluated by professional social researchers and the relevant local stakeholders.

Central to action research is a collaborative relationship we call *cogenerative inquiry.* This brings the experience and training of professional social researchers together with the depth of experience and commitment of the local stakeholders for the benefit of all. Both the professional researchers and the local stakeholders have needed knowledge to contribute to the process.

Action research produces significant generalizations, methodological developments, and empirical findings, as a reading of any issue of the journals *Action Research, Systemic Practice and Action Research,* and the *International Journal of Action Research* will show.

Critique of Action Research

In making these arguments, we realize that our perspectives are idealized. Our definitional arguments regarding the potential

of action research do not pay attention to problems and pitfalls that assail the everyday practice of action research, both inside and outside the university. We have published a number of articles and papers that deal critically with action research as it is actually practiced. (Greenwood, 2002, 2004; Levin, 2003). Our critique centers on seeing how little action researchers have contributed to theoretical and methodological debates in the social sciences. Much action research writing involves endless case reporting without a sharp intellectual focus, often unlinked to any particular scientific discourse. These writings are often hard to distinguish from work done in any of the applied social science fields. We believe that, like the conventional social sciences, action research has not lived up to its potential for the same reason: a lack of integration between solving relevant practical problems and a well-developed theoretical and methodological agenda.

However, there are enough good examples of action research that bridge practical problem solving and have significant theoretical and methodological ambitions to make our positive case. (For examples, see Eikeland, 2008; Emery & Thorsrud, 1976; Emery & Trist, 1973; and these exemplary doctoral dissertations: Aslaksen, 1999; Crane, 2000; Hittleman, 2007; Kassam, 2005; Klemsdal, 2008; Raymer, 2007; Ruiz-Casares, 2006; Skule, 1994; Vasily, 2006.)

Action research is not reducible to "public scholarship." The notion that there are legitimate "public" and "private" spheres of scholarship runs directly against our understanding of social research as a process that engages simultaneous understanding and social action as the way to produce reliable theories, methods, and knowledge.

Pedagogy

Action research pedagogy runs directly against the passive "banking method" (Freire, 1970; Giroux & Giroux, 2004; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005; McLaren & Jaramillo, 2007). Training action researchers cannot be done from a lectern or in university seminars alone. Students need to work collaboratively with the faculty, with their fellow students, and on real projects in order to learn. They need to develop theoretical and methodological competencies but also organizational, coordinating, leadership, and ethnographic skills that arise from experience sharing responsibility for both their own learning and the learning and welfare of others.

This kind of pedagogy is possible. Morten Levin and Davydd Greenwood have both been able to practice it in their universities, and so have others (Levin & Martin, 2007). It is not common because of the hierarchical, compartmentalized, and authoritarian structures that dominate higher education. Paradoxically, it is more likely for advanced science, engineering, medical, and law students to learn these kinds of skills than for social scientists and humanists. In those fields, some teaching involves structured teamwork and the struggle to apply knowledge to concrete situations, which is rarely the case in the non-performance oriented humanities and the conventional social sciences.

Thus, we argue that the social sciences, including action research, all must be moved to address both the intellectual and practical challenges of social knowledge creation and competence development with and for the key stakeholders.

University Reform—The Balancing Act

The position on university reform we articulated in our prior contributions to this Handbook has shifted significantly. When we first wrote, we believed the possibilities of reform were sufficient to warrant our effort. Since then, we have watched the juggernaut of neoliberal policies; the vocationalization of higher education; the Bologna Process (the reform of European universities); and the deepening crisis of confidence in the value of university education as a source of social mobility, citizen formation, and meaningful social reform undermine the university systems of the world. In the current climate of economic panic, energy for much of anything other than cost-cutting Tayloristic exercises has dried up. We believe we understand how very significant reforms in universities could be undertaken, which would dramatically improve them as teaching, research, and social reform institutions, but we also believe that such reforms are unlikely. Rather, the crisis has emphasized the worst features of universities as organizations. So we have moved from writing in the voice of hopeful reformers to writing in the mode of "what if" arguments, the "what if" being "what if society and academics really wanted to recreate a meaningful university system"?

In our vision of the university, the core organizational processes are a multifaceted integration of the generation of research strategies, methods, and findings in social research; the reform of university organizational structures and processes; and the engagement of that research with the multidimensional, urgent, and dynamic problems in the world. This scholarship would depend on the collaborative engagement of students and teachers as learners and actors in these processes. Linking these tasks is a daunting challenge. After all, the conventional social sciences reject the linkage. For many academics, research has to be rigorous or relevant, theoretical or applied, and so on. No point of encounter seems to exist and it is a major challenge to support the creation of a different conceptualization.

Our proposed conceptualization is what we call the "balancing act." It might appear that such a concept is lame because it could suggest an uninteresting compromise in which every involved actor and conceptualization is juxtaposed within its previous frames of reference to create a compromise position, a common ground of "consensus" where issues and people involved give a little and get a little in return. But this is not at all

what we mean. For us, the balancing act is a radical and transformative vision of the future of the social sciences and of universities because it involves creating new points of encounter arising as everyone involved moves away from their former positions and institutional bunkers, taking on new theoretical, methodological, and institutional positions.

Thus, our model is based on Jürgen Habermas's (1984) discourse ethics. The balancing act is a reasoned way to let arguments and positions confront each other, not in a win-lose competition, but in a collaborative learning process where good arguments support transformative learning for all (see, e.g., Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1991). We also build on Ronald Barnett's (2003) arguments that the essence of academic life is to demand the exercise of reason to support or to reject any position. We assert not only that there is a middle ground but also that meaningful social research must take place precisely on that middle ground. By forcing us to strive both to be relevant for practical problem-solving and rigorous enough to make an intellectual contribution to the ongoing development of social research approaches, the balancing act requires us to stand on this middle ground and justify our work in both practical and epistemological terms and then to struggle to reorganize the work environments and the external links of universities to make this possible and sustainable. This is the first dimension of the balancing act.

We argue for multiperspective research and teaching as prerequisites for connected knowledge generation. In the research arenas where different disciplines must contribute, it is evident that a middle ground has to be shaped to facilitate transdisciplinary research and teaching (Gibbons et al., 1994; Nowotny, Scott, & Gibbons, 2001). This is the second dimension of the balancing act.

Action research embodies this middle ground because it accepts the challenge to serve two "masters"—the demand for practical solutions and the scientific demands for intellectual focus and linkages resulting in publications that expand the understandings of professional peers. To do so, social scientists must have integrity, as they can neither operate fully in the world of abstract academic communication nor in the world of practical solutions to social problems. The integrity of the action researcher, moving continuously between these potentially contradictory demands, is key. The action researcher's self-imposed demand to maintain integrity in searching for the best possible theoretical, methodological, and practical outcomes is the only guarantee.

Practicing this integrity, action researchers also model scientific and social integrity for their students. The integrity of the university as an institution depends on facilitating these processes and protecting all parties from internal or external coercion caused by sensitive issues involving multiple stakeholders. This is the third element of the balancing act.

Because action research is built on a commitment to democratic dialogue and social processes, the further obligation of action researchers is to weigh the fairness and democratic implications of their research and teaching processes and of the practical solutions they propose (Flood & Romm, 1996). The power and interests of the relevant stakeholders affect these processes, and the researchers seek to balance these interests through open processes characterized by integrity throughout.

Another balancing act within universities is an institutional challenge to mediate between the development and promotion of deep expertise and high skill levels in many fields and the deployment of that capability around important transdisciplinary projects within and beyond the university. This is the fourth element of the balancing act. Disciplinary silos and autonomy oppose such a change project, but doing away with the ongoing development and teaching of deep expert knowledge would also be destructive to the future of the university and society at large. As important as this is, we see little evidence of a meaningful role played by university management structures in achieving and protecting this balance. Current evidence points in the opposite direction, toward academic commodity production in a fee-for-service environment.

Action research teaching is the fifth element in the balancing act. This teaching balances conveying social theories and methods drawn from the social sciences and connecting these theories and methods practically with everyday social life. Telling students how to think and act is not successful in giving students the ability to evaluate theories and methods, gather and analyze social research data, and work with diverse actors to bring about social change. Nothing short of balancing theory and practice in the classroom and taking the professor and students out of the classroom in the company of other colleagues from other fields and nonuniversity stakeholders constitutes "teaching social science." If the teaching activity does not bridge theory and praxis, then the students are not learning social science. Instead, they are becoming experts in academic commodity production for the benefit of their own careers.

This kind of engaged reflective research is impossible in the conventional academic social sciences or in the existing organizational structures of universities, despite the depth of the crisis in the funding of higher education and the loss of public confidence in the academic social sciences. To explain this, we provide a perspective on Tayloristic organization and management in universities, organizational dynamics that create the disconnected social sciences, which cannot deliver meaningful social formation (*Bildung*) and which have created a marketized teaching system where "shopping" for courses substitutes for a well-reasoned course plan that creates personal formation (*Bildung*).

Social Scientists' Antisocial Self-Understandings

Deep expertise in particular topics and approaches is essential to research about and understanding of broader systemic

relationships. Disciplinary specialization accompanied by the organizational isolation of disciplines does not promote good social research. It makes important social problems impossible to understand and resolve and promotes poor quality higher education. Students are forced to walk around from academic department to department to "get an education," while the faculty who are not in intellectual communication generally have only stereotypical ideas of fields outside their own.

The lack of understanding of the contexts of the social scientists' own practices is paralleled by social scientists' lack of understanding of universities' organizational dynamics and their uneasy position in society. After working for generations to separate universities as producers of social science from nonacademic stakeholders engaged in the problems under study, academic social scientists have made meaningful and valid social research difficult and often professionally suicidal.

We have long been struck that most of our academic social science colleagues, whose specialties involve understanding the pervasive, complexly structured ways humans live in institutional and cultural worlds, conduct themselves personally and academically as if they were suprasocial and supracultural individualists whose behavior is not subject to their own theories and analytical methods. This self-estrangement from local organizational life and from society results in an absence of individual and collective self-understanding among social scientists and humanists, who claim to understand society and culture better than nonprofessionals.

This shows that many academics do not really believe or have not reflected on the ways that their theories and methods apply to themselves. They intuitively place themselves in a suprasocial position, adopting a modernist view, even though generations of social theory and philosophy have demonstrated the impossibility and inadvisability of pretending to take such a superhuman position. Social scientists have positioned themselves as "spectator" analysts (Eikeland, 2008; Skjervheim, 1974) and not as participants in their institutions and society.

Many academic social scientists combine professional hyperindividualism as academic entrepreneurs with a lack of understanding of organizational contexts in which academic social science knowledge is generated and communicated. As these contexts are rapidly changing, even the most un-self-conscious academics now are aware of some changes. But this lack of organizational self-understanding and reflection leaves them unprepared to develop and defend their own narrow academic interests and those of their students in the emerging academic regimes of "marketized" global higher education.

Instead, there is collective self-denial regarding the impact of the changing institutional and societal environments. Disturbing signals from external stakeholders are often met by retrenching: continuing to teach as always, admitting graduate students and training them for nonexistent academic jobs, and doing research on subjects of interest only to immediate professional peers This is an example of single-loop learning and Model O-I behavior (Argyris & Schön, 1978, 1996). This historical naiveté and resistance to confronting the challenge of a critical examination of their own research and teaching practices, institutional working contexts, and the roles they could play in society means that they do not exhibit behavior that could result in greater interest and respect for the social sciences.

These regressive behaviors play directly into the hands of "marketizing" (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997) managerial ideologies, using professional ranking systems to measure excellence in academic fields, and attempting to convert higher education into a fee-for-service training enterprise rather than a research and education effort to improve the quality of democratic societies. Rather, universities are organized according to an antiquated, dysfunctional Tayloristic model of a hierarchical, bureaucratic division of labor resulting in managerialism, authoritarianism, internal competition, and alienation from key external constituencies.

For generations, the more qualitatively oriented and interpretivist social scientists have been freer of constraints other than a lack of financial resources. They were not free in the political economy of university life or free from political attacks on their theories. We think they have confused being marginal with being free. Now both the public who pays the bills and the policymakers expect academic research and teaching to deliver value for the money. Nonacademics logically imagine that the importance of the social sciences is the light they shed on how society works in order to improve our lives. The distance between this public view of the social sciences and the lifeworld of a great many academic social scientists is significant.

University Management as Taylorism

Tayloristic organization, with its hermetic organizational units and command and control structures, makes a bad situation worse by concentrating the communication with the outside world and strategic planning in the central administration. Senior administrators, while privy to the overall "bottom line" of the institutions, generally do not have a good understanding of what real activities and processes produce this bottom line or how the bottom line is likely to change as new discoveries are made, new demands emerge, and so on. Unaware of the details of the research, teaching, and other work contexts that many individual faculty members know far better, the administrators and accountants see the results of the work but do not understand the contexts that make these results positive or negative. They thus elaborate policies and plans that often obstruct or undermine important developments while favoring the interests of the incumbent players and organizations they already know.

These systems unleash dynamics by which senior administrators maintain their power by controlling access to certain

kinds of information and causing those who report to them to compete. Those lieutenants, in turn, do the same down the chain. It is a recipe for the already visible disaster. Like the bosses in Tayloristic factories, they are remote from the point of value creation and increasingly surrounded by accountants, finance managers, human resource professionals, advertising and public relations experts, lawyers, and risk managers. Thus, senior administrators have authority without having the relevant information. Not surprisingly, they routinely make decisions that are either counterproductive or impossible to implement.

When administrators argue that the crucial role of universities now is to prepare students for the knowledge society of the 21st century, neither they nor the faculty have a clear idea what they are talking about because they are divorced from the real worlds of work outside the university. Only a small portion of the faculty on most university campuses have relevant or current experience of the extra-university world to which their educational and research supposedly links. Lacking this experience, they cannot teach or provide research of value to those whose lives will be lived mainly outside the university.

This problem is less acute in the sciences and engineering. In these fields, there is a more constant and fluid link between the private sector, the public sector, and the university and more opportunity for sensible compromises between basic and applied research, all supported by the process of gaining external funding. While the process is not perfect, there are more external linkages, and work organization takes account of them.

In the social sciences, opportunities abound for academics to engage in disciplinary debates and set priorities for research and teaching having little linkage to what happens outside their disciplinary structures. The modesty of funding for all but some forms of quantitative positivistic research "liberates" many academic social scientists to pursue whatever topics and methods interest them or are currently in vogue. Doing irrelevant research, they do not receive much funding, and this allows them to continue the irrelevant work.

Should anyone care? We believe so because, as counterproductive as this situation is, the current direction of university reform results in a society of even more narrowly professionalized people, who neither understand their societies nor how to play a social solidary and self-conscious role in them. What academic Taylorism and adversarial politics with the outside world undermines are theoretically ambitious, methodologically sophisticated, and socially relevant social sciences dealing with the interests of students, policymakers, scientists, engineers, humanists, and society at large.

There is nothing to recommend in current university organizational systems that are ineffectual, costly, isolated, and prey to neoliberal accountability pressures. Only a radical transformation will prevent universities from continuing down the path that is converting them into technical (vocational) training institutes and fee-for-service research shops under direct external control.

The Disconnected Social Sciences

University relationships with key external constituencies often are handled in pecuniary and selfish ways or in aggressive and self-destructive ways. Universities often claim a service mission or an expertise-producing mission. However, the lack of fluid communication between universities and the taxpayers and the irrelevance of much university social research and teaching to nonuniversity people suggests that this mission is not real. The decline of the public land grant universities in the United States is a harbinger of things to come for all universities.

Calling attention to the disconnection between the social sciences, their own organizational and cultural environments, and the larger society sounds like the tired cliché about the "ivory tower." What interests us is not the isolation of social scientists but the radical contradiction between the stated missions of the social sciences and the organizational behavior of most academic social scientists.

It is tempting to treat this tension between irrelevant ivory towers and the "real world" in a stereotypical and moralizing way, but this is not our purpose. Enough jeremiads do this already (Giroux & Giroux, 2004; Kirp, 2003; Washburn, 2005). Our purpose is to highlight how unsustainable the social science practices and methods of academic social scientists are.

The Role of Neoliberal Higher Education Reforms

The issues we describe are not endogenous to universities. They express broader processes of political economic change that go under the headings of neoliberalism and globalization. These processes are real and menacing to organizations producing public goods, which do not fully follow the supposed logic of commodity production market processes. Davydd Greenwood (2009) has published on neoliberal reforms in higher education elsewhere, and so we will be brief here.

Neoliberalism is not conservatism, which believes that some values are not market negotiable, and it is not liberalism, which believes that human beings have basic rights beyond those allocated by market processes. Neoliberalism is based on a utopian belief that the market will allocate all goods and services to those who deserve them and away from those who do not, if left to do its work. Since it has not been left to do its work, neoliberals intervene constantly claiming to free up the market by destroying public goods and reallocating them (energy production, environmental protection, education, etc.) to private actors. These private actors are generally the sponsors of the neoliberal politicians, and the charade results in a rapid increase in socioeconomic inequality accompanied by increased corporatist governmental bureaucracy.

Higher education is among the public goods neoliberal policies have focused on heavily. Beginning with the Thatcher reforms in Britain, followed by the Bologna Process, and the work of the Department of Education in the United States (starting with George W. Bush but continuing now under Barack Obama), neoliberal reforms are decimating the independence and finances of public higher education. The metrics applied are customer satisfaction of students, transparency and accountability for resources expended, and the "flexibilization" of the academic workforce.

The conventional social sciences and universities as organizations are not faring well under these conditions, except for neoliberal economics and other forms of quantitative research. Support for social science that does not seem to be about anything of importance to nonsocial scientists is evaporating. By not studying and illuminating problems of immediate interest to external constituencies, social scientists have separated themselves from sources of support. By not studying social world problems in context, they do not challenge themselves theoretically or methodologically with complex problems. They substitute complex language and baroque methodologies for engagement with real social and cultural complexity. And, without application, they rarely discover if the theories and methods they produce have any value.

The study of social problems in context is more challenging theoretically and methodologically than disciplinary work because social world problems are multidimensional, dynamic, and puzzling "messes" (Ackoff, 1974). These messes are part of large-scale systems that include dimensions relevant to all the social sciences and humanities. Studying them out of context and in bits to fit disciplinary boundaries yields academic commodity production but rarely actionable understandings. Studying pieces of messes allows social scientists to acquiesce to the Tayloristic organization of universities and avoid facing the urgent challenges of university reorganization.

Frustrated with the waste of resources and lack of attention to salient social issues, policymakers and administrators make these problems worse. Rather than demanding fundamental structural reorganizations of universities, these constituencies have been persuaded to demand accountability and transparency within existing structures. They impose discipline-based accountability and ranking schemes, deepening the antiquated Tayloristic organization of the academy and creating less rather than more change. The ranking systems by discipline and the beauty contest rankings of universities conserve existing structures because they take the disciplines and organizational structures of universities for granted.

Academic Taylorism

Looking at the mission statements of some of the professional associations in United States makes clear the autopoetic professional orientations of the academic social sciences (see, e.g., those of the American Anthropological Association, http://www.aaanet.org/about/WhatisAnthropology.cfm; the American Political Science Association, http://www.apsanet.org/content_4403.cfm?navID=733; or the American Economic Association, http://www.vanderbilt.edu/AEA/gen_info.htm).

They take for granted the existence and rationality of the boundaries of the disciplines and then proceed to occupy and protect those turfs, with bows in the direction of being socially valuable. A greater emphasis on social value is absent not because most academic social scientists don't believe what they do is valuable but because they view their value as being beyond debate. Until now, they have rarely been asked to defend what they do outside of their disciplinary confines.

Compatible with the broad Taylorism of academia, this results in the compartmentalization of knowledge and a unit-based command-and-control structure in which powerful central administrative figures distribute resources among disciplinary departments according to the politics of the institution, the ranking of the departments in national and international league tables, and the research monies they gather. No one asks if this overall organization makes any sense. In what way do a set of departments side-by-side add up to a university? How does travel to and between these units amount to an education? Occasionally, when at an event a president or provost is asked to say something generic about the overall university, the emptiness of their pronouncements is evident.

The kind of discussion we are promoting rarely finds its way into the arena of open debate. Anthropologists, for example, who, in their own internal discussions, routinely describe the methodological poverty and ethnocentrism of fields like economics and political science, rarely stand up in a university forum and state that political science or economics needs anthropology's help. The Tayloristic rules are live and let live: Compete for resources by fighting for enrollments and majors, office space, and budget allocations, and improve your ranking in the national and international ranking system. The rules are clear and the professional consequences of "coloring outside the lines" for all but a few great practitioners (e.g., Claude Lévi-Strauss, Clifford Geertz, Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, etc.) are harsh—failed promotions, low salaries, few students, isolation, and opprobrium. The everydayness of these ways of living and thinking prevents them from becoming a subject of conversation and analysis.

Another dimension of this organizational dynamic is that academic faculty members generally are competitive, individualist entrepreneurs (see Wright, Brenneis, & Shore, 2005). The process of getting into a university, graduating, doing a postgraduate degree, getting an academic job, securing grants, publishing, teaching effectively, and providing sufficient institutional service is a calculated career process. The individual is engaged in building curricula vitae that will lead

to permanent appointment, advancement through the ranks, salary increases, increased influence, and eventually greater personal autonomy.

The whole process is based on individualistic competition. Disciplinary solidarity may be asserted when competing with other disciplines, but within the disciplinary department, the ethos is competitive and individualistic. What one academic gets often is gained by doing better than other colleagues in the same unit.

People who spend their professional lives operating according to these rules are unlikely to think of themselves as deeply connected to the structures within which they operate except when they look up the chain of command. Those who succeed within their disciplines nationally and internationally do sometimes become senior statesmen locally, taking on tasks for the collectivity, but they rarely arrive at the position of senior statesmen without first having won a competition with colleagues in their earlier years within their departments.

This behavior is amply supported by the intellectual property regimes current in academia. The ownership of ideas and the authorship of manuscripts are taken for granted as the property of individuals and disciplinary research teams. Ideas are supposed to be original, and the fiction is that an academic's original ideas belong to her or him alone. He or she communicates them and tries to get others to use some of her or his language and to refer to her or his work in the process. If the ideas result in useful inventions, an all-out struggle between the faculty member and the university administration often ensues over the distribution of the rights to the profits between the individual and the university (Marginson & Considine, 2000; Kirp, 2003; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Washburn, 2005).

We could multiply examples and arguments, but we have said enough to show how the organizational environment of the social sciences encourages anti- or at least nonsocial thought and action. The relevant social life is within the discipline and department, and even there, it is generally competitive. It is rare for an academic social scientist to think of her- or himself as a part of a university collectivity with shared cultural norms, a worldview, and preferred methods and as a person whose behavior is largely explained by the social and cultural context in which he or she operates. Instead, it is the "others," the informants, the people the social scientists study outside the university, who have culture, roles, and values and who live in a sociocultural context, not the social scientists. Taylorism is firmly backed up by modernism.

We provide a concrete example from anthropology. For generations, it was assumed that the ability of anthropologists to see and understand the cultures of others was based on their unquestioned rationality and training as Western intellectuals. This was a perverse legacy. Culture and society are claimed to have a pervasive causal influence on the behavior of humans, but the anthropologists making this claim operated professionally as if this general human condition did not apply to them. In anthropology, this tension was long hidden by giving up the study of North America and Europe as part of anthropology. It is telling that the Society for the Anthropology of Europe was not founded until 1987 and that the Society for North American Anthropology was founded at nearly the same time. By not treating these areas as suitable for anthropology, anthropologists removed themselves from the study of their own societies (also reducing competition with economics, political science, and sociology) and steered clearer of political repression like that suffered in the era of the House Un-American Activities Committee and Senator Joseph McCarthy (Price, 2004). They could also engage the modernist fiction of the unquestioned superiority of Western knowledge systems.

This untenable position became more paradoxical when the combination of feminism and cultural studies made positionality, the impossibility of neutral stances, the politics of research, and other previously obscured issues open to discussion. Taking on these perspectives at a discursive level and representing them in the bibliographies of manuscripts and course syllabi, anthropologists and other social scientists still generally have resisted studying themselves, their own institutions, and their own practices. Talking about positionality and reflexivity is not the same as understanding one's positions and being reflexive.

Social science teaching shows the same kind of dynamic. Typically, the general introductory courses are taught as lectures, sometimes with discussion sections, but mainly as passive learning activities. The lecturers state their understanding of what the discipline is about, how professionals operate, and what the key lessons from generations of research are. Students do not learn how to act as social scientists, why the disciplines exist, how they are similar and different from each other, or how research is done. These practices change some in upper-level courses, where enrollments are smaller and more interaction is possible, but many social science majors after 3 years cannot conduct research nor explain how or why the discipline they majored in differs from other disciplines.

At the graduate level, at least in the United States, the situation is more extreme. Graduate students are mentored more individually and must learn to "talk the talk" and "walk the walk" of their professors as a condition for getting a PhD. Taking a particularly egregious example from anthropology, fewer than 10% of the graduate departments of anthropology in the United States require a methodology course as part of graduate training. Students who want to learn how to do anthropological field research often find themselves doing their doctoral research without training on how to proceed.

Other disciplines offer more methodological training. Graduates in sociology, political science, and economics know the main techniques associated with their disciplines. Are they trained, therefore, as researchers? Do they know what their discipline "is," why it exists, and how it relates to others? Our experience is that

they do not. Nor do many of these students have practice collaborating with academics from other disciplines on joint research projects and/or as members of teams doing research outside the university. A few get this experience in fields like archaeology and landscape architecture, but it is a rare practice in the conventional core of the social sciences.

The market-competitive model exacerbates the worst features of these teaching situations. Universities are presented to beginning students as giant educational cafeterias. They are told to go down the line among the offered dishes, picking and choosing within the limits set by curricular requirements, administrative rules, and course enrollment limitations. Departments that attract many students get more university resources. Departments with popular majors get more university resources. Departments with lots of students get graduate teaching assistantships and so are able to admit more graduate students. Departments with large and highly ranked graduate programs get more university resources. The "business model" is clear.

This system already is based on the student market model, although the market language long remained hidden. Students are supposed to make choices according to how attractive they find the courses offered, the campus reputation of the lecturers, and what they take to be the market value of one discipline over another. It is no accident that fields like classics have low enrollments and applied economics and management have high ones.

The departments or disciplines compete rather than cooperate because the Tayloristic system demands it. How these fields relate to each other is a not question addressed in such systems, nor is it possible to make any serious analysis of the mix and relative sizes of the constituent units. What the students learn and why is much less relevant than how many students enroll. How the student as a whole person emerges changed from the exposure to multiple fields and agendas is a question not asked. Students graduate, are given a degree, and are defined as having an "education."

Research suffers a similar fate. Research topics commanding the most external resources contribute most to the internal prestige and power of a unit and a faculty member and to the ranking of the university at large. Universities play little or no role in setting these funding agendas. National governments, private foundations, national research councils, and private sector funders call the tune, and thus the research market is controlled by powerful nonacademic forces that channel research into their areas of military, industrial, and economic development. Most universities do not have their own means of linking to the external world, engaging important external groups, or working toward university activities that are both intellectually challenging and socially desired. Most such relationships pass through individual faculty members and the research groups and centers they create.

Some successful university researchers may work in teams, and these teams are driven by grants. Often the team leader spends most of her or his time, not in the laboratory or classroom, but writing and administering grants, applying for patents, and working out negotiations over the sharing of resources created by the research projects. Many well-funded university researchers barely teach at all, although they might have some students working in their labs and getting some valuable mentoring by observation and participation.

Poorly funded university researchers are either working on unpopular topics or are not very good at getting research funding. They cobble together modest resources or simply do research on weekends and evenings or during the summers. They are less likely to work in teams, and without funding, few work with students as apprentices. They also end up doing the bulk of the teaching at the university.

What is the research agenda of a given university? Every institution now has a research statement and mission statements, but most employees and students have no idea what they are or how they affect them. What the "mission" of the institution might be is a question not asked in a way to produce organizational innovation and change. Rather, it is mainly a public relations instrument.

The research agenda of most universities, like their teaching, is the sum total of the activity going on that year. Whether it adds up to anything, whether the whole is more than the sum of its parts, is mostly irrelevant. Senior administrators answer questions about the mission of their institutions either with vague statements about the "knowledge society," "environmental crisis," and so on or with a table showing the research rankings of their university vis-à-vis peers.

The Missing *Bildung* in the "Marketized" Model of Academic Teaching and Research

There are a host of attempts worldwide to use what are wrongly imagined to be conventional business management strategies to direct higher education institutions (Barnett, 2003; Birnbaum, 2000; Kirp, 2003; Newfield, 2008). Because this management approach has not been countered successfully at most universities, it threatens the public and private university systems around the world.

There are ideological antimarket thinkers in academia (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005; McLaren & Jaramillo, 2007), but antimarket ideology does not motivate our critique. We see that pseudo-market ideologies and management practices are imposed on universities with the justification of the need to "rationalize" operations for efficiency and improved quality. However, our observations and much of the analytical literature, both on the left (Ehrenberg, 2006; Kirp, 2003; Newfield, 2008; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997) and among conservatives (MacMahon, 2009), show that what is claimed as rational economic management is not economically rational. Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie call this pseudo-economic management "marketizing"

higher education, by which they mean claiming economic rationality while actually imposing authoritarian command-and-control management systems on faculty, students, and staff members. The rational allocation of resources, efficiency, quality, and transparency are the supposed motives, but the results are authoritarianism, suppression of information, maladaptive behavior, lowering of quality and transparency, and the creation of scores of new administrative positions to run an unwieldy, inefficient system.

A powerful critique of this pseudo-economics of university management comes from a well-known conservative economist, William MacMahon, whose *Higher Learning, Greater Good* (2009) uses social capital theory to attack the neoliberal "new public management" of higher education. MacMahon shows that the neoliberal management models in higher education and higher education policy underestimate by at least half the value of the goods produced by higher education because half of these goods are "public goods" that accrue to individuals and society over longer periods. They are not simple academic commodities for sale at a given instant.

This argument is key because it shows that, by failing to count the public goods and failing to understand that universities are capable of producing vast stores of public goods, the current models of management by the numbers actually undermine the ability of higher education to produce public goods and drastically reduce their productivity and contribution to the economy and to positive social change. In effect, MacMahon (2009) argues that many higher education managers and policymakers actually have no idea of the breadth and complexity of the goods their institutions produce and thus make economically irrational decisions, undermining their institutions' ability to operate efficiently and effectively. A related argument has been made for conventional manufacturing businesses by H. Thomas Johnson and Robert S. Kaplan in *Relevance Lost* (1987).

Another way of framing this is to state that these managers *do not know what higher education is.* In the language of many, students are customers, faculty are employees, tuition is the payment of a fee-for-service, and research is a profit/loss effort to be analyzed according to cost-benefit criteria. While there are senses in which all this is true, such views miss a significant part of what goes on in higher education. The focus is on the vocational training, content transmission activities, and research profit/loss ratios that obtain, but these by themselves are not the defining characteristics of university teaching, research, and service. They do not constitute an acceptable definition of higher education.

University teaching and research efforts, while satisfying some preferences from the "customers," involve processes aimed at shaping and reshaping the preferences of students, colleagues, administrators, and external constituencies, that is, at *Bildung.* It is the way we link scientific approaches to the social functions of higher education (Prange, 2004).

No unified understanding of *Bildung* exists, but the concept is widely used. The central meanings focus on an ongoing process of formation, of enhancing the intellectual and ethical strengths of individuals and thus preparing them to play meaningful roles in democratic societies (Bruford, 1975). *Bildung* creates critical, well informed, and reflective intellectuals able to address societal problems with integrity. The effects of *Bildung* are precisely what MacMahon (2009) captures in accounting for the value of higher education. These are reasoned affirmations about values, definable processes with measurable outcomes.

Generations after the Manhattan Project and sending a man to the moon, we are still living off the public goods created in efforts that remade (for good and ill) our world (and the industrial economies) fundamentally. University research and education can do this, but proving it, as MacMahon (2009) points out, involves a longer temporal perspective and deeper analysis than the single-year balance sheet favored by university administrators and marketizing policymakers.

Promoting *Bildung* in university teaching, research, and service is demanding. It is much harder than having students read a number of classic texts (the approach favored in the Norwegian curricular debates and in the U.S. "great books" culture wars). It requires vision, an ability to take a long-term time perspective to achieve a greater gain or a greater good. It involves conceptualizing university teaching, research, and service as knowledge creation and transmission activities with outcomes that are both immediate and long-term and conceptualizing them in relationship to a concept of what education and knowledge are. To strengthen these processes requires the autonomy and support to permit students and faculty take up unpopular, divisive topics and to study complex, multisystem problems. It also requires flexible, open-minded administrators to allocate resources wisely in substantive terms rather than to paint by the numbers. In a word, it requires creative and reflective leadership.

This leadership is essential to the integrity of knowledge creation and transmission processes, but it is inhibited by the marketization of university teaching and research. In the case of social science research, inhibition means that social research is unlikely to occur if it involves examining controversial problems in their complex scope, in collaboration with important outsiders or over sustained periods of time without immediate results. The result has been the destruction of the classical *Bildung,* the conversion of education into vocational training, the disconnection of faculty teachers and researchers from the complexities of the real-world contexts, and the disconnection of most of the university from the ongoing core processes in democratic societies. These developments limit the academic freedom of both students and faculty to follow subjects wherever the teaching and research processes take them. Stated more briefly, the lack of collective reflective practice to address these challenges is a direct consequence of academic Taylorism. We argue for a new

Bildung that includes individual formation and also collective efforts and shared responsibility.

We are not backward-looking romantics about *Bildung*. This notion was used to found the Humboldtian university and to justify the creation of the U.S. research universities. It is historically connected to the current dreary scene we portray. The conventional understanding of *Bildung* pointed to the formation of the individual in the perspective of accessing classical virtues of philosophy, history, and literature. Through reading Greek and Roman texts in philosophy, studying history, and seeking the beauty in poetry, prose, and theater, *Bildung* would automatically emerge in the mind and body of the student. But as Prange (2004) argues, "The concept of *Bildung* is a latecomer in a long line of spiritual independence versus material circumstances [tearing sic.] us down to considerations of earthly well-being. Education is for now, *Bildung* is forever" (p. 506). The eternal perspective is matched with the earlier argument that *Bildung* links the scientific ideal to the social impact of higher education. Our own understanding of the social function of education relates to the role of the academically trained person. We see genuine humanism as the expected consequence of a broader understanding of forces and processes that have created our societies and cultures.

But we believe that more than this is needed. As a consequence of our being members of society, *Bildung* has to deal with integrity, equality, and democracy. These virtues can be taught about, but basically they should emerge as a by-product of participating in a learning community, the university. Through active engagement in discourses among students, between students and teachers, and with citizens at large, integrity, equality, and democracy can be nourished. So, *Bildung* cannot simply be taught in class; it emerges as an effect of having joined the university's larger learning community, a community that is open to society itself.

The Role of Action Research in Addressing Reform of Universities

We argue that there must now be a *New Bildung*, one that readdresses the meaning of university education and knowledge in the 21st century, not one that looks backward. We have indicated a few meanings of *Bildung* in an age of globalization, marketization, and increasing inequality. How, then, do universities contribute to addressing these problems? Part of our answer is that action research itself can be a significant source of the *New Bildung*.

We have addressed some major challenges for social science in universities: antisocial behavior by academics, the Tayloristic leadership and organizational models, the disconnection from society at large, and the evaporation of *Bildung* as a unique mission of universities. What, then, would the application of action research to academic organization and behavior look like, and how could this lead to a positive change that could regenerate vigorous universities for the 21st century?

Almost all universities are subject to pressure related to economic resources, whether they are private or publicly funded. Clearly no university on either side of the Atlantic will see the glory years of the last century again soon. Universities also now face the dilution of the public trust in university education and research as a major driver of economic prosperity and trustworthy knowledge generation. Universities can either adapt passively by further tweaking of the Tayloristic organizational structure to streamline themselves as marketplaces for knowledge commodities, or they can fundamentally reorganize through collective, participative engagement (professors, students, administrators, and support staff).

Fundamental reorganization is the only feasible way out of this economic and social crisis. It involves both a bottom-up process and a top-down process because we must create a common space for collective reflection where different points of view and sources of expertise and experience are confronted and where the reflections that emerge can lead directly to changes. This involves a balancing act between what changes are possible and what forces are counteracting change processes.

The change process we describe is relevant both for teaching and research. In fact, we would argue that the same type of knowledge generation process permeates both arenas. Reflection and experimentation would form the kind of continuous learning spiral central to action research (Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Heron 1996; Kolb 1984; Reason, 1994). This reform process has to be multidisciplinary, multiperspective, and transorganizational. It is clear that no single branch of social science is capable of encapsulating the reform process.

What we advocate is controversial, and we know from long experience that this perspective is not welcome in the conventional practices of the social sciences. Among the central problems that would arise are several ontological, epistemological, and methodological clashes right on the horizon. The ontological and epistemological fractures between modernism, realism, positivism, hermeneutics, structuralism, and so on have divided the social sciences for many years. Discussions of ontology and epistemology are ongoing, but they have had little impact on daily life among social scientists, where methodological approaches are a constant source of debate and academic commodity production. This dynamic is already well known and has been well discussed in the theory of science literature (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Skjervheim, 1974; Toulmin, 1990).

We prefer to concentrate on methodological clashes that would have to be dealt with in any process of linking the social sciences. Only when we engage in praxis in the social sciences do different perspectives productively confront each other, and we also know that any change activity in universities ultimately

involves changes in work life as it is lived daily. To engage the change process, we believe it is necessary to confront the conventional social sciences with the direct challenge of creating a new and different social science praxis.

Action research, well practiced, offers a way to accomplish this because it links all disciplines, the university, and its external stakeholders in a cogenerative social research process that tests theories and methods for validity in the form of concrete solutions to problems in real-world contexts. Action research also involves collaborative research teams in which new learners from within and outside the university are welcome and contribute their energy and experiences to the process. In this way, action research necessarily develops the democratization of knowledge generation, transmission, and application.

The action research process is based on making concrete organizational and behavioral changes, and these change processes are used as a systematic tool for learning. As such, action research forms a spiral of experimentation and reflection where all involved take part in the learning activities. This is a democratic and engaged activity giving a voice to everyone involved; it is what we have labeled cogenerative learning.

Obviously, this runs counter to the disciplinary, proprietary, commodity view of research and teaching. In recommending action research, we are insisting that the way forward is to reconfigure universities, particularly public universities, as central institutions in the further development of democracy through participative processes.

What would such a change activity look like at universities? Action research activity would have to address the antisocial behavior of academics that we have alluded to earlier, the Tayloristic organizational structure and leadership systems of universities, and universities' disconnectedness from society; finally, it would be oriented around a core *Bildung* process for all involved parties.

Where is there both energy and possibility for such a process? It is fairly clear where it is not. Attacking the bunkers of the professionalized disciplines and departments directly is a recipe for failure. Making demands on senior administrators and policymakers to give up their Taylorist, marketized addictions is routinely advocated and ignored. Insisting that universities serve society democratically at a time when the only service that counts is service to powerful economic and political players is not promising.

In this challenging environment, we are left with the recreation of the university as a center of *Bildung*. The one place where we think it might be possible to imagine reform through *Bildung* managed by action research is in teaching and research activities. For centuries, university teaching has meant learning that is a top-down, passive process, where the teacher knows what the students need to come to know. By contrast, in line with a long history in adult education and with the principles advocated by Dewey, we see learning as an active process in which the students are presented problems, raise questions, and are assisted in gaining the skills to seek answers for themselves. In this perspective, the teacher, who is also a learner, is a mentor and participant in the same learning process. We see the relationship between students and teachers as a genuine cogenerative process where each participant contributes her or his knowledge and insight as a collaborator in this joint learning activity.

But this kind of learning works only when the students and the teachers see the problems being dealt with as important. Thus, this kind of education can and should make solving practical problems its point of entry—for example, learning what it means to be "green" by working with multidisciplinary teams of inside and external stakeholders to clean up the local water supply, learning administrative skills by helping a local group set up a volunteer health clinic, and so on. Such projects, which work equally well at the beginning university level and the postgraduate level, connect universities to the outside society and necessarily include those who own the local problem in the same learning activity. Because the focus of learning is real problems that are too complex for single discipline approaches, such projects are necessarily multidisciplinary and multiperspective ones.

We are not advocating the impossible. The best way to prove that something is possible is to show that it has already been done somewhere. What we present here are two modest efforts to push the boundaries of what can be possible, even within the current *modus operandi* of universities.

Levin provides one example from a class in organizational development at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). When the class began, there was no clear problem focus. Instead, the students began by visiting a company and meeting with managers, trade union representatives, and workers. Students had the option of interviewing local people, or they could have access to videotaped interviews done by Levin that were later subjected to analysis. The next stage was for the students to interpret the situation and develop perspectives on a meaningful problem focus. In this phase, they met for the second time with the local company people. The students worked in groups of three to five members.

They created a plan for a developmental process in the company, which was presented in writing to the class, and they got feedback from Levin. This feedback shaped a dynamic that effectively simulates a real-life dynamic on organizational development processes. Finally, representatives from the company were invited to the presentation of the students' work, and the company people also participated in the grading process. The companies found this process useful in helping them think through organizational dilemmas, and it has been relatively easy to get companies to volunteer for it.

The *Bildung* elements are clear. Students are receiving formation by interacting with each other, with the professor, and with external stakeholders over real-world problems with real data

and real consequences. They work with real people and experience the social responsibility involved in interacting with other human beings. What the students do in their activity can have real impact on people in the company. The stakes are high, and the problems are complex enough to require collaboration among the members of the class and the acquisition of relevant knowledge and coaching from other parts of the university as well. The students, the faculty member, and the company partners all improve their skills, knowledge, and understanding and learn to share their thinking in a cogenerative environment in which all are stakeholders.

Greenwood offers another example, this one drawn from an English composition class he teaches to a group of 14 students who are in their first year at Cornell University and are about 18 years old. This is part of a Cornell system for teaching freshman writing through small intensive writing seminars on topics of interest to faculty members in many disciplines. Greenwood's course focuses on the anthropological study of universities as its topic and introduces students to action research in the process.

This particular edition of the course began conventionally with a short essay from each student on the process of application to universities and the experiences he or she had. In addition to the writing corrections and revision, the course dealt with developing an ability to study and conceptualize organizational processes such as applications and admissions, residential living, dining, physical organization, structure of requirements, and many other topics through combined ethnographic work by the students (some in teams) and readings.

Early in the course, the students (with widely varied intellectual interests, ethnic backgrounds, and social interests) read Paolo Freire's (1970) *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and then began making connections to their experiences of the passive, banking model of education. One visionary student said that if they really believed what Freire wrote, they should convert the seminar into a group project and take their education into their own hands. After brief negotiations about the process and requirements, they developed a project to eliminate contaminants in the water coming from and passing through the university campus.

The class, including Greenwood, worked out an overall plan, and they divided up into teams according to interest and skills; they spread out all over the campus, dealing with the central administration, the water plant, the city's water treatment system, the conservation biologists who had ways of cleaning the water by means of the use of plants, among others. The dynamic was intense and resulted in a submission to a national competition for green campus projects sponsored by General Electric and MTV. Thousands of e-mails were exchanged, and the collaborative website grew to hundreds of pages.

Their motivation, work, solidarity, and sophistication grew beyond Greenwood's expectations, and he ended up spending time trying to prevent them from ignoring their other courses while they worked for a month on this project. Greenwood is convinced that these students developed the kinds of capacities summarized by the *Bildung* ideal, did so happily and willingly, and received support and approval from people around the university.

Thus, it is possible to work in existing universities within the action research mode. We also know from experience that such learning arenas often become pivotal in the development of individual students, whose academic and life choices thereafter are strongly affected by these experiences.

In previous versions of this Handbook, we have shown how research also can be re-organized on university campuses. Rather than recapitulate these here, we refer you to those chapters (Greenwood & Levin, 2000, 2005). The lesson from the examples is that both teaching and research can be based on the principles of action research. As the professors who engaged in those efforts, we could be in a state of great optimism because we see a way to make a modest contribution to students' *Bildung*. However, we are not because our experiments have shown that it is possible to reconstruct teaching and research, but we have seen little or no diffusion to other classes or research arenas. Business as usual prevails.

■ Conclusion

Our arguments about teaching in this chapter, as well as our arguments in earlier editions of this Handbook about the epistemology and methodology of action research, indicate that this is a superior way to link teaching, research, and real-world engagement. If this is true, why does it not dominate the research universities of the world? Most action research activities take place outside the boundaries of higher education.

What we recommend requires academic social scientists to change their behavior radically—away from hyperprofessional internal debates, away from individualism and entrepreneurialism, and toward multidisciplinary research and action that takes them beyond the university. It requires the Tayloristic organization of the university to be, if not abandoned, transformed to permit easy collaborative work across internal institutional boundaries and across the boundaries between the university and society without a commodity production view of external linkages. And it would require a recommitment of universities to *Bildung* and democracy as core values. All of these changes seem quite unlikely.

Action research disconnected from universities, as some advocate, breaks the link to educating and forming new generations of social scientists. This permits universities to continue training people who lack the knowledge and skills to make the contributions we advocate to democratic society. And, if future researchers are not trained in action research at universities, they are not likely to develop this capability after

graduation. Equally important, the potential contribution of action research to the redevelopment of the social sciences is greatly hampered. Thus, we believe that universities as centers of *Bildung* cannot survive without reorganizing teaching and research along action research lines and that action research will not survive unless it develops a key position within *Bildung*-oriented higher education.

Is action research likely to achieve this key position any time soon? No. Still, we know that the fit between the problems we have identified and action research is real, and we know that it is possible because we have done it on an admittedly limited basis. We have seen the power of the results.

Perhaps the current crisis in higher education will create a propitious environment on a few campuses for the changes we advocate. If so, we have provided a map of one road toward a better future for both the university and democratic society.

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