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ABSTRACT
        In replying to a critic, the authors reassert an
understanding of theory as "a set of logically inter-related
propositions with potential for explaining and predicting events and
for producing new knowledge." Contrary to the authors' thinking in
the 1950s and 1960s, they now hold that the whole enterprise of
educational administration is so immersed in a value saturated matrix
that "ought" theory--theory based on philosophy and ethics--cannot be
ignored and that to deliberately separate it from "is" theory--theory
based on empirical inquiry--is to seriously misunderstand what
educational administration is all about. (Author/IRT)

Theory In The Real World
Of The Educational Administrator

by
A. R. Crane and W. G. Walker

We read Dan Griffiths' comments on IIP'74[1] with interest and some dismay. Obviously the message he received there was seriously at variance with that received by the participants from a number of countries who have discussed the programme with us. His observations and impressions coupled with his claim of "a high degree of international academic intrigue"[2] lead us to wonder just how closely he was in touch with what was going on around him. We, at least, were not conscious of being part of a C.I.A.-type cloak and dagger exercise! Several of his observations on IIP deserve close scrutiny and we shall return to them later in this paper.

Nature and Use of Theory

The main question raised in Griffiths' article concerns the nature and use of theory in educational administration, a theme which has dominated his writing for some two decades. In the past, we have both been deeply influenced by Griffiths and have much admired his scholarship in this field. In the light of his reputation, we were puzzled when in his article he used a quotation from Halpin to imply that we were members of a priesthood preoccupied with "theory for the sake of theory."[3]

His comments on Barr Greenfield's paper have been more than adequately answered by Greenfield himself:[4] we shall be concerned here with Griffiths' criticisms of our 1973 statement on "The Selection of Content for a Theory Based Perspective."[5]

We readily agree that throughout the history of Western civilization there has been a continuing argument about the nature and use of theory. Griffiths, in the first part of his paper, suggests that Herbert Feigl's definition of theory[6] which was "generally accepted 15 years ago" be reinstated and "that only

work which approximates this definition be acceptable as theoretical."[7] We would question just how widely Feigl's definition was accepted 15 years ago. For example, Joseph Schwab (1964) "impugned" Feigl and advised Griffiths that certain assumptions he was making about physical theory were "simply and egregiously mistaken."[8] Even earlier than that, in 1960 Campbell, Charters and Gregg had called into question the relevance of a Feigl-type approach to the development of educational administration as a field of study.

The scientists' theories give rise to predictions about tiny pieces of reality, taken out of the context of the multitude of on-going situations which the administrator knows. When the scientist tests his predictions, he limits his attention to these small slices of reality, ignoring the wealth of other processes occurring around him. He deals with them only far enough to satisfy himself that 'other things are equal.'

The administrator's world is quite the reverse. It is the complex, baffling world of the here and now. It is the unique concrete situation with its own history and tradition, and its own cast of idiosyncratic characters. Each piece of reality slides into the next piece, acting back on it to colour and reshape it. [9]

Social Control of Theory

Griffiths' recall to the good old days not only ignores these warnings but also avoids facing some very significant developments in the field, particularly since the publication of Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. [10] Greenfield, who cites the 1970 edition of Kuhn's work, (the book originally appeared in 1962, well before the 63rd NSSE yearbook edited by Griffiths) pinpoints Kuhn's argument that a scientific theory is essentially a statement of consensus amongst scientists - surely a long distance from the "purely logico-mathematical procedures' of Feigl. There is also the more recent and challenging contribution by Feyerabend [11] who argues that science progresses not by the hypothetico-deductive method but by the agency of courageous individuals who put forward what appear to their contemporaries as crazy ideas and tenaciously propagate them until they become accepted orthodoxy. From this point of view it was not Galileo but his opponents who were "rational". The real innovator suggests explanations that cannot be categorized under the accepted rubrics. Feyerabend therefore agrees with Kuhn (and obviously disagrees with Griffiths) when he argues that science rests on no firmer foundation that "a mythology protected by a self perpetuating priesthood."

The scientific iconoclasm of the Kuhn approach to theory was not lost on some of Griffiths' North American colleagues at IIP. Greenfield cited Kuhn in his paper where he pointed out: "Our theories are not just possible explanations of reality; they are sets of instructions for looking at reality." [12] He was joined by Gibson who referred to "Kuhn's concept of the disciplinary matrix which includes certain symbolic generalizations, certain beliefs, values and exemplars. It appears that the matrix is a broadly shared set of beliefs about the field and, as such, might be called an ideology of the field" [13] Although it is not included in the printed paper, we have vivid memories of Gibson's statement that "science progresses by the denial of common sense."

Theory Of Or Theory In Educational Administration

This non-dogmatic approach to theory and theory building provided the intellectual base of our chapter in *Social Science Content for Preparing Educational Leaders* [14] to which Griffiths makes special reference. [15] We are flattered that he read the chapter so carefully. In doing so, he would no doubt have detected the many typographical errors for which we accept no responsibility and which have caused us no little embarrassment (e.g. the diagonal line on the model p. 397 incorrectly drawn and cross-hatching omitted, "Oghburn" printed as "Osburn" on page 399, Table 3 on p. 404 incomplete).

He complains of "the weakness of our theoretical base and the soft thinking we use in discussing the subject." [16] It is clear that our perspective (and that of the editors of the book) as to what constitutes a sound theoretical base for the preparation of educational leaders is unacceptable to Griffiths, but we remain nonetheless convinced of its soundness. If Griffiths had read the other chapters as carefully as he read ours he would have known that our remit was to write about the selection of content for a theory-based perspective in terms of theories which apply to general and educational organizations and to administration. [17] To imply as he does that our theoretical base was weak and that our thinking was soft is tantamount to rejecting the whole purpose of the chapter.

Our experience of some 15 years of teaching and researching with more than 500 graduate students of educational administration leaves us in no doubt of the seminal value of constructs not necessarily derived from any theory of *educational* administration. We would hope that even the most naive graduate student would quickly grasp the distinction between theory *in* and theory *of* educational administration. To accuse us of including authors who have "never written anything theoretical about educational administration" [18] is to miss the whole point.

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(Continued from Page 2)

LOOSE THEORETICAL BASE?

Presumably the above misunderstanding also accounts for the statement that the authors have "loose standards as to what constitutes a theory appropriate to educational administration."[19] First let us look at this statement in general terms. We have presented a table of criteria for the selection of theories. Where else does such a table exist? Who else has produced any such model? Admittedly ours is adapted from Hilda Taba's[20] work on curriculum construction models, but hopefully such an attempt as ours is better than no attempt at all.

In referring to our criterion of "dependability" Griffiths criticises us for stating "a theory can be dependable without its having been rigorously tested in educational organizations."[21] Yet later in his article Griffiths himself writes: "And while a theory does not need to correspond to reality to be useful, when given two viewpoints of reality it is more heuristic to choose the one that does correspond more closely."[22] We interpret this statement to mean the same thing as is implied in ours when seen in its proper context. We go on to say "Some theories that have been tested in industry, in the civil service, hospitals and prisons have produced results that are highly suggestive of wider application."[23]

In our view all the authors listed in the table criticized by Griffiths provide theoretical insights of importance for the understanding of administrative behaviour in educational organizations. They are certainly just as important as von Bertalanffy and Emery and Trist who are cited by him. For example, Griffiths is clearly impressed by Emery and Trist's concept of "the causal texture of the environment"[24] as providing insight of value for the educational administrator. Why then does our mention of Marcuse leave him "talking to himself?" After all, Marcuse has been one of the writers whose theory of the dynamics of modern technological societies has greatly influenced "the causal texture of the environment" in educational organizations. If university and school administrators had listened to what Marcuse was saying in the early 1960's there would almost certainly have been less likelihood of their being caught unawares and unprepared when the established "causal texture" of education organizations underwent such violent and radical changes in the late 1960's and early 1970's. We thoroughly agree with Griffiths' statement that "we need other theories in which the field is a dominant factor." That is why in our table we included names like those of Marcuse, Fanon and Mao.

Contrary to Griffiths, it is our feeling that any program for the preparation of educational administrators *not* based on theory "would be a very thin one." It seems to us that Griffiths started his article using theory in Feigl's sense, but concluded it by using the word in the way we used it in our chapter and in which we continue to use it. In short, Griffiths begins by criticizing us but appears to end up by agreeing with us.

Our point of view was expressed by one of us in a
r delivered at OISE in 1971.[25] There, following

Willower,[26] it was argued that theory is "a set of logically inter-related propositions with potential for explaining and predicting events and for producing new knowledge." Further, attention was drawn to the answer given by Agnew and Pike to the question "Why bother with theory?" "The most important reason for bothering with theories is that we have no alternative."[27] Griffiths himself agreed with this stance when he claimed that the making of any decision involves some valuation, some attempt to fit a decision into a supporting conceptual framework and on the basis of observations and experiences, to evaluate future outcomes.[28] This claim suggests to us that Griffiths agrees with us that theory, whether of the "is" or "ought" variety, is inescapable.

It is our view that "the theory-based perspective refers to the conscious effort on the part of the administrator to predict and explain on the basis of a known, explicitly stated set of propositions."[29] We re-emphasize that our concept of theory includes not only that based on empirical inquiry - "is" theory - but also philosophy/ethics type - "ought" theory. As Meehan, a political scientist, has put it:

> Explanatory systems that seek to relate political phenomena cannot avoid reference to human values and the means chosen for their achievement. One may study amoeba for a lifetime and yet not feel called upon to criticize their way of behaviour.[30]

Contrary to our thinking in the 1950s and 1960s we have come to the point of view that the whole enterprise of educational administration is so immersed in a value saturated matrix that "ought" theory cannot be ignored, and that deliberately to separate it from "is" theory is not only unreal, but is seriously to misunderstand what educational administration is all about.

THE IIP 74

At the beginning of this paper we made passing reference to one of Griffiths' reactions to the IIP 74. We are frankly puzzled by the statement that "the conference climate was tuned to a high degree of international political intrigue."[31] As members of the Board of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration (CCEA) we received a great many comments from participants representing most countries. From no other source have we received a comment like that made by Griffiths. Since we are still completely in the dark as to what he meant, we can make no further comment.

Griffiths considers that many papers exhibited "supreme dullness." While "dullness" is often a characteristic of conference papers, we cannot agree that this was true of any significant proportion of the IIP contributions. In any case, interested persons can now make their own judgments by reading the recently published proceedings of the conference.[32]

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We certainly agree that Barr Greenfield's paper was one of the highlights of the program. However, it seemed to us that it was the *Americans,* notably Dan Griffiths himself, rather than those from other countries, who were provoked by the competent and confident manner with which Greenfield presented and argued his case for a phenomenological theory approach to the understanding of organizations. We readily agreed with Greenfield when he said that "any claim that a general science of organization and administration is at hand must be treated with healthy scepticism." [33] Griffiths claims that the expression of this scepticism provoked opposition particularly amongst Australians, and that this was "almost equalled by Canadians and those from developing Commonwealth countries.". This is quite the opposite of our perception. Certainly we cannot recall any such response. We did not know then and still do not know of any Australian scholar who would disagree with Greenfield's statement. Obviously, Griffiths gained his impressions from participants who did not share their views with us.

In the light of what we have written above we must firmly deny any knowledge of colleagues who believe that they "possess the truth." It certainly does not apply to us. In common with them we share Halpin's aphorism that "there is more than one gate to the Kingdom of Knowledge." [34] It is true that some of us, including the present authors, do constantly emphasize the crucial importance of theory in attempting to understand, explain and predict organizational behaviour. As must now be abundantly clear, we make no apology for this: in common with Griffiths we are "not ashamed of having opinions." If holding the viewpoint that theory, as we have described it above, is imminent in all administrative behaviour can be described as "defying theory" then we plead guilty. We are not, however, preoccupied with "theory for the sake of theory," nor do we see our approach as "a form of intellectual masturbation." On the contrary, as we point out in the chapter referred to, we are concerned with the *fertility of theory!*

We are once more puzzled by Griffiths' reference to a "threatened priesthood." We know of no claims or assumption of priesthood amongst the Australians, Canadians or those from other Commonwealth countries, and we know of no one from these countries who felt threatened in the slightest by Greenfield's presentation.

W. G. Walker, one of the authors of this paper, was the President of the CCEA referred to by Griffiths. He has closely re-read the original text of his paper and can see no evidence of any "priesthood" stance. It is highly likely that in his preliminary informal remarks he referred to the very wide range of professional and academic expertise represented in the cosmopolitan membership of CCEA. (The only qualification for membership is "An interest in educational administration at any level.") Some of the Americans present at IIP 74 tended at times to assume that the CCEA is an elite organization like UCEA. Nothing could be further from the truth. While a small proportion of CCEA members is drawn from universities, the overwhelming

majority are practitioners who have no, or very little, contact with the formal academic study of educational administration. While it is recognized that CCEA members with university experience and from more developed countries were over-represented at IIP 74, it would hardly have been appropriate for the President of the heterogeneous CCEA as a whole to present a paper such as might be read to the more homogeneous and sophisticated UCEA membership. For this reason, the paper was definitely *not* prepared for a "scholarly" audience.

We can think of no better way of ending this paper than by quoting from the noted British geographer, David Harvey:

> Without theory we cannot hope for controlled, consistent and rational explanation of events. Without theory we can scarcely claim to know our own identity. It seems to me therefore that theory construction on a broad and imaginative scale must be our first priority in the coming decade. Perhaps the slogan we should pin up upon our study walls for the 1970's ought to read: "By our theories you shall know us. [35]

That is precisely what we have done and what we intend to go on doing.   □

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