

## **FANTASIES OF TRUTH AND CHANGE: APPLYING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH TO 'IMPROVE' EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstrak**      *Artikal ini memberi kesedaran kepada pembaca tiada siapa yang dapat menukar keadaan sosial, menolak paradikma yang sedia atau menentukan sesuatu revolusi yang akan datang kerana semua ini dikawal oleh suatu kuasa yang berpunca daripada mekanisma politik dan undang-undang global dan tempatan. Penguasa sering mengawal peruntuhkan sumber, mentafsir perlakuan adab dan menetapkan peraturan bagi mentadbir ganjaran dan kebenaran mengukut keperluan penguasa. Penguasa akan melaksanakan kehendak mereka walaupun mendapat tentangan daripada ahli masyarakat. Jelas di sisni penentuan perubahan sosial ditentukan melalui kebolehan kuasa pusat mengawal rakyat supaya patuh kepada perubahan sosial yang ditentukan oleh pemerintah. Penyelidikan gunaan tidak boleh terkecuali daripada hakikat ini kerana peruntukkan kewangan untuk menjalankan penyelidikan ditentukan oleh pemerintah yang mengawal perjalanan peruntukkan kewangan supaya sejajar dengan keperluan, kehendak dan potensi kreatif pemerintah. Kesannya tiada siapa yang mampu mencetus dan menukar keadaan sosial dalam keadaan sebegini. Kelangsungan begini harus diubah. Dialog perlu diadakan kerana sesuatu projek kreatif memerlukan kerjasama dan penglibatan daripada semua pihak. Melalui dialog dua hala ini dapat mempertemukan keperluan, kehendak dan peluang bagi menguntungkan masyarakat dan negara. Hasil penyelidikan dapat menyumbang ke arah pemupukan kasih sayang dan penyataan realiti keadaan kemasyarakatan dan peluang-peluang mengadakan pembaharuan sosial bagi menjamin kelangsungan kesejahteraan rakyat.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

As applied researchers, we desperately want to do something to change things, hopefully to improve the quality of people's lives. To do this we draw upon our preferred methodologies, grounding our projects in the 'realities' of practice. The great dream is that through the exercise of critical reason we can take control over our lives and the material world about. However, the twentieth century has seen the testing of reformist dreams to destruction and an increasing loss of faith in science to deliver on the Dream of Progress and the Technological Utopia. After a century of great scientific progress, what has been the impact on health, liberty, peace, wisdom - and dare I say it? - happiness?

The evidence of a massive failure of applied research to address the realities of life for people is everywhere in the poverty, wars, exploitation and environmental pollution that are so taken for granted. At what level has it failed? Is it at the level of scientific method, theory and understanding? If it is, then many will argue that all we need to do is rid science of its imperfections. Or is it because science actually cannot deliver now and can never deliver because it is limited in its scope? If this is so, then science has to be supplemented or subordinated to other ways of organising our actions and relationships in the world. The task is to do this without falling into other fantasies that also wreck our world. Of course, as

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this paper was first presented at the Methodology conference held at the University of East Anglia, July 1999.

soon as I use the word 'world', it seems to imply a unity, a kind of order, a sort of objective entity that forms the undisputed ground for all our discussions about truth and the possibilities for bringing about change.

Much of the problem, I think, has to do with various fantasies about truth and change that have been at the foundation of modern science and politics. The fundamental fantasy is that of Objectivity in all its many rhetorical uses whether in Science, Politics or Religion. This in turn gives rise to such as these:

- The fantasy of Reality
- The fantasy of Reason
- The fantasy of measurement, coverage and totality
- The fantasy of control
- The fantasy of witnessing

This list is not exhaustive, nor is it meant to be. I'm not going to take each in turn but rather allow them to unwind like fibre in a rope until nothing is left but the debris blown by the wind.

Is this too cynical? Why do I call them fantasies? I do so in terms of my own loose readings of Lacan's readings of Freud when he uses the term: to refer to the necessary structure desired by the subject that makes it seem whole, that is, that fills a gap, that plugs a void in the life of the individual or group. This structure is composed of the subject and the object that does the job of filling up the void and so creating a sense of fulfilment of desire. However, the object that does the job of fulfilling desire can never be sufficient, because it is always a substitute for the 'real thing', the real thing is always missing, it is the hunger that can never be assuaged. Hunting the 'Real Thing', the 'Truth' and the Text that is to represent the Truth and the Real for the methodologist has all the elements of the structure of fantasy. And what of the applied methodologist? What is sought is the Reason or Rationale that will bring about all the desired changes.

But, as always it is important to ask: whose Reason is it that will or should prevail? Reason, it is implied, is neutral, or indifferent to the subjective concerns of individuals, it deals only in what is True, Real, Good. "Be reasonable," exclaim all those parental figures, those carers, those experts in other people's lives, "we're doing it in your best interests! You should thank us." And the methodologists, the applied researcher, meekly murmurs "yes, through critical reflection, through the application of rigorous methodologies, I can indeed assure you that the chosen course of action is indeed rational and will lead to The Good Life, or at least a Better One." At these points in time I hold Chomsky's words in mind "The intellectual tradition is one of servility to power, and if I didn't betray it I'd be ashamed of myself."<sup>2</sup> Research can too often be used to plug the gap between social justice and the vested interests of the powerful, making it appear as if the interests of the powerful are Rational, Just, Objective.

### **THE FANTASY OF OBJECTIVITY**

Science has at its heart, the Fantasy of Objectivity. Take what should be an example far removed from the austere realm of science. It is a story told by Levi-Strauss of a young boy

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<sup>2</sup> From an interview with John Pilger on The Late Show (BBC2, 25 November 1992)



who belonged to a tribe called the Zuni in New Mexico who was accused of witchcraft because after he had grasped the hands of a young girl she became ill. At first he denied having such powers but because the crime was punishable by death and his accusers did not believe him he changed his tactics. He claimed to have been initiated into sorcery. He was asked for proof and failed to provide the proof. He made up another story of his initiation into sorcery. Again he was asked for proof. His story involved hiding some magical feathers in the walls of his house. His judges forced him to show them these secreted feathers:

After breaking down a section of the walls and carefully examining the plaster, he tried to excuse himself by declaring that the plumes had been hidden two years before and that he could not remember their exact location. Forced to search again, he tried another wall, and after another hour's work, an old plume appeared in the plaster. He grabbed it eagerly and presented it to his persecutors as the magic device of which he had spoken. He was then made to explain the details of its use. Finally, dragged into the public plaza, he had to repeat his entire story (to which he added a wealth of new detail). He finished it with a pathetic speech in which he lamented the loss of his supernatural power. Thus reassured, his listeners agreed to free him.

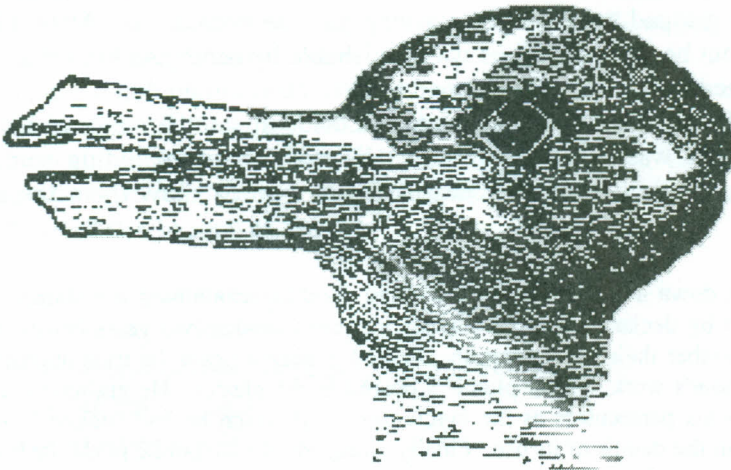
(Levi-Strauss, 1963: 173)

This is an account of the Objective world as defined by sorcery. Far from having no resemblance to the accounts provided by science about the objective nature of the world this story has within it all the elements required by Science. It suggests that to be objective, an account or explanation must a) provide a practical account of how the world works, that is provide a theory b) that this practical account must be tested publicly, that is, it must have publicly testable procedures that can be followed by anyone c) that it must be supported by evidence d) that this evidence must be acceptable to those in power and e) that the evidence must fit with the prevailing views of how the world works. The final element to notice is the narrative itself that provides the rhetorical structure for the presentation of evidence as 'knowledge' by triangulating the different perspectives that create the sense of objectivity and generalisability. This narrative works in the way that Kuhn (1970) and later Feyerabend (1975) described in writing about scientific revolutions.

Examining the record of past research from the vantage of contemporary historiography, the historian of science may be tempted to exclaim that when paradigms change, the world itself changes with them. Led by a new paradigm, scientists adopt new instruments and look in new places. Even more important, during revolutions scientists see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have looked before. It is rather as if the professional community had been suddenly transported to another planet where familiar objects are seen in a different light and are joined by unfamiliar one's as well.

(Kuhn 1970: 111)

What then is objectivity if not a shared fantasy about how the world works? Kuhn describes the different ways of seeing before and after a scientific revolution in terms of the familiar duck-rabbit gestalt: Seeing the world as being duck-like is one paradigm, seeing as rabbit-like is the alternative paradigm. Why does one paradigm, or way of seeing the world win? Because the adherents of the old way of seeing eventually die, leaving the way clear for the younger followers of the new way of seeing to become the new establishment.



The revealed is then transmitted by those authorised by the new Establishment to be the true keepers of the Real Account and protectors of the Real Thing. Whether these are Gurus, Priests, Teachers or Experts of various kinds is a matter of indifference. There is no access to the revealed truth and hence the Real, except through those who guard the Knowledge or at least hold the Patents and the Copyrights! Those who guard see it as their duty to control the interpretation of the signs and symbols through which the Truth is revealed. All is to be doubted except the source of the revelation. Everywhere there is a lack of objectivity, *that* must be rooted out and replaced by the objective. In every sense of the term, this is a political process.

### **CONSTRUCTING THE WORLD ORDER**

You know when people are as mad as hell, it's when they start wanting to construct new World Orders and have a rational plan by which to bring it about. In this section I want to draw on a paper I gave some years back that described the case of Judge Schreber (Schostak 1996). He wrote a book because he considered he had a great educational gift to bestow upon the scientific community and thence to the world at large. It was a knowledge of the entire World Order, by which he meant:

the natural bond which holds God and mankind together; wherever the Order of the World is broken, power alone counts, and the right of the stronger is decisive. (p. 78)

But before I say anything further about Judge Schreber, I have to tell you something about his father. Schreber's father was a renowned educationist who wrote books on how to bring up children that influenced the school systems of many nations. He was a stickler for detail prescribing how the babes were to lie when asleep, the times they were to eat, the directions their eyes should point, the posture of their bodies when sat. He had instruments to ensure their bodies, the heads, their eyes were correctly positioned (Schatzman 1971). Later the son would write of the effects of these instruments and of his father's surveillance techniques as miracles employed to rob him of his reason, to 'unman' him, and in his phrase to commit soul murder (Schreber 1955:78).



One of the key strategies involved in soul murder is the 'writing down system' It is so obstinately held that I have become stupid to such a degree that day after day one doubts whether I still recognize people around me, whether I still understand ordinary natural phenomena, or articles of daily use or objects of art, indeed even whether I still know *who I am or have been*. The phrase "has been recorded" with which I was examined, follows when my gaze has been directed towards certain things and I have seen them; they are then registered on my nerves with this phrase. For example, when I saw the doctor my nerves immediately resounded with "has been recorded", or, "a joint of pork - has been recorded" and especially the phrase "Senatspräsident - has been recorded", etc. All this goes on in endless repetition day after day, hour after hour. *Incredible scriptu* I would like to add, and yet everything is really true, however difficult it must be for other people to reconcile themselves to the idea that God is totally incapable of judging a living human being correctly; even I myself became accustomed to this idea only gradually after innumerable observations.

(Schreber 1955:78).

What peace is there in a world of total surveillance? Now replace God by say a Hegelian Absolute Reason, or a Kantian a priori Principle that should guide action, or indeed, the Invisible Hand of market economics that supposedly ensures the proper interaction of supply and demand to allocate scarce resources to people's needs, interests and potentials.

Judge Schreber was both an intelligent and highly educated individual and drew upon his knowledge of scientific procedure to study the world as he experienced it. He adopted the position of the critically reflective observer exactly as in Benhabib's analysis of market economics:

The logic of a modern market economy is only intelligible to an observer-thinker who, behind the often unintelligible transactions of individuals, discovers the economic laws that result from their activities. This functionalist perspective on social life, which Durkheim identifies with the sociological perspective per se, is required by the reality of modern market economies: individuals' activities, unknown to them and often unwilling by them, result in law-like regularities, which are intelligible to an observer-thinker...

(Benhabib 1986:31)

Schreber analysed the behaviours of those in the world about him and generated theories to explain the law-like regularities that he observed. The question to be aired is, who is mad? Judge Schreber who finally ended his days in a lunatic asylum, or his father who was everywhere praised for his educational writings, or the forms of scientific rationality that gave rise to the methods that justified these practices?

## ONTO THE COUCH

Why on the couch? Because when making inquiries into people's lives, or carrying out research that will ultimately affect people's lives, we are inevitably dealing with the fundamental values, vested interests and desires that motivate individuals. Let me very briefly take just two aspects that seem to me to be central to discussions concerning methodology and the legitimacy of what is done: the issue of control and the issue of censorship.

The obsession to control is methodologically realised in experimental procedures. Schreber's schooling was totally organised by his father rather like Skinner's (1976) behaviourally engineered utopia in his book *Walden II*. In both cases the minutiae of an individual's behaviour is subject to scrutiny in order to construct schedules through which that behaviour can be manipulated to produce Rationally desired outcomes. This kind of attention to detail can be seen in the seemingly endless lists of skills, sub-skills and competences that nurses and other professionals have to achieve (Bedford et al 1996). It can be seen in the audit trails, the quality assessments, league tables and so on that plague professional working lives.

In order to achieve increasing levels of control, behaviour and procedures have to be systematically standardised, purified rather like the chemist purifies elements to create products such as sulphuric acid in order to eliminate the variables that would make experiments go wrong. Unfortunately, although, one cannot purify human beings so easily, the *desire* for purity has wrought many evils in the world culminating in programmes of ethnic cleansing. When reason and methodological principles reduce the range of debate, that which cannot be measured or seen are thus silenced, excluded, in effect, censored from scientific discourse. All this can be done in the name of wanting to be accurate, not wanting to be misinterpreted. There is a great academic obsession with accuracy and with the control of interpretations: how often do we read at the top of a working paper, 'this paper is not to be quoted'. There are of course important reasons for this. However, it does beg the question of whether there is, or can be, a single accurate reading, or indeed, a definitive final version of a text that fully or at least adequately encapsulates the Meaning of what one desires to say.

The rationally objective is the world stripped of whims, desires, beliefs, feelings, fuzziness, uncertainty. Its fantasy is for a world of total clarity, of pure light. It is the fantasy of living without fantasy, a world where all is open to rational operations, manipulations, calculations. That which cannot be covered entirely by Reason does not exist. So what's the alternative?

## **DIALOGUE AND CRITICAL REALISM**

In my view, methodology can never take the place of dialogue about human values. Take for example the question: What are the structures and processes that create the world conditions of desperation and violence when science seems to have created so much wealth? In short, how can it be that the world produces so much and distributes so little? These questions can only be unpacked by exploring further questions about philosophies, and the social and material structures and processes that enact them. Key to this process is the quality of witnessing, listening and representing (Schostak 1999). All witnessing reveals and hides more than can be said and understood. If this is so, then we need to construct dialogue that tentatively explores from many different perspectives, that includes rather than excludes. In a book a few years back (Schostak 1993), I wrote about the forbidden discourse that is essential to ensuring that communication is not what it seems. I described it in terms of that which can be said, that which cannot be said and the tension between the two that opens up ironic spaces, or perhaps better, catastrophic spaces (Schostak 2001). These are the spaces where both creativity and destruction are equally likely, and most likely, both at the same time. It seems to me that the kinds of methodology that now need to be created are neither reductive nor eclectic but which through dialogue explore the spaces opened up by bringing back into view the forbidden, the repressed, the silenced. Such



dialogue is at once subversive and creative and can provide a basis for exploring action (Schostak 1999b).

It could be said that what is being argued for here is a post disciplinary methodology that does not look to control but to stimulate the conditions under which courses of action can be identified and debated. Such a course cannot rob the individual of responsibility nor displace responsibility upon some Absolute Being or some abstract force such as market processes. Is there then a candidate for a methodology that is appropriate to applied research that does not lead to the dangers and the kinds of fantasies I have described?

The advocates of critical realism (Bhaskar 1975, Sayer 1993, Baskar 1979, Collier 1994, Archer et al 1998) would claim, in varying degrees, that such an approach does exist. It seems to be consistent with a dialogical approach to the development of theories and practices. What is being claimed is that research practice in the natural sciences (chemistry, physics and so on) is historically and thus socially constructed. However, whether or not people have ever formulated a theory of gravity, or indeed, if there were to be a catastrophe that wiped out all human life on Earth, the laws of gravity would continue to operate. That is to say, there is a reality that is independent of human thought about it and human action upon it. Rather than limiting their search to discrete events as does an empiricist in order to find patterns, the critical realist searches for the powers, tendencies, liabilities that *must* really exist if those patterns are to take place, thus asking the question: what must the world be like for these effects always to take place. An illustrative example often used is that of gun powder. What is known is that gunpowder *must* explode if a circumstance arises that creates a spark. If in those circumstances the powder does not explode then it is not gunpowder but something else. What is not known is whether the circumstances will ever arise for a given package of gunpowder that will set it off. Hence there are two sides to the process: 1) the description of the real powers of gunpowder that exist whether or not circumstances arise for them to be manifested in an explosion; and 2) the social practices required to make and to formulate descriptions of and eventually theories about the laws and structures necessary for gunpowder to act in the way it does under a range of circumstances.

Social science has for its objects of study not the natural entities in the sense of gunpowder but human beings and their social practices. Where natural entities are outside of the social practices that study them, the processes employed to study social practices are of course social practices. That is to say, the social practices being studied by a researcher are not independent of the researcher's own practices. This means that the researcher must enter into dialogue with those involved in the social practices being studied if accounts are to be made of them that are not biased by the researcher's own interests, interpretations and actions.

What is being studied are the structures, the 'gaps' between structures, the processes of assertion and denial of forms of experience, the patterns of interaction and interpretation brought into social existence by the powers and the liabilities inherent in being an individual in relation with others. All this is in the context or circumstances of the real structures, processes and objects of the world that are available for the exercise of human powers upon them. In short, applied social research cannot be reduced to the methodologies of the natural sciences that deal with objects that are outside of the ways humans produce knowledge and respond to knowledge. Gunpowder does not say, I know that when a spark is applied I explode but this time I've decided not to. This is not within the power of



gunpowder, but it is within the power of people in the domains of social action. People can conceal their intentions, their beliefs. They can deceive or go against 'their best interests', or the 'best interests' of others. Social research is intimately connected to the subjects and processes it claims to study and act upon. In that sense, all social research is applied even if it claims not to be because it affects the objects of its research by influencing the ways in which people see themselves, explain their conduct and act in the world due to the understandings gained through critical reflection on social realities. This of course does not mean that social researchers can ignore or dismiss the practices and procedures of natural science as being irrelevant. Rather, social research applies those procedures only when relevant to realities being described. People deal with the natural world and thus it is important to employ the knowledges and procedures appropriate. However, social research must *in addition* identify, develop and employ those methodologies that are appropriate to social processes and symbolic realities in the context of the real structures of the world that become the stage, the props, the settings for social interactions. Central to such a methodology is dialogue.

Dialogue directs individuals towards others and Otherness in ways that do not reduce others and Otherness to a single framework for knowing, acting, valuing, experiencing. If there were only one way of seeing the social world and only one social world to see, then there would no longer be a need for dialogue, only monologue. However, there are many ways, styles, cultural practices through which worlds may be created for the enjoyment, well being and creative development of its members. Also, there are many ways of exploiting, reducing and damaging the well being and creative development of others leading to misery, poverty, crippled lives and early death.

Dialogue and critical realism offer a philosophically credible rationale for doing research in social contexts. As is to be expected they build upon, assess and transform methods already in existence for doing research. Data will be collected through interviews, observations, the analysis of artifacts and documentation. It will be recorded using all the means currently available. However, the criteria for an applied methodology appropriate to dialogue and critical realism is likely to include:

- A focus on the range of interpretations provided by people to account for their experiences, behaviour and world views
- Dialogic structures between the researcher and the researched
- Developing understandings and explanations that account for the dialogically educed differences identified through the research but do not necessarily reduce them to commonalities, consensus
- Develop models and explanations of the relationship between the real and symbolic structures of the natural and social dimensions of people's worlds.
- Explore change and development through placing differences into dialogue in order to draw out implications for human development and creativity.
- Explore the political and ethical implications of alternative world views
- Explore the ethical and political implications of the development of dialogue between alternative world views
- Engage with others in research informed decision making and action



Such a methodology no longer sets the researcher, the research and the researched apart. It takes seriously the development of knowledge as a social enterprise that spans local and global interests in order to inform action. What now are the implications for education?

### **'IMPROVING' EDUCATION**

An educational environment is organised to enhance the development of people's powers in a creative play of possibilities to transform self and world. This contrasts with the object of schooling which is to canalise people's powers to meet the aims, the values, the desires, the needs, the interests of those who have power over them. I make this contrast deliberately in order to distinguish the two processes that are typically confused in the everyday uses of the term 'education'. They define opposed stances that can be adopted towards others, their worlds and the world of nature. Education requires being open and directed towards the other, reviewing the environment for its possibilities to enhance the agency, the creative powers of individuals. Schooling requires being directed towards the other according to a framework of aims and objectives in order to control and direct their agency and creative powers to ensure that these aims and objectives are met. In education the individual is an active subject in their own and the world's transformation; in schooling individuals become objects open to manipulation for ends not of their making. These distinct processes are in tension in any act of teaching and learning and hence in any society where the system of education aspires both to transmit the knowledge and culture of that society and reproduce its social forms as well as seeking the 'progress', 'change', and 'development' that comes from the creativity of its members.

The teacher, like others, is an agent subject to the powers of the system through which resources are allocated and policies enacted. This agency of the teacher is exercised thus in the context of the tension between the processes of 'social reproduction', 'social change', 'schooling' and 'education'. Without the emergence of dialogue the tensions will, for those whose needs are not met, reduce to a variety of forms of conflict, disaffection and rejection. Managing this emergence of dialogue can be achieved through research processes that meet the criteria for dialogue and critical realism outlined above.

Applied research for educational action can map out the relationships between individual need, the social and natural environments, and the possibilities for the exercise and development of human powers and creativity. In schematic terms it seems to me that education, as I define it, is the process of being directed towards otherness in order to draw out possibilities for engaging the self with other. At this level there is the play of possibility that enables imaginative ways of knowing and courses of action to be entertained. Of course, these have to be explored and tested out – which of these possibilities are 'real', that is, describe the nature of reality (c.f. Bhaskar 1975, 1979), or are 'actualisable' through artistic creation, which are 'desirable', are 'pleasant', are useful? And so on. Philosophically, then, there are two kinds of direction to explore: the epistemic, that is, what do I know to be true, real, useful, valid? And, the ethical/political: how should I treat others, how should they treat me? From these explorations knowledge and belief systems are constructed that can be 'tested' in practice in order to produce knowledge bases and also frameworks for developing beliefs and values whether spiritual or material. In turn these may become formalised in terms of discipline and profession based bodies of knowledge, and organised or institutionalised religions or codes of moral conduct. Finally, official curricula may be developed in order to 'transmit' the legitimated and the accepted bodies of



knowledge, belief and conduct that can be taught in schools, colleges and universities. There is thus a progressive transformation from open possibility to the reification of content in the form of official or legitimated curricula. Very roughly this can be modelled as:

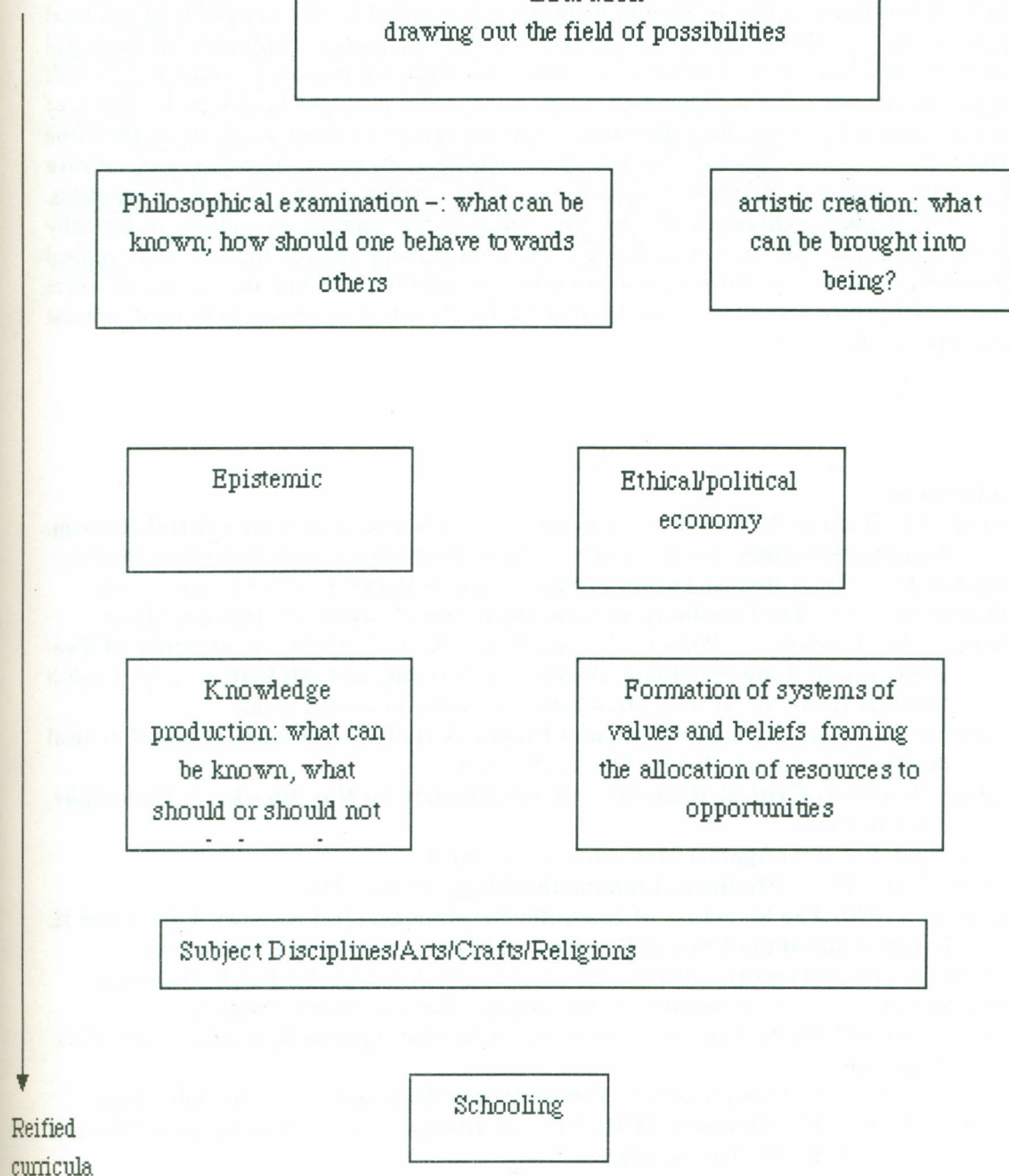
This stratified structure crudely represents an elaboration of the powers of individuals to create their worlds through philosophical, scientific, artistic and cultural action. The connections between the strata can be drawn in different ways to describe the ways in which one strata, say schooling, may be made to prevail over others for political or other purposes. At the level of the school, the question of how to bring about improvements is reduced to concerns about performance on standardised tests. It has, for example, nothing to do with the creative development of alternative ways of knowing or cultural expression. This may be deemed more appropriate for creative artists, philosophers and scientists who have earned the right to do this by succeeding in the schooling and university systems. However, if the question is rather, how to improve the creative powers of individuals in the generation of social, cultural, scientific change then what happens in schools and universities would be subject to a different kind of critique. Rather than performance on standardised tests or formal examinations, the focus moves towards real processes and products, that is, the impact on lives, communities, organisations and so on.

The question now concerns how to engage individuals in the study and creative development of their worlds rather than performance in the traditional forms of examination in schools and universities. There are no recipes for doing this. However possible criteria for 'improving' the education of individuals include:

- Identifying the interests of individuals in the context of the circumstances of their lives.
- Engaging in an imaginative play of possibility as a way of challenging or freeing up the constraints imposed by circumstances. Through imaginative play the surprising, the anomalous, the novel are entertained and become the motivational seeds for projects.
- Formulating an individual's *educational project*. This involves identifying, exploring and developing the knowledge, and skill needs of individuals appropriate to pursue *their* interests in relationship to *their* circumstances and *their* imaginative play of ideas. This is about enhancing and reinforcing the individual's felt sense of agency, autonomy and creativity.
- Identifying what circumstances need to be changed if the creative powers of individuals are to be developed and their educational projects realised
- Formulating curricular courses of action to inform and develop the powers of individuals to bring change. This would involve epistemic and ethical/political dimensions. A project of whatever kind is always directed towards others and their symbolic/cultural worlds as well as the material or natural world. Thus, the question of the relation between the individual, their project and others and their projects arises. The ethical questions of how individuals should relate to each other arise; as well as the political economic questions of how resources should be allocated to meet needs, interests and opportunities. For these questions to be creatively, justly and appropriately resolved requires dialogue where alternatives are explored, accommodations examined and courses of action identified.



Open possibilities



The practical accomplishment of such criteria as these – whether in schools, universities or the various communities, institutions and places of work and play of everyday life – demands attention to the realities of people's lives, their actual circumstances as a basis for development towards the progressive realisation of their projects. Dialogic forms of applied research thus become critical in the fulfilment of educational projects (Schostak 2001).

## **WITHOUT CONCLUSION**

No single person can create the dialogue that will result in social change, paradigm shifts or the next 'revolution'. This is because there are at global and local levels political and legal mechanisms that allocate resources, prescribe codes of conduct, administer rewards and sanctions and have at their disposal the necessary coercive powers to enforce their will despite opposition. In the Hobbesian sense, social order is attained through the ability of central powers to terrify the population. Applied research cannot step outside the arena where power is constructed and resources allocated to needs, interests and creative potentials. And no individual is sufficient to bring about a change in such an apparatus. However, it takes individuals to open the dialogues that engage individuals in mutually creative projects. Through such dialogic curricula perhaps we can think how as applied researchers and as educators we can contribute to creative communities of action where care, social justice and wisdom are essential to the allocation of resources to need, interest and opportunity?

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