

THE PURSUIT OF VISIONS AND IDEAS

THOMAS BARR GREENFIELD - BUILDING AN IDEOGRAPHY

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DECLARATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, any help received in preparing this thesis and all the sources used, have been acknowledged.

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Signature

ABSTRACT

This is an interpretivist study. It tells a story and tries to understand the events of such from the perspective of characters in the story. The main character is Thomas Greenfield, educator, theorist and critic. The background of the story is the world of educational administration with its logical positivist ways of knowing and its science-based methods of inquiry. In 1974 Greenfield shattered the prevailing orthodoxy and presented an alternative view of organisations and administration and spent the next eighteen years defending and developing his subjectivist theory of organisation. This theory taught that organisations are "invented social reality" and are built upon "a moral order" (1975c). By and large, Greenfield felt that his work was either pilloried or ignored, most particularly in the USA, and that what he had to say went unheeded. Other scholars differed in their perception of events.

In order to see the Greenfield story holistically, the study blended biography and ideography and reflected upon the relationship between experience and ideas as it sought an explanation of Greenfield's notoriety and fame.

The context for the study was the historical and cultural understanding of educational administration as it emanated from the USA, the birthplace of the discipline.

The inextricable connection of Greenfield with his environment meant that as the study discussed significant issues in Greenfield's academic life, it made several discoveries about the nature of the field. The effect of cultural differences on the reception or rejection of ideas, particularly unorthodox ideas, was highlighted; the role of the journals in maintaining orthodoxy and quelling critique and the encouragement and quality of intellectual discussion and debate were raised. The study shows that the academic field of educational administration is now beset by conceptual pluralism in which multiple paradigms flourish and in which positivistic science is still widely accepted. Eclecticism has led to fragmentation and, in some cases, to a loss of identity as departments of educational administration have become subsumed in larger social sciences departments. Greenfield's IIP74 paper would hardly raise a ripple today! The hope for the field rests with those who, like Greenfield, are prepared to ask the fundamental questions and follow where their arguments lead even if this means challenging "the sanctity of conventional wisdom" (Hodgkinson in Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993:xiii).

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NOTES ON THE TEXT:

1. Occasionally, in some of the quotations used in this study, the reader will encounter non-inclusive language. The words are reported in the way the original document used them. No apology is made for this. In the words of Thomas Greenfield:

This text is written in old-style, inclusive language. The "he" is intended to mean "he or she", but if you doubt that intention, write your pronouns over mine. (Greenfield, 1987:10).

2. In this study the titles of all articles, papers and presentations are printed in italics in order to distinguish them within the text. The author is aware that this is contrary to the usual referencing conventions. The bibliography follows the usually accepted conventions.