

# PROSPECTS

quarterly review of  
comparative education

ISSUE NUMBER ONE HUNDRED AND ELEVEN

## OPEN FILE

### EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

GUEST EDITORS:  
SOLEDAD PÉREZ AND  
PIERRE R. DASEN



INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION

Vol. XXIX, no. 3, September 1999

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INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION  
**PROSPECTS**  
quarterly review of comparative education

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# EDITORIAL

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In December 1998 we sent a questionnaire to all readers of *Prospects*. You were invited to let us know what you like or dislike about the journal. Your replies have now been analysed and we wish to share with you some of the survey's results.

In the first place, we would like to thank the 215 readers from 51 countries who took the time to reply; this figure includes 131 representatives of libraries (university libraries in particular proved to be our most active counterparts) and 84 individuals (mainly faculty members and researchers). We are especially grateful to those 102 respondents who sent us their comments and concrete proposals relating to the content and further improvement of the journal.

The survey showed that our proposals to produce a cumulative index covering all issues of *Prospects* since the 1970s and to make the entire text of the journal since the 1970s available on the Internet are widely supported. It is hoped to include proposals on this matter in our future programmes. The same applies to the question of production of a CD-ROM edition of the journal and of the full-text presentation of each issue on the Internet. As you know, at the moment only tables of contents and the introductory articles to the 'Open files' are available on our web site, but we are currently working on a complete reorganization of the IBE Internet site and there may, in future, be an opportunity to subscribe to *Prospects* on the web.

Many of you have appreciated the '100 Thinkers on education' series and its continuation as 'Profiles of famous educators'. We shall continue to publish the profiles of famous educators in the journal and, when we have a sufficient number of them, may one day envisage publishing them in book form.

Several respondents came up with concrete proposals regarding themes and subjects that should be dealt with by *Prospects*. Those of you who felt that not enough attention is paid to regional problems will be pleased to learn that the September 2000 issue will be dedicated to 'Education in Asia', and we expect that issues focused on other regions of the world will follow. The current situation and possibilities for self-improvement of teachers are a matter of concern for many among you. These questions will be addressed in an issue on 'Professionalism in teaching' planned for June 2000.

Most replies contained positive comments on the content and presentation of *Prospects*. However, a substantial number of respondents complained about the difficulties they have experienced when trying either to subscribe to the journal or to renew their subscription. There were also complaints about irregularities in its

delivery. Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience. We are now looking into these matters and will do our utmost to eliminate both of these problems.

Finally, we would like to follow up on the proposal by several readers and to introduce a 'Letters to the Editor' column in *Prospects*. The present page can be considered as an invitation to participate in this new dialogue. Please send us your reactions to the articles we publish, your ideas and proposals for further improvement of the journal. We shall be happy to reply to your concerns and to publish the most interesting letters.

THE EDITORIAL TEAM

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# VIEWPOINTS/CONTROVERSIES

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# PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION: THEMES AND VARIATIONS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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*Philip G. Altbach*

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Private higher education is the most dynamic and fastest growing segment of post-secondary education at the turn of the twenty-first century. A combination of unprecedented demand for access to higher education and the inability or unwillingness of governments to provide the necessary support has brought private higher education to the forefront. Private institutions, which have a long history in many countries, are expanding in scope and number, and are increasingly important in parts of the world that have relied on the public sector. A related phenomenon is the 'privatization' of public institutions in some countries. With tuition and other charges rising, public and private institutions look more and more similar.

Private higher education has long dominated higher education systems in Japan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan Province of China (hereafter Taiwan) and the Philippines. There has been a dramatic shift from public to private post-secondary education in Latin America, such that Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela now have at least half of their students in private universities. Private higher education is the fastest growing sector in many countries in Central and Eastern Europe and in the countries of the former USSR. For the most part, this unprecedented growth in the private sector stems from an inability in many countries of the government to fund expansion.

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*Original language: English*

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Not only has demand overwhelmed the ability of governments to pay, but also there has been a significant change in the way that higher education is considered. The idea of an academic degree as primarily a 'private good' that benefits the individual rather than a 'public good' for society is now widely accepted. The 'logic' of today's market economies and an ideology of privatization have contributed to the resurgence of private higher education, and the establishing of private institutions where none existed before.

The world-wide expansion of education makes it essential to consider the status of private higher education and its specific problems. While private universities share common roots with public institutions and have some similar functions, they also have special characteristics. Most important among these is the financial base—private institutions are responsible for their own funding. Other distinctive factors include internal governance and management, the relationship to government and public authorities, and institutional planning.

We are concerned here with understanding the parameters of private higher education world-wide. Common features as well as differences will be highlighted, along with the challenges faced by private institutions. Will the private sector be able to address the challenges of increased numbers, new forms of accountability and innovative technologically driven educational programmes in a creative way? Or will the private institutions cluster at the bottom of the post-secondary system, offering low-quality programmes that provide credentials but ones of little value? Will the prestigious private universities at the top of the academic hierarchy in some countries be able to provide some guidance to the newer institutions? Will appropriate agencies be set up to protect quality and represent the interests of students and of society in this new private-enterprise educational environment?

## **Themes and variations**

There is tremendous differentiation in private higher education internationally. Harvard University, with its endowment measured in billions of dollars, could hardly be more different from a newly established 'garage university' in El Salvador offering specialized training in a few fields. Some private institutions are highly focused in specific fields, such as the world renowned European Institute of Business Administration (INSEAD) in Fontainebleau. There are large multipurpose universities, like the Far East University in Manila with more than 100,000 students, while many enrol just a few hundred students. Some are among the most prestigious institutions in the country, like Waseda or Keio in Japan, Yale University in the United States, the Ateneo de Manila in the Philippines or Javieriana University in Colombia. Most private post-secondary institutions are responsible for their own funding, although some receive government funds. In India, for example, more than 2,000 privately managed colleges are financed largely by public funds. Some nations allow almost complete freedom to private institutions, while others, such as the Republic of Korea, impose rigid controls.

While private higher education is growing world-wide, there are major national and in some cases even internal variations. Most of Western Europe continues to be dominated by public universities. While their number and their role within academic systems are growing, private institutions still constitute a tiny minority. Some are religious, mainly Catholic, universities and seminaries, while a growing number are specialized institutions, especially business schools. A few, such as the University of Buckingham in the United Kingdom, are multipurpose private universities. Still, more than 95% of students in Western Europe attend public institutions. Significantly, it is in Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union that private higher education is having its greatest European success. In this region, governments are unable to devote sufficient funds to expanding public universities; the idea of state domination was discredited after the fall of Communism; and there is little regulation of the new private institutions.

While many of the most famous American universities are private, more than 80% of students in the United States attend public institutions of higher learning. The percentage of students attending public colleges and universities has steadily increased for the past half century, and the 80:20 ratio seems stable. In the United States, private institutions fall into several categories. At the top of the academic hierarchy are universities such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, the University of Chicago and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and private colleges such as Amherst, Smith, Williams and Swarthmore. These prestigious institutions are highly selective and all have large endowment funds. Religiously affiliated universities and colleges, ranging from top-ranking institutions such as Georgetown, Notre Dame and Boston College to many small 'Bible colleges' and struggling liberal arts colleges affiliated with both Catholic and Protestant groups, are another key category in the private sector. There are also many secular private colleges and universities. Finally, a group of little known 'proprietary' (profit-making) specialized institutions, most of which are small, are included, although few are accredited. These schools are not central to the academic enterprise in the United States. The more than 2,000 American private colleges and universities are quite diverse. The very large majority of them depend on tuition fees from their students for survival. They constitute a vibrant and diverse segment of American higher education.

In comparative terms, private higher education is most powerful in Asia. In a number of nations, including Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines and Indonesia, private post-secondary institutions dominate the higher education systems in terms of numbers with upwards of 80% of students attending private institutions. While public universities are the most prestigious in each country, several private schools rank at the top of the hierarchy. Substantial private sectors also exist in Thailand and Taiwan. In Asian nations traditionally dominated by the public sector, such as Malaysia, the faster growing segment of higher education is private. Even in communist China and Viet Nam, private higher education is growing rapidly. There are 2,000 private post-secondary schools in China, although only a handful are officially recognized by the government. Most undergraduate education in India is provided by private colleges affiliated with public universities.

In India, unlike all other Asian nations, there is substantial public support for the private colleges.

Latin America has traditionally had a private higher education sector dominated by the Catholic Church; the oldest institutions are Church-related and typically among the most prestigious. In the past several decades, however, diverse secular establishments have been founded. In most countries, these now outnumber religiously affiliated universities. This new group includes multipurpose universities offering degrees in areas that have strong market demand, but also schools specialized in single fields, from management to tourism studies. A few have achieved high standing and respect, but most are clustered at the lower levels of the academic hierarchy. This explosive growth has created a private sector that now educates a majority of students in Brazil, Mexico, Colombia and elsewhere.

Aside from Western Europe, the region relying most on public higher education is sub-Saharan Africa, but even in this area private higher education is the faster growing segment of post-secondary education. Owing to the public-oriented traditions of the main colonial powers—the British and the French—and the limited financial resources available in the private sector in most African countries, traditionally little private higher education has existed. In the past decade, however, the private sector has grown dramatically, largely because government could not finance access. Catholic religious organizations have been active throughout the region, as have Protestant groups in Zimbabwe and several other countries, and there are also the beginnings of other private initiatives. Nonetheless, shortages of capital and student inability to pay for the cost of tuition make the expansion of private higher education in Africa more difficult and slower than it has been in most other regions.

This global summary of private higher education development shows national and regional variations. It also indicates explosive expansion—private post-secondary education is a significant force almost everywhere. There is considerable diversity among private institutions, but most of the expansion is taking place at the ‘low end’ of the higher education system. The role played by private higher education—which is able to adapt quickly to changing market conditions, student interests and the needs of the economy—is bound to grow.

## **Issues and trends**

As private higher education moves to the centre of higher education systems worldwide, there are certain key issues and trends that need discussion and analysis in a comparative framework.

### **FINANCING PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION**

There are many models of funding private higher education. The reality of most private institutions is that tuition payments are the financial basis of the institution, and without them survival would be impossible. This requires careful planning relating to student numbers, the cost per student and expenditure levels. Errors in

these calculations, the failure to meet enrolment goals or unanticipated expenses can wreak havoc with institutional budgets, and in some cases may even threaten an institution's survival. Most new private post-secondary institutions do not have much of a financial cushion. This tuition dependency also means that students must be able to afford to pay the fees charged. This, in turn, has an impact on the social class of students who study and the kinds of programmes that are offered. In this way, private institutions may exacerbate class or other divisions in society.

A relatively small proportion of private institutions have other financial resources available to them. Universities affiliated with religious organizations sometimes have funds from these groups, or at least can rely on help with staffing. In a few countries, a small number of universities can depend on endowment or other funds contributed by alumni or other supporters. This is especially the case in the United States, where a sizeable minority of private schools have substantial endowments that provide continuing operating funds. All but a handful of these colleges and universities, however, remain dependent on tuition revenues. In a few countries, government support is available to private post-secondary institutions. In the United States, although direct funding is not provided, students in private institutions are eligible for government loans and grants, and private universities can compete for government research funding. In India, the large majority of students studying at private colleges receive financial support from the government. The Philippines has a fund for private universities that provides some resources. Japan and a few other countries also provide financial support, albeit limited, to private schools. With the possible exception of India, the bulk of funding for private post-secondary institutions is generated by the institutions themselves. As the private sector grows, so will the debate over funding, especially over the question whether private institutions should have access to government programmes for research, student aid and construction of schools.

#### OWNERSHIP AND PROFITS

Traditionally, colleges and universities have been non-profit institutions, operating under legal authority from the state to provide education and engage in research and other education-related activities. These institutions have been owned by non-profit agencies, such as religious organizations or scientific societies, with legal authority to own and manage them. For the most part, these arrangements do not permit the institutions to earn a profit, while they are guaranteed a high level of autonomy. In some cases, the university is run and owned by a sponsoring organization, in others by the academic staff and administrators, and in still others by boards of trustees or governors that may be partly composed of academics or may be dominated by outsiders. Legal arrangements vary from country to country.

Religious organizations have long been involved in establishing and supporting academic institutions. Many of the earliest academic institutions were established by the Catholic Church, not only in Europe, but also later in Latin America and Asia. The only existing university older than the European medieval universities is the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, which is an Islamic institution. Protestant religious



organizations have also been active in higher education, including establishing the first academic institutions in the United States. Even many of the early universities in Asia—in the Philippines, Korea, China, Japan and elsewhere—were established by Christian organizations. A major motivation was to entrench the influence of Christianity on local élites and ultimately to convert people to the faith. In some cases, such as in the Philippines, a goal was also to educate Church personnel. Hindu organizations in India, Shinto and Buddhist groups in Japan, Buddhists in Thailand and Muslims in Malaysia, Indonesia and elsewhere have all been active in establishing academic institutions. Today, while the goals of religiously affiliated institutions are different, religious organizations of all kinds remain active in private higher education world-wide.

In some countries, Japan and the Republic of Korea among them, universities can be established and owned by individuals or limited groups, often family dominated, through boards of trustees. In such cases, academic institutions remain legally non-profit, but the borderline between non-profit and profit making is sometimes difficult to discern. Ownership groups, such as trustees or governors, often have the ability to appoint their own successors, and are able to maintain control over an extended period of time.

There is a growing trend towards for-profit private higher education institutions. These schools may specialize in such fields as business management, computer studies, or related areas that might be in high demand, although they are sometimes multipurpose institutions. Profit-making higher education institutions are dependent for their existence on the legal provisions of particular countries. Only in a small number of countries are profit-making higher educational enterprises explicitly permitted by law. In many others, earning profits from educational institutions is not yet accepted culturally or legally, and as a result some new schools resort to skirting existing regulations or nudging them towards profitability. In the United States, a largely ignored 'proprietary' profit-making post-secondary education sector has long existed, primarily focusing on vocationally oriented fields at the lower end of the prestige hierarchy. These proprietary schools are seldom authorized to offer degrees, but rather award certificates for specialized skills. Recently, the University of Phoenix joined the ranks of for-profit higher education. This institution, which is listed on the New York Stock Exchange, offers academic programmes in high-demand areas that do not require much investment in facilities. It has no campus, but works from offices in a dozen or more cities, mainly in the western United States, and makes use of technology to assist in instruction. It is now the largest private university in the United States, and is accredited by one of the accreditation agencies.

The Philippines has long had for-profit universities, with several institutions listed for many years on the stock exchange. In Latin America, where most countries do not permit for-profit higher education institutions, at least some of the new institutions seem to be interested in producing revenues for those who established and control them. Similar trends can be seen in other countries, including the Republic of Korea and Malaysia.

For-profit higher education is without question a major phenomenon world-wide, and it will continue to expand. Higher education systems will need to accommodate to this trend. Where both for-profit and non-profit institutions are permitted, they are able to co-exist. Few, if any, for-profit institutions are high prestige. The largest number of these institutions are small vocationally oriented schools, many of which do not have authorization to offer degrees. Nonetheless, they offer services that are in considerable demand and earn substantial profits. The for-profit sector creates special challenges for accreditation and control, since these institutions often operate in largely unregulated segments of the higher education market.

With respect to patterns of ownership and funding, there is and will continue to be considerable diversity. Universities that are at the top or aspire to be at the top of the prestige hierarchy will be non-profit institutions. They share the norms and values of top universities in terms of academic freedom and the involvement of the faculty in institutional governance. In contrast, both general-purpose universities and specialized post-secondary schools at the lower end of the academic pecking order are more likely to be for-profit. Regardless of the nature of ownership, these institutions will have less academic autonomy and more control by management. The exact configuration of ownership will depend on the legal framework and to some extent on the academic traditions of the nation.

#### PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE ACADEMIC SYSTEM

As higher education expands and student enrolments grow, academic institutions not only increase in number but also become more differentiated by type, role and function. Traditional universities can no longer absorb the demand for higher education. Moreover, the student body itself is more differentiated, with a greater array of interests and educational goals, and far more heterogeneous in terms of ability. A higher education establishment that served 2 or 3% of the university-age population in traditional universities is transformed when it is called on to educate a quarter or more of the age cohort, and to provide education to 'non-traditional' students as well. This expansion and differentiation gives rise to academic arrangements which aim at providing some systematic direction to higher education. Private higher education is inevitably part of this post-secondary education system.

As said above, academic institutions have expanded in number, diversity and size and have become parts of multi-institutional systems. Ministries of education and other government authorities have sought to understand—and control—the mass phenomenon of higher education. In some countries, co-ordinating agencies have been set up to ensure that post-secondary institutions serve societal needs, with the minimum of duplication. In others, academic institutions have been brought into centralized systems that allocate responsibilities and resources. Co-ordination and control have proved to be difficult, and the cost, legal and financial, of providing them has been high.

Private higher education has become an essential part of overall national systems. It is, however, even more difficult to co-ordinate than the public sector, because its

resources do not come from public sources, ownership is not in government hands, and 'accountability' is spread to many institutions and groups. Tight control over the private sector is, for example, part of the higher education system in the Republic of Korea. Government agencies have the power to impose limits on enrolments, tuition, numbers of teaching staff, salaries and the like. These regulations have recently been modified, but the Republic of Korea, and to a lesser extent Japan, are examples of countries with strong government authority over the private sector. The United States has relied on the non-governmental accreditation system to ensure an acceptable level of quality of private institutions.

Private institutions seek to 'fit' into the academic system of a nation because their survival depends on being able to attract students and offering 'products' that are appealing and appropriate. As noted, in most countries, especially in the developing world, virtually all of the newer private schools rank towards the bottom of the academic hierarchy. This is in part due to the fact that it takes a long time to build up an academic reputation and status, but also because these institutions offer applied programmes and have very limited resources.

Of course there are important exceptions, even among newer institutions. In Pakistan, the Aga Khan University, with generous funding from the Aga Khan Foundation, has been able to achieve top ranking quickly. In Argentina, several new private universities, notably San Andres and DiTella, have built impressive reputations. The INSEAD management school in Fontainebleau was able to establish itself as a top school almost from the beginning. And in the history of American higher education, such new private institutions as Stanford and the University of Chicago, both established at the end of the nineteenth century, quickly became top-ranking institutions. In all of these cases, impressive financial resources and skilled leadership permitted rapid development in an academic and social environment that needed these innovative institutions.

#### AUTONOMY AND ITS LIMITS

Private higher education operates with considerable autonomy in most countries, largely because private institutions typically receive little, if any, public funds, and because legal structures do not restrict most academic activities or programmes. The autonomy is, of course, not complete. There are three possible levels of regulation: laws relating to non-profit organizations or corporations, government regulations concerning higher education in general and sometimes even special legislation dealing with private higher education.

Many questions at the heart of the concept and role of private higher education have to be dealt with. How much autonomy should private higher education have? Should institutions have total freedom to determine their goals, standards, tuition charges, curriculum, personnel policies, academic standards and the like? Or should private schools rather be subject to controls to ensure that national norms of quality and academic practice are observed? Should private universities be considered an integral part of an academic system subject to public direction? Should private

institutions be measured for quality or for relevance? How much responsibility does private higher education have to the public good? How accountable should private higher education be? Should there be differences in accountability based on societal conditions? Should private higher education in developing countries have the same autonomy as in wealthier nations?

Countries have given differing answers to these important questions. A few countries have imposed fairly strict controls on private institutions, but most permit them a significant degree of autonomy. The international trend is to give more leeway to private higher education while insisting that the private sector should be subject to some kinds of accountability, ensuring that accurate information is provided to potential students, a base of quality is maintained and fiscal affairs are managed properly.

#### THE MULTI-NATIONALIZATION OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION

More and more often, academic institutions in one country establish links, branches and collaborative arrangements with universities in another. This 'multi-nationalization' trend flows mainly from institutions in the Northern hemisphere linking with universities in the Southern. Collaboration takes many forms, including offering specific degree programmes and establishing academic centres abroad as well as 'franchising' curricula and degrees. For example, several prominent management schools in American private universities are opening management institutes in India in collaboration with local business firms. Much of the multi-nationalization involves private post-secondary institutions, in part because external controls are less stringent, and because there is more entrepreneurialism in the private sector.

Multi-nationalization permits private institutions to quickly establish new academic programmes by importing them from abroad, and potentially to use 'best practices' from other countries. In general, however, the 'importing' institution depends on foreign providers for academic programmes and curriculum. There is little true collaboration in the creation of new structures and curriculum. Questions have also been raised concerning the measuring of quality and the accountability for cross-border academic programmes. Despite all these questions, multinational educational initiatives permit private universities to establish programmes in quick response to local market demand.

### **The responsibilities of private higher education**

Higher education has traditionally been considered both a 'public' and a 'private' good. It delivers a unique 'product', namely knowledge and the credentials to apply knowledge in modern society; thus, it provides skills that individuals use to raise their incomes and to achieve more prestigious careers. At the same time, higher education improves the human resources needed for societal growth and the operation of a modern economy. Recently, there has been considerable debate on the primary contribution of higher education. The central question is whether the benefit is first

and foremost private, and thus the individual and his or her family should pay, or else whether it is mainly for the public good.

Data from virtually every society show that post-secondary education ensures a higher income and greater opportunities for graduates. Comparisons between those who have attended college or university, and those who have not, show consistent benefits to degree holders. Even those who have attended a college or university without earning a degree are better off. There are variations among countries, but the pattern holds globally.

Universities contribute significantly to society in ways beyond teaching and offering degrees. Through their libraries, they are major repositories of knowledge. Universities are centres of research and development, and in most countries they are the source of most basic research. They often constitute important cultural centres by sponsoring publishing enterprises, dance companies or orchestras and serving as venues for cultural performances and institutions. In many societies, universities are among the few places where independent and critical thought takes place. These are all central responsibilities of universities that are difficult to quantify and generally do not produce income.

Private higher education also has a responsibility to provide information to the public concerning programme quality, the usefulness of degrees and certificates and other details of their offerings. All too often, it is *caveat emptor*—let the buyer (student) beware. Accrediting systems, where they exist, provide some controls over the quality of educational programmes. Part of the problem is generic to all of higher education. The educational marketplace is a particularly complex one, since the measurement of the 'educational product' is a difficult task, and there are few established traditions of quality assurance. Accountability measures, at least concerning budgets and the direct delivery of educational programmes, are fairly well developed in the public universities, but in many places the same is not true of private higher education. Transparency is needed.

How do private institutions relate to these core functions of higher education? The majority of private universities and post-secondary institutions world-wide provide training and bestow credentials in their areas of expertise, but little else. With the exception of universities operated by religious organizations, there is little sense of social responsibility on the part of academic institutions. Few private schools are able to serve as research centres or support major libraries.

Private institutions provide access to those who can afford to pay for instruction. Few private universities can afford scholarship programmes for students from poor economic backgrounds or can provide academic support programmes for ill-prepared students. As a result, private universities contribute little to social mobility or to providing educational opportunities for bright but underprivileged students. Letting market forces fully determine who studies at private universities ensures that only those who can afford the tuition will be able to attend.

The professoriate is a central part of any university, and the relationship of private institutions and the academic profession must be considered. Academic freedom and the autonomy of the professoriate are central to the idea of the modern university, but they are sometimes seen to be in conflict with the market orientation

of private higher education. The professoriate traditionally has a central role in designing the curriculum, and there is a commitment to freedom to pursue knowledge in the classroom. The traditional values of academe are absorbed with time. Much of the private sector is new, and so it is especially important that these values be instilled into the norms of the institutions and in their faculties at the beginning.

## **Future trends and issues**

Private higher education, precisely because of its rapid expansion and more central role in the world's higher education systems, faces special challenges and responsibilities. The following issues need to be explored.

- What are the elements that make up private higher education? What kinds of institutions exist? Our knowledge of the patterns of private higher education development world-wide and of the way the private sector fits into the higher education system is quite limited.
- Private higher education is largely market-driven. To what extent should the market control developments? Should restraints be imposed? How do restraints work in countries where they exist, such as the Republic of Korea?
- How should the older, established and often high-status private universities relate to newer, less well endowed institutions? Do the former have a special responsibility to assist or monitor emerging universities?
- What is the appropriate balance of accountability and autonomy in the private sector of higher education?
- How should private higher education be accredited?
- How can distance education be successfully integrated into private higher education? Distance education, being cost-efficient, will inevitably form a part of private higher education.
- What is the appropriate role for government in private higher education? How should public and private institutions interact? Should private higher education be funded by public sources? How should funding mechanisms work?
- How should co-ordinating agencies, responsible for ensuring that the higher education needs of a nation are met, deal with private higher education as an integral part of the post-secondary education system?
- What should the role of the new vocational post-secondary institutions be in the higher education system?
- In Latin America especially, but in other parts of the world as well, what should the role of religious organizations be in higher education? What responsibilities do religiously affiliated universities have to the broader higher education system?

## **Freedom and responsibility: an agenda for the twenty-first century**

Private higher education is the most dynamic segment of post-secondary education at the turn of the twenty-first century in much of the world. In the developing

countries, it is without question central to meeting enrolment needs in the coming decades. Its prominence is linked with the ideology of privatization that is so influential at present and with the global trend towards cutting public spending. The inability of the state to provide access to post-secondary education that is demanded world-wide contributes to the rise of the private sector. For these reasons, the continued expansion of private higher education is inevitable.

The general characteristics of private institutions are not absolute. While the majority are small and specialized, stand at the lower end of the prestige hierarchy and do not have a research focus, there are exceptions. We have already given examples of prestigious and highly esteemed private schools and large multipurpose institutions, as well as of research-oriented private universities.

There is a growing trend towards the multi-nationalization of the private sector in higher education, further blurring distinctions as well as national boundaries. Private interests in developing or middle-income countries are linking up with universities, public or private, in the industrialized nations to offer educational programmes and degrees. This multi-nationalization makes control and monitoring more difficult. The private sector is more active in linking internationally than are public academic institutions.

The private sector must balance autonomy and accountability. It has to be encouraged to provide new models and approaches to the delivery of higher education, ensuring both cost-effectiveness and an experimental approach. At the same time, accountability is needed to ensure that these new approaches deliver a quality educational product. Accreditation and quality control are integral to the growth of private higher education.

The trend, in some countries, towards the establishment of for-profit private post-secondary institutions creates special challenges. For-profit institutions may be able to provide specific kinds of post-secondary training, but by their very nature they cannot evolve into universities with the traditional academic values, programmes and ethos. An orientation to the 'bottom line' will simply not permit this. For-profit higher education may have a role in some countries, but it requires special monitoring and attention precisely because the values of the corporation and the marketplace are to some extent at odds with the traditional values of the university.

Despite the great promise of and clear need for private higher education in a period of enrolment expansion, there are potential problems. Private higher education risks being dominated by the market and the need to serve immediate goals to such an extent that it can no longer share the traditional commitment of higher education to the pursuit of knowledge and truth and to the values of academic freedom of inquiry. Not every academic institution needs to foster research or seek to model itself after Oxford or Harvard, yet the traditional norms of academe are important for all. Even schools that focus exclusively on vocational training and specialized degrees should encourage professionalism, academic freedom and high standards in their educational programmes.

The social responsibility of private higher education is too little discussed. Higher education has a responsibility to maintain meritocratic values at the same

time as encouraging social mobility. Academic institutions traditionally provide opportunities for advancement and undertake social analysis. They bring the benefits of science and technology to society through efforts such as public programmes and continuing education. These goals, and the programmes to make them possible, are seldom on the agendas of private higher educational institutions.

The twenty-first century will see private higher education grow in importance in many nations, especially in the developing and middle-income countries. Even in the wealthy countries of Western Europe and North America, private higher education will become more central to the academic enterprise. It is necessary to understand this phenomenon and to ensure that private higher education serves not only the needs of the marketplace but also of society.



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**OPEN FILE**

**EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**

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# EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

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*Soledad Pérez and Pierre R. Dasen*

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## Introduction

In recent decades there have been considerable changes in concepts, theories and practice in the field of educational research. No longer limited to teaching, education has become a global social phenomenon embracing a substantial number of actors. In both developed and developing countries, the central goal is to bring basic education to individuals, transforming them into social participants adapted to face a changing world. All countries are concerned about the transition from school to the world of work, and also about lifelong education. Nevertheless, there is always a gap between economic systems—in perpetual transformation—and relatively static and conservative education systems, which resist innovation and adapt with difficulty to technological changes. The divide is even greater between the rich and poor countries. The former

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*Original language: French*

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are investing substantial resources which will enable them to adapt to such changes, while the latter face increasing problems in financing the development and reform of their education systems. This ability to adapt—which is vital—means that those involved in education need to have a perfect grasp of the increasingly complex manner in which social and education systems function, and research can help provide this. The status of educational research therefore varies with the context: whether at the international, national or local levels, it is influenced by the prevailing socio-economic, historical, geographical, political, educational and linguistic conditions.

An analysis of research in the educational sciences gives rise to several considerations. It is not our intention here to discuss the concept of the educational sciences from the epistemological point of view. We are not interested, for example, in the question of whether educational sciences form a coherent whole that can be regarded as an independent field of scientific inquiry. For us, the obvious variety of the approaches, subjects and methodologies is a sign of great richness.<sup>1</sup>

Our aim is to review a certain number of particular cases, which reflect the realities of both the 'North' and the 'South', to find out what is actually being done in research in the educational sciences. We would like to draw attention to the abundance of such research in the various contexts and to the sometimes difficult conditions under which it is conducted.

## Origin of this Open File

The articles in this Open File are derived in great part from two symposia organized at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland), in collaboration with the *Société suisse de recherche en éducation* (SSRE—Swiss Association for Educational Research). The association has a committee for international relations and, in particular, co-operation with colleagues from countries in the 'South' and in the 'East'. The committee promotes exchanges between researchers in these countries and those in Switzerland. Parallel with these exchanges, in 1995 it organized a one-day seminar on educational research in the 'southern' and 'eastern' countries, and in 1997 a symposium as part of the annual SSRE congress. The goals defined were as follows:

1. To draw attention to the value of social science research, especially the educational sciences, in the countries of the 'South' and the 'East'. In many cases this research is not well known, frequently taking the form of unpublished doctoral papers or theses. It was considered important to get an accurate picture of the most active areas of research in those countries.
2. To learn about the working conditions of colleagues conducting research in those countries.

Not all the papers presented are published in this issue: we have included in this introduction parts of the address given by Jean Tano, Professor of Psychology at the University of Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), who focused on the conditions under which research is conducted in West Africa. In addition, at the request of the editors of *Prospects*, we commissioned two other articles.

## Research areas in the educational sciences

In India, Mishra has been studying primary education, which is a priority for the Indian Government. The state of education changes radically from one region to another. Achieving universal primary education in a vast country like India is not easy for various reasons (child labour, prostitution, cultural and religious traditions). Mishra stresses that collaboration between researchers and public authorities is vital to the evaluation of innovations in education.

Serpell focuses on the problems arising in Africa between donor organizations and researchers. In his article, he severely criticizes donors from the northern countries. He believes that scientific relations among the countries of the South must be promoted if joint projects are to be developed. He draws attention to the inadequate background information among some of the 'northern' researchers sent to apply their techniques in the 'southern' countries, often poorly adapted to the realities of these countries.

Pérez and Akkari have focused on Latin America. The research situation on that sub-continent is particularly complex because circumstances vary from one country to another and even within countries and regions. It is nonetheless interesting to note that several countries share certain main features and to emphasize the variety of the research being conducted in Latin America.

Gretler takes a historical look at the development of educational research in Europe. He notes that the 1960s represented a turning point for research because of the urgent growing interest in education shown by educational authorities and decision-makers. He reviews the situation of academic and non-academic research in the European countries and looks at national associations and the role of the various international organizations.

Groux analyses the situation of research in France, using Ile de la Réunion as an example. She demonstrates that research is selectively localized in a few *départements* and institutes. Like Gretler, Groux notes the importance of relations between the public authorities and the world of research. She wonders how independent research and relations with the authorities can be reconciled.

The networks linking researchers from the North and South are expanding. Carton talks about NORRAG, whose more than 200 members come from the academic world, agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, while Mella describes a Latin American network—REDUC.

In his review of research trends, Ferrer looks at the differences and similarities between the various articles and also proposes directions for future research. He believes that it is vital for the countries of the 'North' and/or the 'South' to create collaborative research networks.

As the examples here show, educational policy-makers in most countries stress the effectiveness and efficiency of research financed by the government or funding

agencies. Political leaders demand evaluations to ensure that the funds allocated to research are properly used at a time of budgetary restraint, reorientation of public funding for research, and the streamlining and downsizing of research institutions in the interest of increasing research productivity.

## Evaluating research

First of all, the universities themselves have established self-evaluation systems. In Austria, Belgium and Switzerland, for example, the universities play an important role in the evaluation process because the academic staff are involved in it. In countries like Japan, government directives encourage self-evaluation efforts at all Japanese universities, while Italy has voted to adopt a system of evaluation groups covering all its universities and to set up a national observatory. Private and public agencies that provide direct funding to research projects and research teams also carry out detailed evaluations with a view to awarding fellowships and monitoring the results of research activities. In Mexico, the work of academic researchers is reviewed every three years for the purpose of determining promotions and pay rises. Similarly, countries like France have public research institutes with university status and have set up evaluation systems for the management of staff and institutes (Groux, 1999). Several countries have set up ethics committees, either within a particular faculty or as part of the university, to advise researchers on how to conduct their research.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (1998), it is always difficult to maintain a balance between quantitative criteria (research reports, for example) and qualitative criteria (defined by peers). It is important to bear in mind not only the direct outcomes of research (articles, discoveries and so forth) but also more indirect consequences, such as contributions to the development of technology, the improvement of instrumentation and the dissemination of knowledge. For the universities, these functions include teaching and training, the transfer of knowledge to other economic and social sectors, international exchanges and the impact on national and international culture.

The university, an age-old institution, has for a long time been fulfilling a universal mission in the sense that the search for knowledge is a universal value, and the commitment to the free circulation of knowledge has been part of the university tradition from the outset. While students and teachers have been influenced by this international broadening of horizons and by the various exchanges among universities (ERASMUS, SOCRATES, etc.), mass higher education has brought with it new challenges. Extremely flexible ties have been established between universities in several countries in the 'North' and 'South', ranging from a basic level of bilateral links between individuals in similar departments to multidisciplinary networks. Nevertheless, while the countries of the 'North' welcome these exchanges, the countries of the 'South' find it difficult in financial terms to manage these types of initiative and often call upon the northern countries to fund their research and research fellowships.

## Research entities

A survey of the articles contributed shows that various entities are involved in educational research: government agencies, universities, independent research centres, NGOs (national and international, religious and lay), and regional and international co-operation agencies. The approach to these entities varies with the author. Research in the United States, even though it was not the subject of an article in this issue, can provide some interesting insights.

The most important North American NGOs in the field of educational research are the national foundations, such as Ford, Spencer and Fulbright. The growing influence of the United States in the field of education is a result of the funding, for example, of NGOs in Latin America, not only by NGOs in the United States (the Ford Foundation funds Vargas, a Brazilian NGO) but also through international and regional co-operation agencies, such as USAID and the World Bank. American multinationals, like Kellogg and Microsoft, also fund educational research projects which may or may not be related to their areas of interest. In every state in the United States of America, smaller bodies are involved in local education projects. In recent years, researchers have paid special attention to major urban centres.

In the United States, research functions are shared by various bodies: government agencies are frequently responsible for information and documentation; universities are concerned with pure research; and NGOs lean towards research and action-oriented research. Teacher-training establishments focus above all on applied research dealing mainly with professional and advanced training for teachers and educational testing. In addition, at North American universities, many research teams in the departments of psychology and sociology are working on theoretical issues, such as cognitive development, multicultural education and the use of computer technology in teaching.

In a 1997 report prepared by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (Robinson, 1998), a set of educational research priorities was established on the basis of seven major themes: early childhood learning; student learning; effective teaching; strengthening schools; cultural diversity; learning beyond the classroom; and adult skills. It is worth recalling that the priority accorded to educational research led to the creation in the mid-1960s of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the US Department of Education. At present, ERIC provides users (researchers, students, parents, decision-makers) with literature on education by means of data banks, publications and other services. While initially restricted to collecting literature produced by the various services of the US Department of Education, ERIC has expanded its scope to cover all publications relating to education. Today, it collects, analyses, lists, indexes, summarizes, annotates and makes available all documents produced by public or private sources at the local and international levels.

In the 1990s, educational research in the United States began focusing on the new information technologies. There is increasing use of computers, both in the

schools and in the home. In addition, CD-ROMs and the Internet have opened up new horizons for researchers, providing vast data banks and a global forum for information exchange. While this is an accurate description of the situation in the countries of the 'North', the countries of the 'South' present a mixed picture, in terms of working conditions, for example.

## Working conditions

When comparing the contributions from the southern countries with those from the northern countries, it is immediately evident that research differs less in the content than in the conditions under which it is produced and disseminated. As the best way to illustrate this situation, we have chosen to reproduce at length an excerpt from the communication presented by Professor Jean Tano at the one-day seminar held in 1995. The conditions he describes have certainly not changed since that time.

Tano noted that among the French-speaking countries in West Africa, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Senegal and Togo have more or less the same system of education, in particular at the university level, which is based on the traditional French model. Educational sciences are taught mainly in teacher-training establishments, which do not go in for research, with the exception of the *Écoles normales supérieures*, where teachers/researchers conduct at least the minimum research needed to obtain diplomas leading to promotion, or else carry out commissioned research. The educational sciences have also been incorporated into university structures in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), Togo and, most recently, Dakar (Senegal). In certain cases (Burkina Faso, Togo), these departments lack full professors, so that students are still obliged to go abroad to obtain higher-level diplomas.

These West African countries are members of the African and Mauritian Council on Higher Education (CAMES), a supranational institution responsible for monitoring the promotion of teachers/researchers in higher education. Under this system, obtaining a diploma (master's degree, *diplôme d'études approfondies* (DEA), Ph.D., *Doctorat d'État*) by conducting research and producing publications is the only way to gain promotion. This system, at least, ensures the existence of academic research, even if it has to be carried out under often very difficult conditions. But since the findings of nearly all this research go no further than the stage of unpublished theses or dissertations, they do not lead to any accumulation of knowledge in the region or exchanges with other parts of the world. Mishra's article in this issue provides a perfect example: the references are, strikingly, almost all unpublished works. Readers can only be frustrated by the difficulties of access to this reference material, only made possible by actually touring universities in India. Admittedly, India has a relatively large number of journals and documentation centres, which is not the case in Africa.

Jean Tano describes the situation in West Africa as follows:

What should we retain from this brief presentation of the state of educational sciences and psychology in West Africa? Despite a few differences that we have deplored, we have discovered

similarities that can be classified under three main headings: human resources, logistical resources and funding.

First, there is the question of the quality and quantity of human resources: recruitment practices in these countries in the general field of science teaching and research are hardly a cause for optimism. Faced with current economic difficulties and owing to the various structural adjustment plans imposed on them by international financial institutions, these countries have cut back on both existing staff levels (through forced retirement measures) and salaries. The combined result of these two factors is that experienced researchers and lecturers are being dismissed and not replaced, and there are no candidates to fill the budget slots for new researchers. Thus, while the student population continues to grow, the number of teachers/researchers is declining steadily. This poses a dangerous threat to research activities in all disciplines, and in the social and human sciences in particular.

This forced policy of stringency leads to lowering the level of teaching and reduces, breaks up or weakens research teams. In fact, this kind of selective targeting of schools as a means of reducing public spending will also lead in the relatively near future to the elimination of research, and as a corollary raises the question of the very existence of higher education in our countries. All this does nothing to stimulate research or help find solutions to the many ills besetting African society.

The second category of problems undermining research activities in West Africa concerns logistical resources—work structures, access to documentation and the dissemination of information. Generally speaking, political leaders in these countries have an ambiguous attitude towards these disciplines, first, because they believe them to be the cause of student or population unrest, and second, because they fail to see any practical use for them in terms of economic development. As a result, the authorities are reluctant to provide working structures for these disciplines. Nor are they inclined to seek resources to facilitate access to documentation or promote the dissemination of findings in these disciplines, which they regard as secondary or useless for development, as it is understood in West Africa. Yet, given the nature of psychology and the educational sciences, researchers in these fields—perhaps even more so than in the exact sciences—need to compare their findings with their counterparts in other countries and continents and to keep up with the development of research theories and techniques. Researchers in West Africa are thus so severely handicapped that they have to make frequent trips to the North to try, in a few days, weeks or months, to learn about the latest developments in their field. Unfortunately, very often there is no money to pay for the travel and subsistence of these volunteer researchers. In addition, there is no way of financing the dissemination of the results of any research carried out. It may be unthinkable, but research findings rarely go beyond the sector or laboratory in which the research has been conducted. At best, they will be disseminated in the departments or within the university. All this makes inter-university exchanges difficult both between the southern countries and between the South and the North. The rare cases of outside dissemination are the result of personal relations, or due to outside organizations which have funded the work. Thus, an impressive amount of more or less interesting data piles up on the desks of the researchers who have conducted these studies, which will then be blissfully ignored by the scientific community so long as there are no resources or structures which would ensure at least a minimum of dissemination.

These material constraints bring us to the last area of difficulty—funding. In the North there are, generally speaking, three major funding sources for research: the government, private or quasi-public firms, and foundations. In our countries, in the best of cases, the state



is the only entity that can fund research. Now, we have already noted, owing to the authorities' prejudice against psychology and the educational sciences, and also because of pressure from foreign donors, governments are not in a position to allocate funds to this type of research. In summary, it can be said that research in psychology and the educational sciences in the countries of West Africa is still in need of substantial resources, and a great deal of imagination, in order to make it possible for it to be carried out and its results disseminated, even in a way remotely similar to ongoing general practice in the countries of the North.

The situation described by Tano accurately reflects the problems in the countries of the 'South', as also found in India by Mishra, Africa by Serpell and Latin America by Pérez and Akkari. There is still a North-South divide in educational research, despite attempts to level out these differences.

## Notes

1. Readers may wish to consult *inter alia* the collection of texts edited by R. Hofstetter and B. Schneuwly, 1998.

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# RESEARCH ON EDUCATION

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## IN INDIA

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*R. C. Mishra*

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The education of children represents one of the most important concerns of the central and state governments in India during the last two decades. The issues of limited access, poor quality of education, poor quality of teachers, high drop-out rates and high repetition rates of children at the primary level, which were recognized as main areas of concern in the first Five-Year Plan (1952–57), have continued to draw attention in all subsequent plans. However, in terms of investment priorities, there seems to be a clear bias towards the expansion of education. Greater enrolment of children in schools has been used as the main criterion for evaluating the success of educational plans. Hence, primary schools have been established almost within walking distances so that more children can attend. The educational needs of ‘out-of-school’ children in smaller habitations (where there are no schools) are being fulfilled through non-formal education programmes.

As a result, India today has nearly 760,000 primary schools and about a quarter of a million non-formal education centres, along with about 1.75 million teachers and about 110 million students (Government of India, 1996a). Census estimates suggest that there are about 115.6 million children of primary-school age, indicating that approximately 95% of children are enrolled in primary schools recognized by the government (Government of India, 1991).

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*Original language: English*

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While these enrolment figures appear to be quite impressive, the efficiency, quality and achievement of learners present a gloomy picture of education. Studies indicate that children, on average, take about eight and a half years to complete the primary school cycle (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 1994; World Bank, 1996), and that even in the terminal years of primary education, pupils' achievement level is depressingly low. The situation is similar whether one considers educationally 'advanced' states (e.g. Kerala, Tamil Nadu) or educationally 'backward' states (e.g. Assam, Madhya Pradesh) (World Bank, 1997). More than 50% of children enrolled in Grade 1 drop out at some point during the years of primary education. In some states (e.g. Bihar, Rajasthan), the drop-out rate is around 70% (Government of India, 1996b). Preventing drop-out has been the most important focus of the government's educational activity in recent years.

Studies focused on the characteristics of educational development in India suggest that there has been a 'positive spurt' in the quantity and a 'negative spurt' in the quality of overall education. Since primary education forms the basis of movement to other levels of education, more research has been directed at the analysis of causes for negative spurts at this level. The problems of secondary and higher levels of education are very different from those encountered at the primary level. Differences are evident not only in the goals of education, but also in transmission processes. I would like to focus first on the major issues related to primary education (education up to the Grade 5). Upper primary school consists of another three years after Grade 5. This span of eight years of schooling in India is recognized as 'basic education'.

## Primary education

A main feature of primary education in India is the mushroom-like growth of primary schools during the last two decades. Many of these schools do not possess even basic facilities (e.g. buildings, teachers, chalkboards). Today, in addition to the government, many private bodies, trusts, voluntary agencies as well as religious and ethnic groups are involved in the delivery of primary education. The expansion has been so phenomenal over the years that concerns for both quality and relevance of education have receded into the background. Even the government seems to have ignored its own guidelines with respect to the provision of basic necessities and facilities in schools. This has led to the existence of a few excellent but a large number of fractured institutions (Aggarwal, 1997). It is therefore not surprising to find schools that have the inputs of the latest technology (such as televisions and computers) and those that do not possess even the bare facilities (such as blackboards, chalk and erasers).

In order to improve the condition of such schools, a special programme (Operation Blackboard) was formulated during the seventh Five-Year Plan period (1987–92). The programme has assisted states in arranging basic facilities (e.g. buildings, teachers, teaching/learning aids) in schools. Unfortunately, these facilities alone have not succeeded in bringing about significant changes in the quality of education. Hence, the focus is now shifting from improvement in the quality of schools to improvement in the quality of teachers.

## SMALL SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION

Research indicates that small schools (less than fifty students) are a great hindrance to restoring educational quality, as these schools are unlikely to attract and sustain the resources essential for competing with large-size, good-quality schools (Aggarwal, 1997). Yet such schools are considered a long-term necessity for achieving the goal of universal primary education. The arguments favouring these schools include: easy accessibility, serving the local needs of people, better management and control, appreciation of local contribution, and better-quality classroom interaction (Aggarwal, 1997). Survey reports indicate that approximately 30% of rural schools are small schools (about fifty children) and approximately 50% of schools have less than seventy-five children. Large-size schools (150 children or more) are characteristic of more advanced states such as Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu; less advanced states generally have small schools.

The regional distribution of small schools has led to the analysis of educational processes in such schools. A common assumption is that the population groups served by small schools are not only internally homogeneous, but also governed by common educational goals. A related assumption is that a common curriculum will be able to meet the educational requirements of small groups, as they share many social and economic problems. Empirical studies cast doubts on the validity of these assumptions. For example, Mishra (1996) found that even tribal groups, who share many socio-cultural features of life, do not perceive the same types of benefit from schooling. There are still people (for example, hunting-gathering Birhors in Bihar) who feel that schooling places children in a culturally marginalized state.

Unfortunately, psychological dimensions do not find due representation either in research on educational processes or in educational planning and policy. The government seems to be committed to the education of children of smaller villages. Analyses of psychological characteristics of people living in such villages, their dominant needs and expectations from education are warranted in order to understand their low response to school education. As Sinha and Mishra (1997) point out, the degree to which school education is capable of satisfying the immediate necessities and future expectations of remote rural communities should be accepted as an important criterion to evaluate the success of primary education.

## Major educational issues

The expansion of primary schools in remote rural areas has brought out a number of issues related to teacher, curriculum, pedagogy and medium of instruction. No appropriate answer to any of these issues has yet been found. The broad questions related to each of them are briefly discussed here.

## TEACHERS

Teachers occupy a pivotal role in all educational processes. A recurrent problem with primary schoolteachers is the lack of interest in working in remote rural areas.

Difficult access to the areas, lack of physical facilities and many other problems discourage teachers from working in remote rural areas. In order to overcome this problem, many state governments have made it compulsory for newly appointed teachers to serve in a remote rural area. An important issue related to this policy is: who should teach the children of deprived groups and isolated regions—an inexperienced or experienced teacher? To what extent will an unwilling teacher contribute to the quality of education in a school where serious commitment and a sense of responsibility are essential? What kind of controls can be developed for unwilling teachers? Should teachers be forced to serve in rural areas, or are there other options (such as incentives) that would attract more experienced teachers?

Research suggests that teacher motivation makes a greater contribution to teaching-learning outcomes than teacher competence. Yet orientation programmes for teachers largely focus on competence rather than motivational dimensions. Sarma, Dutta and Sarma (1992) observed that about 50% of trained teachers did not apply their teaching skills in the classroom. This is apparently a motivational problem that requires urgent focus.

#### CURRICULUM

Education as an instrument of change is closely linked with curriculum. A serious debate persists among psychologists and educationists on the issue of which curriculum should be taught to children in primary school. While in the past the emphasis was on a 'common' curriculum for all school-going children, in the last decade some attempts to align curriculum with the local needs of communities have been made. The efforts have not produced meaningful results as the policy planners have not seriously addressed what type of education is relevant to the rural communities and how such education can be delivered. The utility of a uniform curriculum has been questioned, and the plea has been made for developing a culturally sensitive programme of education that ensures the 'self dignity' of groups by providing them with economically viable options for life (Sinha & Mishra, 1997). This is particularly essential in view of the fact that a majority of children fail to follow the standard curriculum and drop out within a few months of their starting school. As Dave (1997) argues, whether the new curricula and related curricular packages are more flexible, needs-based, relevant, productive and learner-centred than the traditional ones is still open for research.

#### PEDAGOGY

Both what is taught and how it is taught have far-reaching consequences for a child's later life. In formal education systems, there is no emphasis on 'learning by doing'. Children are forced to concentrate on techniques through which they can obtain high scores in examinations. The system does not provide children with opportunities to develop and master the skills required for effective functioning in vital sectors of life (e.g. at home or in the workplace). Consequently, schools today are viewed

largely as 'certificate distributing agencies' rather than as 'centres of learning'. The market approach to education in recent years has given 'profit' a legitimate status in education. As a result, many state-recognized private schools have emerged. The maladies of private schools are many (Tilak, 1998), yet such schools have proliferated tremendously over the years to meet the educational challenges of children. They have been widely accepted by the section of society that can afford the cost of a child's education in such schools.

## LANGUAGE

Language is the most essential component of communication and interaction processes. The policy on language use in schools is quite burdensome for many children. While in some states children can go through their entire school career in their mother tongue, in several states children begin with their mother tongue, but at some point switch to another language. In many states, children have to develop mastery in at least three languages (a regional, a vital and a foreign language). Although ideally all languages are equal, in practice a language hierarchy seems to be in evidence—with English at the top. Thus, getting a child educated in an English-medium school is a status symbol in both urban and rural sectors of the population. Greater employment opportunities for English-speaking people in today's job market have caused great setbacks to government schools, especially in urban areas where the option for English-medium schooling is more readily available than in rural areas. While some researchers feel that there should be a uniform policy with respect to language use in schools, others perceive it as a constraint on the process of education. The issue of language use has been heavily researched. The evidence is generally in favour of bilingual (or even multilingual) education in view of its positive consequences for cognitive development and social interaction processes (Mohanty, 1994; Mohanty & Perregaux, 1997). However, there are several complex issues related to bilingual or multilingual education that need to be researched carefully in order to evolve a sound policy on language use in schools.

## Meeting challenges

In order to respond to the challenges of primary education, several innovations have been carried out over the years. These are so numerous and various that India can be considered a mine of educational innovations. Several innovative projects have been run with assistance from international agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF and the British Council. The projects relate not only to early childhood and primary education, but also to many vital aspects of education such as science education, education for nutrition, health and environmental education, education for the disabled and non-formal education for children. Dave (1997) has presented a fairly detailed review of many of these projects. Several objective criteria have been used to assess the impact of innovations on educational processes. Shortcomings related to planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of innovations seem to be

in evidence. One can easily conclude that the impact of innovations on children's educational processes has been far less than expected.

## **Secondary education**

Access to secondary education has considerably increased in recent years as a result of improved enrolment in and completion of primary schooling by children. Today secondary education constitutes an important segment of education not only because it is an essential step to move higher on the educational ladder, but also because it serves the needs of many who wish to enter the world of work.

## **Problems and alternatives**

Relevance and quality of secondary education pose serious challenges to planners and managers of education. Strengthening both these aspects is essential for developing the full potential of children to pursue higher studies or find employment. A number of strategies are being worked out for restructuring secondary education. Even the national philosophy of secondary education has witnessed significant changes to make sure that children are exposed to and integrated with the larger world of today. While the curriculum structure represents a major concern, the processes of its transmission are also attracting considerable attention in research. The possible use of modern communication technology in all schools is being explored. The search for alternatives in secondary education is witnessed in national efforts to design it in the context of rural development in particular, and national development in general. Consequently, issues related to vocationalization of education, non-formal education, population education and distance education etc. have repeatedly surfaced in discussions about secondary education. Their significance as research topics is widely accepted, but actual studies addressed to many vital issues are lacking.

## **Research issues**

A review of research on secondary education suggests that researchers feel more at ease in dealing with problems like the new pattern of education, the attitude towards education systems, drop-outs, innovations, study habits and academic performance correlates (Anand, 1997). Many of these topics represent the age-old problems of educational research. However, there are several issues related to each one of them that still bother researchers.

### **VOCATIONAL COURSES AND INPUTS**

Much effort has been made to assess the status of vocational courses being taught as a part of secondary education. Reports indicate that the system has failed to implement vocational activity programmes (Gautam, 1988) to such an extent that such courses are being handled as the academic courses of the humanities and social

sciences. While both teachers and students have great appreciation for application-oriented courses, a large number of schools are severely lacking in infrastructural facilities (such as workshops, work sheds, farms, tools and implements) to run the courses. Poor implementation of vocational courses due to inadequate personnel, physical space, equipment and financial resources stands almost as a general conclusion. Studies also reveal that the level of inputs (e.g. students, teachers, physical facilities, school climate, leadership, teacher morale and motivation, etc.) has failed to satisfy the fast changing nature of educational demands (Bhatta, 1989). Hence, the output (e.g. student performance, innovativeness of schools) in large numbers of schools has not risen beyond an average level.

#### DROP-OUTS

Not all students who join a secondary education programme necessarily complete it, but the problem is not as serious as encountered at the primary level. Hence, the study of drop-out at the secondary school level has largely remained confined to research undertaken at the level of government or by the national education bodies. It has been realized lately that the factors associated with drop-out at the level of secondary education are very different from those involved at the primary level. Financial constraints of families and repeated failure of students in examinations have been reported as crucial factors associated with drop-out in some parts of the country (Padhy, 1990). Whether the same factors would account for drop-outs elsewhere is not known. An analysis of psychological characteristics and socio-cultural contexts of drop-out cases is warranted to understand this phenomenon closely.

Western researchers have often commented on poor learning skills and achievements of students in almost all Third World countries (Murphy, 1987). It is argued that their entire school career is driven largely by a single motive—passing examinations. Less concern is displayed for the understanding of subjects and the acquisition of appropriate skills. In a study of Grade 7 children, Chelini (1991) found that a majority of them showed deficiency in understanding the fundamental concepts of science, mathematics and social studies. Such deficiencies are reflected even at the secondary level, owing largely to the poor study habits of students, inappropriate skills and the lack of proper orientation towards education. For example, Devarajan (1992) found that in Kerala students showed interest in reading Malayalam (the local language) novels, yet had little interest in textbooks. When asked about their reasons for attending school, students generally mention 'social status' and 'prospects for better jobs' (Ghalsasi, 1988). A study of drop-out, stagnation and wastage at the secondary level in the context of these factors has not been attempted.

#### THE PROBLEMS OF TEACHERS

As mentioned earlier, teachers play the most significant role in all educational processes. The problems of secondary schoolteachers are not only numerous, but also of great variety. They could be broadly categorized as personal (e.g. motivation),



professional (e.g. job satisfaction), interpersonal or administrative. Often these problems have been studied by comparing teachers from government schools with those from privately managed schools. Although they share many 'on the job' problems, the level of job satisfaction of government schoolteachers appears to be higher than that of the teachers working in privately managed schools (Mohapatra, 1991). Similar results are obtained in respect of teacher motivation, with rural schoolteachers reflecting higher motivation more frequently than urban schoolteachers (Das, 1988). There is less focus on the analysis of interpersonal relationships in schools. The little work done in this respect reveals less congenial relationships among fellow teachers. Although the socio-metric patterns of teachers show considerable variation across schools, a poor relationship between the teachers and the head of the institution, whether male or female, is clearly in evidence (Mohanty, 1990). The factors underlying poor interpersonal relationships among teachers are not known. Studies in this area are required, particularly in view of the fact that Indian society is characteristically a relationship-oriented society (Kakar, 1971).

## INNOVATIONS

The dynamism of an education system can be assessed only in terms of the degree to which it provides scope for innovations. As compared with the primary level, innovations attempted at the level of secondary education have been too few to exercise any major influence on the overall teaching/learning process. As mentioned earlier, a major innovation at the secondary level was the provision of vocational courses, which has not fared well in terms of its management. A second important innovation is the recent establishment of centrally managed *Navodaya* schools (a new kind of residential schools) for promoting quality education in rural sectors of the country. While *Navodaya* schools are equipped with well-trained teachers, a huge campus and impressive buildings, the laboratories are inadequate to meet educational needs, and the facilities for health care and recreational activities are meagre (Haridas, 1992). There are also doubts about the efficacy of these schools for the children of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

## Priority areas of research

In order to develop a sound educational policy, both the central and state governments have identified certain priority areas that need immediate research attention. Broadly speaking, the research concerns relate to four major issues: curriculum, teacher education and training, socio-cultural and economic aspects of education, and planning and management of education. Some crucial research topics related to each issue have been identified. An analysis of these topics would suggest that while some of them relate to general educational issues, many reflect the social, cultural and economic contexts in which the programme of education is to be pursued.

Modest funds are available from the government and other national bodies of education such as the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) to support research by individual researchers or institutions. The task has not been taken seriously either by the government or by the researchers. The government seems to be interested in supporting a researcher who can deliver quick results (within six to twelve months). Owing to this time constraint, serious researchers do not find the programmes attractive. They consider such research highly superficial. Consequently, most research proposals are made by individuals who often lack the necessary experience of working with educational problems. A tendency towards 'fund chasing' research seems to be in evidence. The support received from international organizations (such as the World Bank) has reinforced this tendency. In many instances, even sub-standard proposals are approved and funded simply because money is available. In the evaluation of research reports, similar kinds of dissatisfaction have been experienced. Since data collection and their analyses are undertaken hurriedly, the reports fail to provide any insight into the problem studied. The conclusions are generally unfounded, and policy perspectives appear to be speculative. The situation is similar for the projects that derive support from the national bodies of education on a relatively long-term basis. The complexities involved in the management of projects and an unusual delay in the release of grants lead to a lack of interest among researchers. A change in the orientation of researchers as well as research-supporting organizations is essential in order to make educational research a fruitful enterprise.

A great paucity of programmatic research also characterizes the scene. Both researchers and policy planners tend to have a fragmented view of education. For example, there are many tribal groups in various parts of the country. Adequate knowledge has not been generated so far about their skills, abilities, competencies, motivations, educational needs, aspirations or other psychological characteristics. Hence, it is not surprising to find psychologists and educationists making sweeping generalizations about these groups in discussing the problems of their education. After almost five decades of experience of working with such groups, educationists and policy planners still debate the 'educability' of tribal children (Sujatha, 1996) on the basis of their personal impressions of some specific groups with whom they might at some time have spent a few hours or days. There are, of course, some well-designed studies carried out with tribal groups (Mishra, 1996; Mishra, Sinha, & Berry, 1996) in which the perspectives of psychology, sociology and anthropology have been nicely integrated to comprehend the psychological characteristics of tribals. By adopting a relatively rigorous, but sensitive and culturally appropriate, methodology, these studies have brought out not only several strong aspects of tribal life and culture, but also many psychological strengths of tribal children which could be used as the basis for designing a fruitful policy for their education (Sinha & Mishra, 1997). More studies are needed at different locations in the country so that a general and sound policy for tribal education can be evolved.

## Researchers' working conditions

The preceding sections give us some idea of the condition of educational research in India. In this section, the focus is on the working conditions of educational researchers. Although the discussion is mainly centred on those who hold a teaching position in universities or colleges of higher education, part of it may also apply to researchers who are associated with national bodies of education, and share a major burden of research to facilitate the policy, planning and administration of education.

A distinction can be made between 'commissioned' research and 'voluntary' research. In the former, a problem is identified at the national level as relevant and worthy of research, and a group of experts is requested to participate in the research programme. Often a lucrative budget is available for research, and the work is completed in a given time-frame. Not much difficulty is encountered here, because most of the work initiatives are taken by the grant agencies themselves. The concern is largely with the quality of work that is produced. It shows enormous variation, depending on factors such as programme leadership, type of research team, location of field sites, and the problem(s) addressed by the research. The evidence is for both poor and good-quality work.

The situation is a little complex in the case of voluntary research that develops out of researchers' own initiatives. Funds are generally not easily available. There is tough competition, and a preference is given to proposals submitted by people who are more experienced, have an established research reputation and are generally known to people at the funding agencies. Severe budget constraints also exist for individual research projects. Most funding agencies provide support up to a maximum of 50,000 rupees (approximately US\$1,200), which is too meagre an amount to cover the genuine cost of even a small-scale project that involves field work. In some exceptional cases, a grant may be available up to 100,000–125,000 rupees (approximately US\$2,400–3,000). In spite of substantial price increases over the years, the grants have not been suitably increased. With recent revisions in the salaries of research assistants, almost 80% of the sanctioned grant is utilized for salaries of the project staff. Rarely is there a provision in projects for an office assistant to manage day-to-day correspondence, accounts and other contingencies. Many grant agencies do not allow purchase of equipment such as a tape recorder, calculator or typewriter. The researchers are advised to rent these items, although the total rental charges may be twice as high as the cost of the equipment.

Great financial constraints are experienced with respect to travel and maintenance costs involved in field work. The sanctioned grant usually allows the researcher to make a limited number of visits to the field to monitor research activities. Thus, one is forced to rely on data provided by research assistants. The quality of such data is often suspect. The position of a supervisor is generally not approved by agencies, owing to the assumption that this role will be played by the researchers themselves. Additionally, often the university does not grant researchers the requisite leave for

pursuing research projects. In this state of affairs, the progress and seriousness of the work are severely hampered.

A variety of constraints are also placed on researchers' functioning by their institutions. All universities observe complex rules with respect to the release of money received from grant agencies, appointment of project staff, salaries, purchases, travel and maintenance allowances, etc. Researchers have to follow many long bureaucratic procedures to have their own research money available for work. On the whole, a researcher spends more energy and time on meeting the formalities related to receipt and utilization of the grant than on the research work itself. There is no freedom whatsoever with respect to the appointment of staff, distribution of salaries or purchases. Even small things (such as the printing of questionnaires) involve several official formalities.

Such conditions prevail with almost all research programmes. Entering into a research enterprise is an invitation to recurrent, frustrating experiences. Consequently, many serious researchers have renounced research after having produced high-quality work with support from some of the educational research grant agencies. Unnecessary constraints imposed on researchers will have to be removed if funding agencies and universities wish to see serious individuals coming forward with useful proposals for research on educational processes.

## Concluding comments

Research carried out with respect to primary and secondary education in India presents a gloomy picture. As we have seen, it is not enough to ensure that children have easy access to education; issues pertaining to the relevance and quality of education will also have to be addressed carefully. Researchers have not been successful in responding to today's educational challenges. They need to work seriously towards finding 'economically viable' and 'ecologically valid' (Sinha & Mishra, 1997) models of education for various groups of Indian society.

In spite of the many weaknesses reflected in educational research, one can find some streaks of optimism. Managing education driven by research-based policies in such a vast country is in itself a commendable achievement and a testament to the acceptance of educational challenges. The ecological, cultural and linguistic diversities present within the country often get in the way of developing a universal policy of education, yet a consistent effort towards the universalization of education is in evidence. Researchers have taken strong initiatives to discover the ways in which this long-cherished goal can be achieved. We hope that with new data coming in, a more sound national policy of education will emerge.

Despite all the economic, physical and institutional constraints, many researchers have been able to produce fruitful data in respect of several vital issues associated with educational processes. Their commitment, zeal and ability to cope with frustration are appreciable. A study of the responses of teachers and students to the new educational policy and vocationalization of courses shows great promise for the management of education in the changing scenario. Studies of teachers' motivation,

job satisfaction and interpersonal relationships present us with data which can be helpful in designing intervention strategies for improving teachers' job effectiveness and job efficiency.

The search for alternatives through a great variety of educational innovations is another strong aspect of educational research. This tendency presents a very healthy sign of educational development based on 'self-experience' and 'self-learning'. It also reflects the dynamic nature of education that allows us to cope with newly emerging educational problems and challenges. Many of these innovations are still under trial. Their evaluation studies have been full of weaknesses (Dave, 1997). One can learn from these studies and attempt a more careful monitoring of innovations to exploit their full potential in respect of designing educational policies. Close collaboration and interaction between educational researchers and policy-makers are essential for examining and evaluating the worth of educational innovations. Co-operation with researchers working in other multilingual and multicultural societies will be highly rewarding in respect of designing research on Indian educational processes.

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**OPPORTUNITIES**

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**AND CONSTRAINTS**

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**FOR RESEARCH ON EDUCATION**

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**AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

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**IN AFRICA:**

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**FOCUS ON ASSESSMENT**

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**AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

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*Robert Serpell*

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The past decade has been an episode of social, economic and political turmoil for sub-Saharan Africa. National economic restructuring programmes informed by the policy orientation of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have intensified both internal inequalities in the distribution of wealth and external dependencies on industrialized countries for the financing of basic infrastructure and social services. In this context, education in general, and higher education in particular, has experienced a general, albeit uneven, decline in quality. Most African

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*Original language: English*

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universities have been beleaguered by a significant reduction of overall funding and an exodus of indigenous scholars.

Concurrently, the scale of the social problems confronting service planners in the region has grown to massive proportions. Huge numbers of families have been displaced by civil wars, and fragmented by war casualties and by the AIDS epidemic. The availability of food has continued to be threatened by inadequate agricultural production and distribution, especially in areas affected by drought and war. And the quality of basic education and health services has declined under the combined pressures of escalating population growth, lowered professional morale, and scarcity of material supplies.

The demand for innovative conceptualization of the basic needs and possibilities for human development in Africa is thus greater than ever. But resources in the region for addressing such an agenda are scarce. Most of the fifty nations of Africa have established one or more public universities with an explicit mission that includes not only the training of professional, entrepreneurial and managerial/administrative manpower, but also conducting basic and applied research designed to advance human understanding, to generate new technology and to enhance the design of public policy and professional practices. The faculties of these universities have been a major source of educational research (Coleman & Court, 1993; Goma, 1984; Nicol, 1967; Otaala et al., 1998; Stifel, Davidson & Coleman, 1982; Tembo et al., 1985).

Over the past two decades, however, public universities in Africa, embattled in the competition for national funds, have tended to increase student enrolments while holding the numbers of faculty and their level of emoluments static—in the hope of cultivating an image of enhanced cost-effectiveness relative to other branches of the national system of formal educational provision. This focus of administrative planning has been driven in large part by the preference of many accountants, economists and financial institutions such as the World Bank for numerical indices of enrolment, throughput, etc. (Samoff, 1993; Serpell, 1993a). The effect has been a gradual erosion of the commitment by many African universities to the traditional university goal of generating new forms of knowledge, since progress towards that goal tends to be documented in qualitative descriptive forms that lends itself much less easily to quantitative summarization. University faculty are held accountable by their employers primarily in terms of their contributions to teaching rather than to research.

Yet the traditions of scholarship remain embedded in the institutionalized practices of appointment and promotion of academic staff (Kashoki, 1979). Commissioned research has thus become increasingly attractive for a number of reasons, some more respectable than others. Because such research is explicitly tied to application in fields of publicly recognized importance, it appears to some policy-makers to have greater legitimacy in the context of economic recession than more generically motivated, basic research. Moreover, the agencies commissioning such research are often more generous in their funding practices than the more traditional, academic research foundations. Individual researchers are able to significantly enhance



their income by taking on such projects, and their institutions are often willing to support them in doing so, provided that a component of funding is allocated to institutional 'overheads'. Many of these agencies are international in character, derive their resources from the more affluent, industrialized countries of the world, and thus afford the scholars they fund significant opportunities for international visibility.

While such visibility can lead at best to intrinsically valuable cross-fertilization of ideas, it can also contribute to the 'brain drain' of outstanding scholars from the continent, who choose to work abroad in societies where they find an environment more conducive to research productivity, as well as other more concrete, material benefits. Moreover, the relatively short-term product orientation of most commissioned studies, while giving rise to enhanced levels of explicit accountability among researchers, may also serve to distort the pattern of reporting on research in the direction of piecemeal publication, rather than systematic accumulation of knowledge (Zimba, 1998).

Given this context of economic scarcity and preponderance of externally based resources for the sponsorship of research, much of the educational research in Africa over the coming decade will probably involve partnerships between indigenous scholars and external agencies. A major administrative challenge faced by such research will be to maximize the opportunities for original insight and creativity while ensuring accountability to relevant audiences (Serpell, 1988a, 1997). In this paper, I describe four different models for the design, organization and sponsorship of educational research in Africa, and discuss for each of them certain distinctive strategic advantages and risks. Each of the models is illustrated with a brief outline of an instance of actual research.

The primary contrast between these models is their originating agency: a local African institution, an international research group in the North, a South-South network or an individual scholar. Each of these types of agent has its own distinctive strengths and weaknesses. Research initiated by a local institution is generally responsive to felt needs. It tends to be strictly pragmatic, and is often somewhat conservative. Research initiated by an international consortium of scholars generally has access to state-of-the-art technology. It is often preoccupied with quality control (often operationalized as conformity with a blueprint, and nominal equivalence of procedures across different sites). Such research is generally slow to deliver usable results, and is sometimes perceived by African participants as exploitative. South-South research networks are designed to promote capacity-building by affording agency to African scholars and institutions. They generally have a shorter history than other international collaborative structures, and need to confront problems of defining priorities, focus and authority. The mutual trust that arises among key players in a successful network facilitates efficiency, but also runs the risk of degenerating into an exclusive clique. Research driven by individual initiative is often theoretically coherent and thorough, but is generally constrained by limited resources. Without institutional sponsorship it seldom achieves much visibility elsewhere in the South, resulting in duplication of efforts.

The field of education is extremely broad, and research can contribute to its enhancement in a great variety of ways. In order to restrict the range of considerations within manageable proportions for in-depth analysis, I have chosen to focus on one particular domain in which I have some first-hand experience: research on assessment and special education. Another problem of selection is posed by the ecocultural, political and economic diversity of the African continent. Two of the projects I describe involved indigenous researchers from several African countries; the others were conducted in Zambia, where, as a citizen and long-term resident, I have greater knowledge of detail than is accessible to me in other African countries. Nevertheless, on the basis of discussions at numerous regional and subregional conferences, and visits as a consultant to various countries of the region, the principles that I derive from these studies appear to have relevance for the continent as a whole.

### **Children and adults with mental retardation and developmental disabilities**

The design of educational provision appropriate for meeting the needs of children with developmental disabilities has tended to be perceived as a relatively marginal issue deserving of rather low priority. Within the domain of special education, the condition of mental retardation has an ambiguous status. On the one hand, the number of children affected by mild or more severe degrees of mental retardation in any given country is larger than the combined numbers of those affected by auditory, motor or visual impairments severe enough to warrant special education. And numerical preponderance is often regarded as qualifying a sector of the population for some degree of priority attention. On the other hand, case studies of successful integration into society through special education are generally easier to find for the conditions of blindness and paraplegia than they are for deafness, and such 'success stories' are particularly hard to find for the condition of mental retardation. Thus a superficial argument often arises in the process of decision-making that construes special education for the 'physically handicapped' (i.e. children with motor impairments) and the blind as a 'better investment' than special education for the deaf, and the latter as a better investment than special education for the mentally retarded (or intellectually impaired).

Nevertheless, from a humanistic perspective, children with mental retardation and their families are arguably deserving of some priority access to special education for the following reasons. They are among the poorest of the poor, and thus most in need of compassionate help and public subsidy. Furthermore, education is likely to make a more crucial difference to the quality of their lives than it will for almost any other category of potential students. Indeed, access to special education for these children may often be a matter of life or death, with professional educators acting as the most powerful advocates for mobilizing attention to their most basic needs for adequate nutrition, clothing and their basic human rights to respect and protection from abuse.

## AFRICAN INITIATIVE

In Zambia, in the period shortly before and after political independence in 1964, psychological test development was undertaken on a substantial scale in the contexts of public education and the mining industry. The national government established the Educational and Occupational Assessment Service (EOAS), which conducted selection exercises for competitive access to limited openings for employment and further education (Heron, 1975). For the professional validation of its selection methods, the EOAS followed the standard principles of psychometric test development established in Western, industrialized societies (Irvine, 1969; MacArthur, Irvine & Brimble, 1964). Most of the tests generated in this period were designed for candidates with seven or more years of formal schooling. In the construction of their initial item banks, these tests were closely modelled on Western tests, and discussion of their validity centred on their predictive power with respect to performance in job or high-school settings (Durojaiye, 1984; Vernon, 1967). Early on in its historical formation, the national culture of independent Zambia thus completely incorporated an application of exogenous psychometric technology that purported to refine and standardize the process of assessment of individual differences within the general realm of education.

In the 1970s, the educational assessment functions of the EOAS were taken over by the Psychological Service of the Ministry of General Education, which has continued up to the late 1990s to conduct annual revisions and restandardization of the national secondary school selection examination, including a battery of academic achievement tests and two general aptitude tests (one verbal and one non-verbal) that is used to determine eligibility for further schooling beyond the seventh grade for over 100,000 candidates per year. The director of the service, however, recognized that another set of objectives for educational assessment could not be served by this type of test, namely the identification of children during their early years of primary schooling who had special needs arising from intellectual and/or sensory disabilities. As a first step towards designing a culturally appropriate measure of intellectual functioning in Zambian primary school pupils, he decided to standardize a test of basic reading skills at Grade 3 (Sharma, 1973). The idea was that this might later serve as one of several criteria for the validation of a general intelligence test.

A valuable by-product of this project was a sobering profile of widespread underachievement relative to national curriculum goals based on a systematic nationwide sample of children enrolled in the third grade of public primary schools. Complementing the results of a more selective study designed to evaluate the impact of curriculum change in the 1960s (McAdam, 1973), Sharma's (1973) results provided evidence of a massive challenge confronting the government's declared policy of imparting basic literacy to the whole of the next generation of Zambians in a society that had an adult literacy rate of about 33% (Kashoki, 1978*b*) at independence. A major impediment to the achievement of this goal was the political decision to use English as the medium of instruction by Grade 1, despite the fact that less than 5% of the adult population claimed to use English as their home language (Kashoki,

1978a; Sekeleti, in press). These data provided fuel for an intensive national debate on educational reform (Serpell, 1978; Zambia, 1976, 1977).

However, given the serious doubts raised by this study as to whether most schoolchildren were receiving an adequate opportunity to learn to read, the test was deemed unsuitable as a validation criterion for the development of a local test of general intelligence to assess children for developmental disabilities and/or special educational needs. The limited progress of Sharma's institutionally sponsored test development programme towards its stated objective may be attributed in part to the conservative and pragmatic orientation that characterizes many endeavours in such contexts. In other countries in the region with similar levels of resource allocation to education (Kenya, Zimbabwe), the government went ahead with establishing assessment centres to facilitate referrals to their rapidly expanding special education services without the benefit of any systematic standardization of the instruments used for assessment (Kristensen & Wabuge, 1989; Mariga, 1989).

The pattern of test development in these centres followed a more ad hoc strategy, giving rise to a considerable armoury of instruments, whose interpretation had to be guided by clinical intuition without the benefit of any standardization data as a frame of reference for day-to-day administration. Thus, at a 1987 regional workshop for Commonwealth countries of South-East/Central Africa on 'early intervention to prevent or ameliorate mental handicap and developmental disabilities', one of the recommendations adopted was as follows:

There is a need in the sub-region to develop localized, culturally and ecologically appropriate assessment tests, with systematic standardization and validation. Universities and other research units in the sub-region should collaborate to draw up a concrete plan of work for this purpose with a clear division of responsibilities and time-table (Serpell, Nabuzoka & Lesi, 1989, p. 176-77).

Several recommendations of this general character can be found in the reports of committees and conferences bringing together education and psychology professionals in the region over the past three decades (Dasen, 1998; International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development, 1996; Landers & Kagitcibasi, 1990). Unfortunately, however, little or no progress has been made in shaping the rhetoric into an action plan with adequate resources.

#### INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION, PLANNED AND MANAGED IN THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE

A quite different process for the design, management and interpretation of research was followed in the case of the International Pilot Study of Severe Childhood Disabilities (IPSSCD) (Belmont, 1984; Schuurman, 1995). The original inspiration came from a group of researchers (most of whom were based and experienced in highly industrialized countries) at a meeting in the Netherlands sponsored by the Bishop Bekkers Institute (BBI) (Stein et al., 1981). The study was designed to address

the need for reliable and affordable estimates of prevalence as a basis for advocating the establishment of appropriate health, educational and psychological services for children with severe disabilities and their families, with special attention to the condition of mental retardation.

Prior to this undertaking, and indeed in spite of it, a common practice in policy making about childhood disability services in Third World countries was to extrapolate directly from prevalence estimates based on epidemiological research in industrialized countries. Thus the same percentage rates for each category of disability were applied to the total child population of a given Third World country reported by its latest national census. The resulting figures would then be used as a basis for assessing the degree to which current special educational provision falls short of probable need.

Some critics, however, would argue that the prevalence of a given disability is likely to be significantly lower among school-age children in a Third World country than that projected from industrialized countries, given the higher general rate of infant mortality, and the lesser availability and accessibility of relevant medical facilities for protection against life-threatening diseases of such children, especially the most vulnerable among them. On the other hand, some might argue that high rates of disease, malnutrition and low levels of health care provision would be likely to generate a higher basic incidence of congenital impairments, and that this would offset the higher level of hazards to survival to yield an overall higher prevalence rate among school-age children.

Such speculative debates, the BBI conference decided, could only be rationally resolved by collecting local epidemiological data in each country. However, the methods currently used in industrialized countries for the collection of such definitive data relied (and still rely) on sophisticated methods of assessment, administered by highly trained professional personnel, and recorded and reported for statistical aggregation through elaborate and expensive information systems.

The challenge addressed by the study was whether reliable prevalence estimates could be generated in Third World countries using feasible and affordable methods of data collection. Three methods were explored: sample, door-to-door field surveys using either a concise ten-question checklist or a more extended structured questionnaire, and informal interviews with local key informants to identify affected children.

The Institute for African Studies at the University of Zambia was invited to participate in this study in response to a request for technical advice on implementation of a national campaign to reach disabled children (Serpell et al., 1988b). The campaign had the following objectives:

- (a) to raise the level of public consciousness of the special needs of disabled children;
- (b) to establish comprehensive provincial registers of disabled children;
- (c) to lay the foundations of nation-wide health and educational services for disabled children; and
- (d) to supply technical aids and prosthetic devices to as many disabled children as possible and to train the children and their families in the use of such aids.

The campaign's general method was to use the mass media and letters to schools and clinics to solicit self-reporting by families who thought their child might be disabled, followed by evaluations on predetermined days conducted by an itinerant district team of paraprofessionals following a brief training course. Prevalence estimates were seen in this context as being facilitated by the registers (objective b), and as an essential ingredient for planning service development (objective c).

It was therefore determined that participation in the international study might be a valuable adjunct to the campaign, if only to provide a kind of quality control estimate of the level of coverage achieved in a sample area by the self-reporting procedures of the campaign. A reciprocal benefit for the international study was that the campaign reporting method could be conceived as a version of the loosely defined alternative approach of eliciting prevalence estimates through key informant interviews.

Added value was tacked onto this convergence of objectives between the international study and the national campaign by securing an extension of sponsorship from the BBI. This enabled the graduate research officer appointed to conduct the field survey to stay on in the district and co-ordinate the establishment of an itinerant rehabilitation team. This team was charged with following up the children evaluated as disabled with a community-based rehabilitation programme (Nabuzoka, 1986; World Health Organization, 1980).

One of the benefits of such international collaboration is access to state-of-the-art technology in a specialized field of science such as epidemiology. Yet this benefit also brings with it a predictable set of costs. Not only must international communication be maintained (in itself a costly process for many Third World countries), but some degree of local autonomy must be sacrificed in the interest of standardization for purposes of cross-national comparability. Considerable time and effort need to be invested in negotiating the specifics of such standardization, lest it be reduced to blind adherence to a blueprint. Without intensive and egalitarian cross-site discussion, the criteria for such control may lean towards nominal rather than functional equivalence, giving rise to what Berry (1969) has termed 'pseudo-etic' measurement (Serpell, 1990). An exploration of the degree to which clinicians in the various Third World countries participating in the IPSSCD had a common conception of mental retardation was undertaken as an adjunct to the main study with somewhat ambiguous results (Serpell et al., 1988a).

Another cost of this strategy tends to be the slow rate of delivery of usable results. Based on the inconclusive findings of the International Pilot Study (Belmont, 1984), a further cycle of studies was launched, entitled the International Epidemiological Study of Severe Childhood Disabilities (IESCD). Ten years later, the IESCD was the focus of a stock-taking workshop in Delhi. Unfortunately, the elegantly phrased conclusions and recommendations do not suggest that almost twenty years of research have succeeded in responding to the concrete challenge of determining a practically feasible and affordable method of data collection to generate reliable prevalence estimates of severe childhood disability in Third World countries. Rather a series of cautions and concerns were articulated, followed by calls for further research (Schuurman, 1995). Both local clients and national administrators

tend to perceive research as exploitative when the principal beneficiaries appear to be scholars, and the dangers of such a perception are intensified when international travel is involved. Moreover, the pressure for scientific research to deliver practically usable results is often more intense in a Third World society. Thus researchers and institutions in the affluent countries of the North need to be especially attentive to such concerns when they are expressed by colleagues from the South.

#### SOUTH-SOUTH NETWORK SPONSORSHIP AND/OR SUPPORT

One political response to such concerns has been to advocate for the economies of scale achieved by international collaboration to be focused within the less affluent segments of the world (South Commission, 1990). Not only is the stock of technical expertise in Third World countries often underestimated by international and national bureaucracies, but certain specific demands placed on the design of social services and field research by the socio-cultural and economic conditions of a given Third World country often have more in common with those that prevail in another Third World country than with those familiar to experts from affluent societies.

A notable example of African regional collaboration in the field of mental retardation was co-sponsored by the International League of Societies for Persons with Mental Handicap (ILSMH) through its Network Africa, and by the International Labour Organization (ILO) through its African Rehabilitation Institute. The first phase of the project comprised a three-week workshop in 1986 that brought together in Kenya policy-makers and practitioners in the field of mental retardation from Botswana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe to design a modular curriculum on social and vocational rehabilitation for the training of personnel to work with persons with mental handicap (African Rehabilitation Institute, 1987).

In 1988, a further meeting was held in Zimbabwe with representatives from nine of the same countries and three more (Malawi, Mauritius and Swaziland) to review the training modules designed in Kenya and to plan a common format for field-testing them. The co-ordinator of the project (Lilian Mariga) visited each of the participating countries to inspect and monitor implementation of the plan. In 1989, a summative meeting brought together representatives from eleven of the participating countries to share their experience with the field testing and revise the modules accordingly. The revised modular curriculum was subsequently published and disseminated throughout the continent with the inscription that 'any parts of this book may be copied, reproduced, or adapted to meet local needs without permission from the African Rehabilitation Institute, provided the parts reproduced are distributed free or at cost—not for profit' (African Rehabilitation Institute, 1991).

One of the positive features of this approach is its contribution through the participation of indigenous, local professionals to the capacity-building of organizations and institutions within a Third World region to conceptualize issues, critically examine methods, and professionally manage technical training and programme development in a specialized field such as mental retardation services.

Not only does such local participation afford opportunities for local adaptation and validation of science and technology, but it also virtually guarantees 'appropriation' by relevant professionals, already active in the field in each country, of the philosophy, methodology and practices incorporated in the eventual product of the research and development process. The concept of appropriation has been advanced as a socio-culturally embedded formulation of cognitive growth that captures important aspects of learning and development neglected by earlier theoretical formulations of education (Rogoff, 1993; Serpell, 1993*b*, 1998).

Among the salient problems of South-South networking are those arising from international political rivalries which sometimes threaten to overshadow scientific and technical considerations in setting priorities, especially with respect to the designation of personnel responsible for management, implementation and reporting of such collaborative activities. Such problems arise in almost all collaborative endeavours, but they are perhaps disproportionately hazardous for the successful completion of such projects in societies that have a relatively small number of highly trained personnel, who by virtue of that scarcity are frequently called upon to shift their attention across a wide variety of fields, and who tend to be both occupationally and internationally mobile.

#### INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE

One of the hallmarks of scientific progress has been the systematic accumulation of knowledge, with researchers maintaining a tight focus on particular questions and pursuing them to their logical conclusion (Goma, 1984). Institutional research initiatives often 'cast their net' relatively wide, aiming to bridge the concerns of multiple investigators, and in the process tend to diffuse the focus beyond the scope of concentration required for significant progress on any one of the many specific questions with which they 'touch base'. Complementary to such efforts, therefore, there is a need for individual investigators and/or small teams with a shared vision to pursue those questions in more detail.

One such narrowly focused, concentrated endeavour has been the development of a test of intellectual functioning directly adapted to the eco-cultural context of those children in South-Central Africa whose home environments afford them few opportunities to acquire the skills of pictorial representation before they enter school. The initial impetus for this work was a theoretical debate concerning the origins of cross-cultural variations in the rate of development of various dimensions of cognition (Berry & Dasen, 1974; Cole et al., 1971; Goodnow, 1969; Okonji, 1980; Serpell, 1977). An experimental study conducted among urban schoolchildren in Zambia and Britain in 1971–72 found that pattern reproduction skills among the Zambian children were significantly superior to those of English children in the medium of wire modelling, while the same English children outperformed their Zambian peers in the medium of pencil and paper drawing (Serpell, 1979). Both groups scored equally in the medium of clay modelling, and the gender differences in performance on the drawing and wire modelling tasks were absent from the clay modelling task.



Subsequent exploratory test development in Zambia with a small sample followed longitudinally in a rural area (Serpell, 1977, 1993a) and a larger, stratified sample of urban schoolchildren (Ezeilo, 1978) gave rise to a procedure entitled the Panga Munthu (Make-a-Person) Test (PMT). The PMT test requires that the child, without time limit, makes a model of a person from a lump of clay. A reliable scoring system is used to rate the child's model, and normative data have been collected from a nation-wide sample of over 3,000 children enrolled in public rural and urban primary schools (Kathuria & Serpell, 1996). Relative to the other instruments available for the clinical and educational assessment of African children, the PMT claims:

certain distinctive advantages:

- It is simple to administer.
- The instructions are easy for children to understand, even if they have quite limited language ability.
- It draws on a range of basic skills that are very widely distributed among African children irrespective of whether they have been to school.
- It does not appear to be significantly easier for urban than for rural children.
- It does not appear to be significantly easier for boys than for girls.
- Reference norms are now available for a sizeable sample of school-going children in one African country.
- While the test has some construct validity as a measure of general intellectual competence (it shows a steady increase in scores with increasing age, and it discriminates well between groups of children known from other criteria to differ substantially in general intelligence), it does not appear to tap dimensions of intellectual functioning that are strongly influenced by the amount of exposure a child has received to formal education in a modern school setting (Kathuria & Serpell, 1996, p. 25).

Without the benefit of the kind of top-down planning that informed the broader programmes of research previously mentioned, this programme of test development has depended on limited resources, and has been less widely publicized outside the country in which it was conducted. Thus several African developmental and educational psychologists participating in the 1996 African Regional Workshop in Lusaka at which the standardization study was presented (Kathuria & Serpell, 1996) expressed surprise at the existence of such an instrument. Such low visibility increases the risk of duplication of effort in a region that can ill afford it, given its limited resources for research and technology development.

One strategic implication for future efforts in the region is the value of documentation and regional dissemination of local case studies. Another resource, for instance, of considerable, under-realized potential utility in several African societies is the set of instructional videotapes painstakingly compiled by Lilian Mariga and Roy McConkey for ZIMCARE (1984). This modular series of tapes illustrates the techniques of home-based rehabilitation of children with mental retardation among low-income rural and urban African families in Zimbabwe. These tapes have been successfully dubbed in the Shona and Ndebele languages for the purposes of 'cascade'

training and dissemination within that country. Many, if not all, of the modules could be dubbed in other African languages for use elsewhere in the region, where the social, cultural and economic conditions of many families in need of such assistance are much closer to those represented in the ZIMCARE tapes than in any comparable instructional materials available from industrialized countries of the North.

## Conclusions and future prospects

Reflecting on the lessons to be learned from the various lines of research outlined here, it seems that certain benefits would accrue to a somewhat less tightly structured type of centrally planned research endeavour, modelled after the general design of the classic study by Segall, Campbell and Herskovits (1966). The central plan would focus on conceptualization of a research question, stipulating certain categories of information required to address it, but stopping short of specifying the data collection procedures to be followed.

One such question that has often been posed at regional and international conferences on mental retardation concerns the capacity of indigenous cultural practices to cater to the basic human needs of persons with mental handicap without segregating or stigmatizing them. An important resource for moving the debate beyond rhetoric would be a set of carefully documented accounts of such persons' everyday lives. Given the low prevalence of significant mental retardation, to set out to identify such individuals embedded in rural African communities would entail considerable cost. However, researchers trained in ethnographic methods and already committed to medium-term participant observation studies in various rural communities in different parts of Africa could perhaps be enticed into appending the task of generating such data to their other activities. A central planning group would be needed to distribute a field manual and an invitation to participate in the compilation over several years of a collection of case studies.

For a variety of reasons, each of the research models that I have described is likely to continue to be followed over the coming decades. Each of them appears to hold a strategic advantage with respect to one of the following desirable features: responsiveness to felt needs, access to state-of-the-art technology, capacity-building and regional dissemination of results, and theoretical coherence. Along with these advantages, each model seems particularly vulnerable to certain risks. By reflecting on the complementary strengths and weaknesses of these various models, planners and administrators of educational research may seek to optimize the match between their perceptions of priorities and the type of research design to which they allocate resources.

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# EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

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## IN LATIN AMERICA:

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## THE LIE OF THE LAND

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*Soledad Pérez and Abdeljalil Akkari*

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Latin America has become a scene of great political changes. Most of its countries have undergone transition from a period of authoritarian rule, when the isolation of academic communities was the norm, to democracy. At present, the continent is suffering from an economic crisis not without consequences for the field of education.

We shall attempt to single out past trends in educational research before going on to introduce the relevant theoretical inputs that can, in our view, help us to grasp what is at stake in the field of educational science. Next, given the diversity of contexts in Latin America, we shall turn our attention to the research actors—state structures, universities and research centres, NGOs, foundations and co-operation agencies—and assess their situation. We conclude with a look at the future prospects in store for educational research.

### **Historical background and theoretical approaches**

#### THE 1950s AND 1960s

Educational research institutions have been operating in several Latin American countries since the 1930s. Political and socio-cultural links existing between States have been conducive to the production of international comparative studies. Until

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Page 327 contains a biographical note about the author.

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the 1960s, educational research was geared to description and standard-setting and—apart from a few interesting research-action initiatives already under way in one or two countries—involved relatively little field work (Freire, 1965; Meister, 1969). Nevertheless, some of the research work did make it possible to draw up a report on the state of education in the countries concerned. The work in question was discussed at events such as the CEDES Conference on Education and Economic and Social Development in Latin America, organized under the aegis of UNESCO, the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Conservative and progressive schools of thought have always existed side by side. The dominant themes in Latin American educational research over the period 1950 to 1965 were above all influenced by North American human-resource theory.

According to Schmelkes (1995), Latin-American social science's development-oriented leanings in the 1960s led to education being regarded as one of the fundamental tools for building a modern and technocratic society. As such, it was considered a worthwhile investment whose dividends—well-trained human resources—would further economic development and help to form responsible citizens in a stable democracy. Education, it was said, would diminish social differences, improve the lot of disadvantaged groups and foster social mobility. The work of ECLA in those days provided what were by no means insignificant theoretical foundations. ECLA recommendations sought to encourage the transition from traditional, agricultural societies to modern ones built on models of productivity growth and industrialization. Education, then, came to be viewed—through the prism of human-resource theory—basically as an input. The leading issues of the day included: access to, and retention in, school for all sections of society, teacher training and recruitment—particularly in rural areas—and the financing of the education system (García-Huidobro, Tellet & Ochoa, 1990).

Other, more radical currents of thought, meanwhile, were impressing Latin American researchers. The 1950s and 1960s were times of great social, political and economic change, with Cuba embodying the neo-Marxist tendencies that fired the hopes of progressive researchers throughout the continent. Several of them pitched their research work at macro-social level in the belief that the ongoing social, economic and political changes would ultimately spark revolutionary changes in their own countries. Towards the mid-1960s, dependency theory took the intellectual centre stage, and Latin American countries were shown as the dependent partners in their relations with developed countries (Cardoso & Faletto, 1969). 'Dependency theory' did not systematize the role of education, but together with 'reproduction theory' it nonetheless formed the basis of much of the work marking that period. This sociological theory, we recall, identified the unfair share-out of the benefits of education, and established that the dominant groups in society moulded the content of education to suit their own interests. Education was seen as an impediment to the efficiency of society's structures and functions.

Another contemporary paradigm—which can be linked to 'liberation theology'—advocated research on mass education. It paved the way for the seminal work of

P. Freire (1965, 1969, 1970) on oppressed-group awareness raising and literacy. Education, it was argued, must give people freedom through knowledge and an ability to make choices. People must no longer be treated as the objects, but rather as the subjects of education. There must be dialogue between equal partners for subjects to interact and participate. The communication process, according to Freire, had become politicized and thus become an attempt to change social reality. As far as he was concerned, thought and action were the bedrock principles that would ultimately enable the most deprived members of society to express themselves and take part in the social process. Much inspired by Freire's work, educational researchers broadened their scope from purely educational to socio-political aspects. Education ceased to be based on a range of knowledge-transmission techniques and became closely linked to the political leanings of teachers and the taught.

#### THE 1970s

Educational researchers began to embark on an increasing amount of field work, and research became more closely linked to a State's economic development. The functional literacy programme (UNESCO), for instance, was strongly supported throughout the decade. Alongside ongoing investigations, theme sets and methodologies were developed for participatory research or to enable grass-roots actors to draw on the collective memory. Yet it has to be said that the 1970s also saw ideas about educational research subjected to a good deal of reappraisal. Decision-makers, education managers and researchers, among others, noted that— notwithstanding efforts made at the national level—the universality of learning for all was proving an uphill battle. Hopes that education would serve to remedy all ills had been but partially realized. Public opinion and the social actors recognized that social inequalities had not vanished and that economic progress was poor. Thus literacy campaigns had been failing, often owing to tight budgets and a lack of qualified personnel.

Some researchers turned to critical historical analysis: Carnoy (1977), for example, talks of 'education as cultural imperialism'. In the early 1970s, Latin American academic circles opened up to participatory educational research—based largely on the ideas of the Brazilian basic-education movements. In Argentina, Meister (1969) and others were researching the involvement of grass-roots actors in development programmes. 'People's radio schools' were started up in Ecuador with the help of the Catholic Church, with the aim of teaching indigenous adults—assisted by specially trained supervisors—to read and write via radio broadcasts. The levels of grass-root actors' involvement in the various development and learning programmes became the subject of close scrutiny.

#### THE 1980s

Latin American countries wavered between dictatorships and unsteady democracies. Throughout the decade, public and private research institutes developed methodologies



hinging on actor participation and respect for autochthonous cultures. Indigenous groups emerged and gained recognition on the national and international scene, sparking a range of research-action initiatives and community development projects.

#### THE 1990s

Research fields have become far more diverse. In 1990, ECLA famously urged the countries of Latin America to embark upon a *transformación productiva con equidad* (productive transformation with equity). 'Reproduction-theory' type analysis gave way to more pointed pragmatic concerns, e.g. links between education and production, vocational training, etc.

A great deal of research work has been done in Latin America in such fields as science teaching, non-formal education, comparative education and rural education. In the case of non-formal education, governments are struggling to afford the necessary funding to meet continuously growing demand but are being forced to turn to other institutions, both local and international. This has been the focus of much attention on the part of scholars. Investigating the educational and socio-economic role of women in community life, Pieck (1995b), for example, shows how taking part in housecraft courses enables women to devote a share of their time to work in the community: doing the housework more efficiently leaves them free to take on outside social and economic activities.

Pérez (1992) examines women's involvement in non-formal pre-school education centres; this topic was the focus of a comparative study carried out in Azuay province, Ecuador. The part women play in community life is often a function of their standard of living and position within the family.

Brushini (1996) shows the structural inequalities confronting women on the Brazilian labour market. Their wages are lower and they enjoy far less job security. It is evident that continuing sexual divisions in domestic labour and responsibilities within the family play a key role in the way society works.

The *Centre international d'études pédagogiques* (CIEP—International Centre for Educational Studies), in its assessment of the Emmaus working community in Uruguay, highlights the importance of the community (Centre, 1990). Community learning programmes can help those ejected from mainstream society by the economic crisis to take control of their lives and create added value which in turn helps them to participate fully in the life of the local community.

The position of teachers has attracted the interest of many researchers. Briones (1996), for instance, seeking to facilitate teachers' integration into local communities, came up with the concept of self-education. His research exposes the human and professional isolation of newly qualified young teachers appointed to remote rural areas. Briones stresses that they must be allowed to further their professional development by becoming self-sufficient through 'teach yourself' methods of learning. Distance learning with audio-visual aids and special seminars gives these teachers an opportunity to discuss their daily and professional problems with others in a similar position.

In addition to studies such as that of Filmus (1995), the relation between education and the labour market has received greater attention since the launch of the regional-level CIID-CENEP network (*Red latinoamericana de educación y de trabajo*). An example of network members' action may be seen in the conceptual categories used to analyse education-labour interlinkages and child labour in working-class sections of the population. The network has also been responsible for staging a Latin American seminar on vocational-training research—sponsored by the CINTERFOR inter-American research and documentation centre and Brazil's National Learning Department (SENAI)—with a view to assessing activities relating to this topic. Among the issues remaining at the top of the agenda are the limitations of labour market research; the methodological analysis of public policies and use of findings in the field of vocational training; and educational research and its usefulness in that field.

Private education is another matter of intense interest to researchers. An international survey conducted in 1992 exposed the inequalities existing between public and private education. The mathematics average was sixty-six among 13-year-old Colombian pupils attending the country's elitist private-sector schools and thirty-three for those at public schools. A similar discrepancy was reported in Costa Rica (seventy-two and forty-four respectively); and the picture seems to have been much the same with respect to science subjects (Schiefelbein, 1995).

Thus the theoretical frameworks of the various types of research can be seen to be highly diversified. Macro-social changes were what first aroused the interest of researchers. In that respect, education policy and planning have played a key role. Indeed, relations between governments and the world of research have been riddled with constraints and negotiations. Latin American researchers have gone on to tackle these issues from the viewpoint of more local concerns, taking communities and research and/or development projects as their focal point.

## Research actors

There are basically four types of actors involved in educational research in the majority of Latin American countries: state bodies, universities and independent research centres, NGOs (national and international, religious and secular), and co-operation agencies (regional and international). Rather than launch into a full description of those actors, we have chosen to examine a selection of defining examples which can—in our opinion—serve to illustrate the general trends in the region's research.

### STATE BODIES

Most Latin American countries possess institutional frameworks that enable them to conduct research in the field of education. Brazil's *Instituto nacional de estudos e pesquisas educacionais* (INEP), for example, financed an average of twenty-four projects a year between 1972 and 1982—although that hardly amounts to very much in comparison with the size and needs of a country with a population of over 160 million inhabitants (Vieira, 1985).

Research institutes linked to government departments of education played a dynamic role throughout the continent during the 1960s and 1970s, but then gradually faded. In Peru, the *Instituto Nacional de Investigación Educativa* (INIDE—National Institute for Educational Research) was among the first hit by the economic crisis and the Peruvian Government's austerity measures. Spending cuts caused a decline in the number of research projects INIDE was running nation-wide from ninety to fifty a year between 1977 and 1985. The *Dirección Nacional de Investigación Educativa y Capacitación Docente* (DINIC—National Office for Educational Research and Teacher Training) is currently in charge of research in the fields of educational psychology and educational sociology in particular. In Chile, the *Centro de Perfeccionamiento, Experimentación e Investigaciones Pedagógicas del Ministerio de Educación* (CDEIP—the Ministry of Education's Centre for Teacher Training and Educational Research) remained responsible for educational research until 1989, when it saw its field of action restricted owing to political and financial difficulties. In Colombia, the *Fondo Colombiano de Investigaciones Científicas y Proyectos Especiales Francisco José de Caldas* (COLCIENCIAS—the Francisco José de Caldas Foundation for Scientific Research in Colombia) has had the task of financing and executing educational research and innovation programmes. In 1989, the *Instituto Colombiano de Pedagogía* (ICOLPE—Colombian Institute of Pedagogy) was set up and then closed owing to budgetary cutbacks (Pérez, 1998).

Consultation of many Latin American reports on the matter primarily reveals that few analysts actually recommend the creation of brand new research structures. Pizarro (1990), for instance, considers that instead of setting up new institutions at national level, the emphasis should be placed on bolstering existing structures and endowing them with a genuine capacity for research and co-ordination—always a requirement for inter-institution relations.

Newly established state institutions generally tend to take the form of documentation centres designed to supply reliable and regularly updated information. The Caribbean Research Information Service (CERIS) opened recently in Trinidad and Tobago to undertake the task of collecting documents relating to education-system organization, gathering information linked to ongoing research, compiling bibliographies of completed research and, finally, pinpointing potential sources of information.

#### UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH CENTRES

University education departments represent the chief centres of educational research work in many Latin American countries. In the early 1980s, for example, Brazilian universities were responsible for nearly 80% of the country's educational research. Eight per cent was done by INEP, 2% by the municipal education offices and the remainder by NGOs (Vieira, 1985). Postgraduate programmes, however, did not begin to take root there until the end of the 1970s. By 1981, twenty-seven such programmes were being run at twenty-two higher education establishments.

In Chile, the departments of education of the Catholic University of Chile (CUC) and the University of Chile (UC) offer postgraduate courses in education.

Educational research in the Caribbean region began in 1954 with the appearance of the Educational Research Centre, under the University of the West Indies (UWI). In 1990, an independent educational research centre opened in Jamaica to carry out research on behalf of public and private institutions.

University educational research has suffered as a result of the problem of imbalances between teaching and research. The exponential growth in student numbers in most countries has served to restrict research opportunities. Moreover, lecturers in departments of educational science have in some cases been appointed at master's degree level. With some lecturers reluctant to embark upon Ph.D. work so long as pay rises remain a function of their length of service, and with the rapid decline in working conditions and levels of pay, teaching duties far outweigh research in many departments of education.

Postgraduate programmes may have proliferated in recent years, but there has been no accompanying rise in the number of research projects launched: teaching has remained the dominant feature, even within the framework of those programmes.

Nevertheless, there have been several noteworthy initiatives designed to offset low levels of scientific output.

For the past fifteen years or so, the ANPE (National Association for Graduate Studies in Education) has been staging an annual event in Brazil to enable researchers from around the country to present and debate their work. Also meeting on a regular basis are a range of theme-specific working groups. Meanwhile, the *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico* (CNPq) and *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* (CAPES) have acted as a driving force in stimulating educational research, Ph.D. and postgraduate training, and postgraduate-programme assessment.

In launching the Programme for the Improvement of Quality and Equity of Education (MECE), the Chilean Ministry of Education has been responsible for yet another interesting research initiative aimed at fostering closer relations between researchers and policy-makers. The programme draws heavily on World Bank recommendations relating to teaching standards. Indicators have been developed to weigh up returns on educational investments. The assessment, however, concentrates mainly on quantitative factors, with little attention to the social context within which the schools are operating. Providing deprived neighbourhoods with better equipped public-sector schools, for example, relies not just on the limited means invested by the authorities, but also on families' commitment and support.

Independent research centres, for their part, are found in every country, and are often run by academics offering their services at the national and international level. In our opinion, one of the most representative examples would be the *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales* (FLACSO—Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences), which has branches in several Latin American countries. This body has conducted a great deal of research in the fields, among others, of higher education, rural education and teacher training.

## NGOS, FOUNDATIONS AND CO-OPERATION AGENCIES

NGOs have always played a dynamic role in Latin American educational research. In Chile, they represent a rich source of research output: one such example is the *Centro de Investigación por el Desarrollo Educacional* (CIDE), which was established in 1964 and has links with the Catholic Church. Under the dictatorship, the institute enjoyed a degree of independence from the State—unlike the universities, whose research was plagued by obstruction and censorship. The CIDE is the co-ordinating centre for the Latin American Educational Information and Documentation Network (REDUC), which gathers, publishes and circulates in seventeen different countries periodical information on educational research (analytical abstracts on education).

In Mexico, the *Centro de Estudios Educativos* (CEE—Centre of Educational Studies) has on many occasions carried out research on behalf of local and international bodies (UNESCO, World Bank, etc.).

Foundations linked to local or multinational firms are rather more active in research-action type projects. The Roberto Marinho Foundation (Brazil), for example, has launched an ambitious distance learning project known as 'Telecurso 2000', which is made up of four novel concepts: learning in context (*ensino em contexto*), contextualization of learning (*contextualização do ensino*), basic skills and abilities enhancement (*desenvolvimento de habilidades básicas*) and civic attitudes (*attitudes de cidadania*). In terms of technical education, the project seeks to encourage students to learn such basic skills and abilities as the following: approaching, manipulating and figuring out numeracy problems; reading and interpreting text content; understanding a foreign language so as to be able to read technical handbooks; and familiarizing oneself with economic and technical quality control concepts so as to become better at producing, dialoguing and learning with others. 'Civic attitudes' involves developing school pride and respect for religious beliefs, public spaces and differences between individuals—ultimately paving the way towards successful political and cultural self-determination on the part of community organizations.

Latin American NGOs involved in educational research depend on foreign backing to finance a good share of their work: nearly 60% of it in the case of CIDE in Chile in 1992 (Velloso, 1996), for example, and Brazil's Carlos Chagas Foundation receives substantial contributions from North American counterparts, the Ford Foundation in particular.

Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), which has been financing research in many Latin American countries for the past twenty years, regards education as a priority area of research. Among others, it has backed a local NGO survey investigating the role of education in strategies of survival on the Uruguayan labour market (Lemez, 1989).

As we have seen, Latin American NGOs have been receiving foreign funding from private religious and secular foundations or from international organizations and co-operation agencies. Aware of such structural dependency, those NGOs are now seeking grants from their own governments, and some are even offering their services in an effort to become self-financing.

Regional and international co-operation agencies have long been contributing to education-oriented projects. The 'Development and Education in Latin America and the Caribbean' project (1981), supported by ECLAC, UNESCO and UNDP, has produced many reports and comparative studies on the state of education in Latin American countries.

Several education watchers have underlined the growing influence of the World Bank (Coraggio, 1995), which is evidenced by their financial contributions. From 1990 to 1994, yearly inflows of education aid from abroad amounted to more than US\$1.1 billion (McMeekin, 1996). Most of the funds came from the World Bank, followed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Japanese international co-operation agency and USAID.

The World Bank, IDB and industrialized-country co-operation agencies are increasingly active not just in executing educational projects, but also in their follow-up and assessment. As Coraggio (1995) points out, however, World Bank studies pay little heed to the 'basic redistribution of productive resources' among various socio-economic groups. World Bank studies and interventions basically focus on quality, productivity and efficiency.

The regional teams of the OAS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO and a large number of co-operation agencies are at work in most Latin American countries.

It must be said that outside actors, above all State-run co-operation agencies, rightly focus their action in the region on underprivileged populations.

Examination of the various research actors brings out a number of general trends. First of all, the activities of public research bodies—most of which remain answerable to education ministries—are stagnating, or gradually diminishing to nothing. Next, despite difficulties in terms of funding and researchers' working conditions, universities still occupy a highly influential position in countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Colombia, where academic traditions remain strong. Finally, the efforts of NGOs in the field of research capacity are growing, mainly with the help of outside financial support.

Researchers in Latin America often have to do a number of different jobs, thus covering multiple tasks. This weakens them with respect to their working conditions within education systems that are struggling financially to cope with challenges such as decentralization and the range of reforms and new developments needed at national level.

## Prospects

Educational research still represents a great challenge in Latin America. For many years it tended towards a comprehensive approach comprising a variety of social and/or revolutionary change theories. Much research has demonstrated that it is not enough just to carry out educational reforms, even if they do entail substantial changes for vulnerable children and families: the different contexts in which the grass-roots actors are evolving must also be closely studied. As Tedesco (1995, p. 7) puts it, 'the identity of the progressive educational movement and thought is in a

state of crisis, and the simple answers of the past are no longer sufficient to define an educational policy which responds to the objectives of democracy and equality in the distribution of knowledge'.

Most children in Latin America attend state schools. Thus researchers should devote an increasing amount of thought to studying the educational means likely to improve the quality of public-sector teaching. States should make the effort to spell out what they mean by quality of education. One avenue of investigation worth exploring would be the defining of quality standards in relation to school retention rates and mastery of reading and writing. It is not enough simply to send every child to school: they have to be able to remain in the classroom for several years in order to acquire the ability to put their knowledge into practice. Improving state education is the only way to provide the greatest possible number of people with access to an education. As economic conditions become increasingly difficult for the middle classes of Latin America, more middle-class children are returning to the state education system; this could help to raise levels of public financial support, proportional to the influence of those classes on the political chessboard. In the meantime, however, the middle classes have lost much of their purchasing power, and the teachers themselves are among the groups most affected by the economic crisis. In almost every Latin American country, teachers are finding themselves having to take on two or three jobs at the same time just to meet their basic needs—hence the growing absenteeism in underprivileged urban and rural areas alike. Conditions such as low rates of pay, the poor image of the teaching profession and inadequate in-service training plainly need improvement. One should also bear in mind that private-sector teachers are by and large better paid than their public-sector counterparts.

Spending on education, however, is on the wane. Although education always features as the top priority issue at election time and in official government publications, an in-depth look at the resources actually received clearly shows what a small proportion of national economic resources has been invested in public education (Schiefelbein, 1995*b*). Most Latin American countries figure in the middle-income bracket, but educational resources are nonetheless unevenly distributed among the various social groups. Schwartzmann, Durham and Goldemberg (1995), commenting on the case of Brazil, rightly reckon that scarce funding is not the only factor obstructing progress towards resolving education-related problems. The focus of public debate is now shifting to private education. The State, as a number of cases have shown, may be giving more and more encouragement to private education, but it still remains geared to better-off social groups. Unless there is substantial in-depth reform, Latin American formal education will continue to be a two-tier system: one elitist, private tier aligned with developed-country standards, and one public tier constantly plagued by organization, management and planning related difficulties (Akkari & Pérez, 1998).

If we accept the possibility of more radical measures to enable Latin America to break out of that two-tier system, one option is a tax on private-education establishments, ultimately paid by the families whose children attend them, so that financial resources can be redistributed towards the cash-strapped public sector.

Some young people from deprived social backgrounds manage to continue their studies with the help of scholarships financed by NGOs and local or foreign foundations. Nevertheless, this approach necessarily remains limited, and only a fraction of those in need are actually benefiting from such support.

Finally, the challenges for the coming decade include, among others, the requirement to strike an appropriate balance between the public and private sectors at the level of both education and research. Every area of educational research in Latin America is rich in potential, but the direction it takes still has to be attuned to the needs of the largest possible number of learners. In addition, public or private funding is necessary to equip existing education-ministry departments with structures for information and the dissemination of research findings (Pizarro, 1990).

In the light of economic globalization and technological change, it is increasingly clear that tomorrow's generation must embark upon lifelong learning; the UNESCO Commission chaired by Jacques Delors (1996, p. 17) puts this forth as a societal imperative. 'The concept of learning throughout life [...] emerges as one of the keys to the twenty-first century. It goes beyond the traditional distinction between initial and continuing education. It meets the challenges posed by a rapidly changing world.' This cannot happen unless everybody 'learns how to learn'. To that end, educational research will have a decisive role to play insofar as it can clarify the choices facing educational planning and policy-making in Latin America.

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# EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

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## IN EUROPE

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*Armin Gretler*

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### Summary

This article is divided into three parts. It begins with an overview of the historical background of educational research as a scientific discipline which emerged in Europe towards the end of the nineteenth century and gives two definitions: the first characterizes educational research as to its content, the second as to its functions. The second part deals, one by one, with the national and international structures of educational research and development. The article ends with a series of views on the prospects for educational research, deliberately looking beyond the European framework.

### Background

Educational research as an independent discipline came into being in the late nineteenth century in Europe, but very soon there were exchanges with the United States on the subject. A survey of the historical development can be found in De Landsheere's key work *La recherche en éducation dans le monde* [Educational

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research world-wide] (De Landsheere, 1986). After the ground had been broken by works that were more philosophical in nature, educational research, in the modern sense of the term, was developed by means of the experimental methods used in the natural sciences. An important work in this context is *Education as a science* by Alexander Bain, published in 1879. Simultaneously, psychology branched out into experimental psychology; two key figures are Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), who founded the first laboratory of experimental psychology in Leipzig in 1879, and Alfred Binet (1857–1911), one of his followers, who, among other works, published *Etudes de psychologie expérimentale* [Studies in experimental psychology] in 1888 and *Les idées modernes sur les enfants* [Modern ideas about children] in 1909.

An experimental branch of pedagogy came into being after Wilhelm August Lay (1862–1926) suggested drawing a distinction between experimental psychology and experimental pedagogy. Another of Wundt's followers was Ernst Meumann (1862–1915), who published the three volumes of his *Einführung in die experimentelle Pädagogik* (Introduction to experimental pedagogy) in 1910, 1913 and 1914. In francophone Europe, experimental pedagogy was influenced by the works of Edouard Claparède (1873–1940), who published the first version of his *Psychologie de l'enfant et pédagogie expérimentale* [Child psychology and experimental pedagogy] in 1905, and Théodore Simon (1873–1961), whose *Pédagogie expérimentale: écriture, lecture, orthographe* [Experimental pedagogy: writing, reading and spelling] appeared in 1924. Following the distinctions introduced by the German sociologist and philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) with regard to the meaning of the terms 'explanation' and 'understanding', as early as 1903 Claparède analysed the two fundamental approaches which characterize educational research: the first borrows methods from the natural sciences and is positivist and nomothetic (formulation of general laws), while the second is rooted in the human sciences and uses hermeneutic (interpretative) methods. A long epistemological debate was sparked by the clash of these two approaches; educational researchers now agree that the two paradigms are complementary.

The period from 1900 to 1930 was characterized by the new education movement (progressive movement or *Reformpädagogik*) and by the preponderance of the quantitative approach to educational research. The most outstanding features of the development of the latter were the formulation and application of statistical theories, the design of tests (for example, in 1905 Binet and Simon came up with their intelligence test, which has since become famous), large-scale surveys carried out by school administrations on school failure, syllabi and teaching methods, and finally, curriculum development and evaluation and the introduction of the first specialized teaching methods.

The next period, from the 1930s to the late 1950s, represents in general history the time of economic crisis and the Second World War, but it is difficult to attach a name to this period when looking at educational research. It was characterized, *inter alia*, by the introduction of empirical educational sociology, which raised questions about the links between a child's socio-economic origins and his or her

chances of success at school and analysed the school as a transmitter of middle-class values. Whereas tests had helped to make the school an instrument of selection, sociological studies challenged that aspect and, in close association with studies on adolescent development, called for non-selective school structures (comprehensive schools at the junior secondary level; see, for example, the Langevin-Wallon plan in France). But these decades also saw a loss of momentum in purely quantitative research and a corresponding rise in studies linking empirical research to philosophical considerations derived from liberal and 'socio-humanistic' schools of thought, as well as important contributions by eminent figures such as Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) and Jean Piaget (1896–1980).

During the twenty years between 1960 and the end of the 1970s, policy-makers began to show an interest in educational research. Their expectations regarding the immediate usefulness of research findings must retrospectively be described as excessive. The predictable outcome was disillusionment. It led to a 'crisis of confidence' between educational policy and educational research. The interest shown by policy-makers led to the distinction between conclusions-oriented and decisions-oriented research. Another direct consequence was the substantial rise in public as well as private funding for educational research, primarily in the United States. This trend was also followed by a number of European nations, in particular the Scandinavian countries, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany and France. Girod de l'Ain, recalling the French Revolution, wrote in the newspaper *Le Monde* on 5 September 1967 that it was the 'year I of educational research'. The educational research topics given priority during that period included the significance of education and training for creating human capital (which led to a new sub-branch, the economics of education), equality of educational opportunity and research on curriculum development. These years were also marked by the advent of the computer as a research tool and as a research subject in terms of its educational implications. Lastly, major international projects on comparative educational research were launched, primarily under the aegis of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), founded in 1959. The range of methods used for educational research expanded as qualitative and critical methods were gradually added to the quantitative ones.

After the rather unremarkable 1980s, education and educational research were again given priority in the 1990s on both national and international political agendas. While the major topics continue to attract attention, the importance of education and training as factors of economic development in an increasingly competitive international context is constantly growing. In our 'knowledge and information societies', moreover, the new information and communication technologies are flourishing. The management of education and training systems is therefore becoming more strategically important, and all suggestions brought up by research are welcomed. Indicators on education systems, prepared in particular by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), are making a major contribution to this field.

## TWO DEFINITIONS OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

The following two general definitions of educational research help clarify the subject of this article. The first, formulated by the OECD, focuses on the scope of inquiry of educational research and appears to be the only definition based on reflection by and a consensus of experts of international repute. Educational research and development, it says, is:

systematic, original investigation or inquiry and associated development activities concerning the social, cultural, economic and political contexts within which educational systems operate and learning takes place; the purposes of education; the processes of teaching, learning and personal development of children, youth and adults; the work of educators; the resources and organizational arrangements to support educational work; the policies and strategies to achieve educational objectives; and the social, cultural, political and economic outcomes of education (OECD, 1995, p. 37).

The second definition gives an example of a functional approach. It is formulated by the *Société suisse de recherche en éducation* (SSRE—Swiss Society for Research in Education) and comprises the following five functions, illustrated by projects referred to later in this article:

1. Analytical and explanatory function: 'educational research and development observe, highlight and explain the facts and realities of education and training by means of analytical, empirical, hermeneutic or any other relevant method'. Examples: OECD Education Indicators project; IEA project 'Third International Mathematics and Science Study' (TIMSS).
2. Synoptic function: 'educational research compiles synopses of scattered and fragmentary pieces of research information and contributes in this way to the construction of theories and to the establishment of a knowledge base for educational sciences'. Examples: European Union projects on a decade of reforms of compulsory education (1984–94) and on the role of parents in education systems.
3. Evaluation function: 'educational research provides scientific support and supervision for experiments and reforms in education and training'. Example: the OECD project 'Programme for International Student Assessment' (PISA), which has evaluation functions in addition to its analytical and explanatory role.
4. Forward-looking function: 'on the basis of a given set of political objectives, educational research formulates concepts and models for the future development of education and training'. Example: OECD's 'Schooling for Tomorrow' project.
5. Advisory function: 'educational research plays an advisory role in the planning and development of education and training'. (Société suisse, 1988).

## Structures and organization of educational research in Europe

### UNIVERSITY AND NON-UNIVERSITY RESEARCH

Traditionally, educational research is carried out primarily in universities (particularly in departments of education, psychology, sociology and, since the advent of the economics of education, in departments of economics as well). As already stated above, however, since around 1960 policy-makers have been increasingly interested in educational research. In fact, it was 'to have at their disposal organizations whose policy lines they themselves could set that, as from the 1960s in particular, the political authorities established the major national and international institutions' (De Landsheere, 1986, p. 141–42).

Though this phenomenon was not confined to Europe, most of the institutions mentioned by De Landsheere are situated in Western Europe, with a few in Eastern Europe: the National Foundation for Educational Research (England and Wales, as early as 1947), the French National Institute of Educational Research (also founded before the 1960s), the Finnish Society for Educational Research (1957), the Educational Research Institute of Yugoslavia (1961), the Educational Research and Development Office of Sweden (1962), the Max-Planck Institute for Human Development and Education (1963), the Danish Institute for Educational Research (1964), the Educational Research Centre of Ireland (1965), the Educational Research Foundation (Netherlands, 1966), the National Educational Research Centre of Spain (1969, renamed National Institute of Education Sciences in 1974), the Institute of Pedagogical Studies of Albania (1970) and the Academy of Education Sciences of the German Democratic Republic (1970).

Educational research institutions at the disposal of policy-makers have also been created in federal States. The German *Länder* have their own institutes (*Länderinstitute*) for educational research. Most Swiss cantons have established similar, necessarily small, institutions; in conjunction with the Confederation, they set up the Swiss Co-ordination Centre for Research in Education in 1971. Since this 'explosion of research institutions' (De Landsheere, 1986, p. 141), educational research has been spread between university departments and state-sponsored institutions.

### NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATIONS

The development of educational research, its incipient role in educational policy-making and the gradual establishment of its scientific and social identity were expressed not only through the establishment of non-university institutions, but also through the founding of national educational research associations, which occurred in most European countries at about the same time. They will not be listed here. It must be noted that certain countries do not have a national association and



that others have more than one national educational research association (for example, Italy and Spain). This indicates that identification processes, even in cases where they are under way, are far from complete and that the field of educational research in Europe is still very much in its formative stage.

The European Educational Research Association (EERA) is currently conducting a survey on the organization, structure and problems of educational research and development in European countries. The results are to be published in late 1999. The questionnaire includes questions on definition, systems of categorization of research projects, institutional structure, male and female researchers, and the financing and planning of educational research. The survey also seeks to identify the characteristics of national educational research associations, the connections between educational research on the one hand and educational policy and administration and teachers on the other, and strategies for the dissemination of information on educational research and development. The findings of this survey will make it possible to highlight the differences that still exist between Western and Eastern European countries, even considering the major changes in the organization and structure of educational research in Eastern European countries after 1989.

In this way EERA hopes to obtain the first systematic collection of data on educational research structures and organization in European countries and, on that basis, to launch European and international discussions on the nature and tasks of educational research. These discussions, to mention only two aspects, will be important for international co-operation in this field and for the systematic build-up of knowledge gained through research.

#### EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

Educational researchers in the United States have long been grouped together in the American Educational Research Association (AERA). In Europe, with its more than forty countries, there are many specialized associations covering various aspects of educational research, such as the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI), the European Society for Research on Adult Education (ESREA) and the Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE). Nevertheless, until recently, an umbrella association of the AERA type, covering the entire field of educational research, was lacking. This deficiency was felt more and more painfully; therefore, the representatives of about fifteen national associations founded the European Educational Research Association (EERA) in 1994. Though initially designed as a grouping of national associations specializing in educational research, today EERA also includes research institutions and individual members.

Although it is still only in its early stages, EERA has managed during its first five years to establish solid structures consisting mainly of annual congresses (European Conference on Educational Research—ECER, attended by 500 to 1,000 researchers), permanent thematic research networks and a bulletin.

The fourteen permanent research networks listed in 1998 do not present a systematic view of the scope of educational research, but rather offer a selection of focus areas of current research. These are: (1) continuing professional development of teachers; (2) vocational education and training; (3) European curriculum research; (4) inclusive education; (5) children and youth at risk and urban education; (6) open and distance education; (7) social justice and intercultural education; (8) economics of education; (9) student assessment; (10) teacher education research; (11) quality assurance in school development and the teaching profession; (12) information centres and libraries in educational research; (13) philosophy of education; and (14) communities and their schools.

The EERA Bulletin has published several articles directly relevant to our present concern: 'Educational research in Europe' by a member of the European Commission (Ruberti, 1995); 'A European perspective on co-operation in educational research' by the educational research officer at the Council of Europe (Vorbeck, 1995); 'Educational research and development in OECD countries' (McGaw, Kogan & Tuijnman, 1996); 'Europeanization of educational research' (Calderhead, 1996), and 'New challenges for educational research in Europe' (Döbrich, 1997). The March 1996 issue of the Bulletin contained the first, though still incomplete, annotated list of journals and periodicals published in the field of educational research.

#### ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

This section deals with the main activities of OECD, the Council of Europe, the European Union and UNESCO in the field of educational research. It is noteworthy that the aims and purposes of two of these four organizations are principally economic; the fact that they carry out significant activities in the field of educational research shows that training and education are considered to be a major factor of economic development and growth. Detailed accounts of the respective contributions of all four follow.

#### ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

For the reasons mentioned above, in 1968 OECD set up the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), in which all its Member States participate. The main objectives of the Centre are as follows:

- to promote and support the development of research activities in education and undertake such research activities where appropriate;
- to promote and support pilot experiments with a view to introducing and testing innovations in the educational system;
- to promote the development of cooperation between Member countries in the field of educational research and innovation (OECD, 1995, p. 2).

On that basis, CERI has been carrying out a wide range of constructive activities for thirty years. Its work programme for 1999–2000, for example, is based on the following five operational objectives:

- Objective 1: to develop and analyse education statistics and indicators;
- Objective 2: to identify key features of schooling for tomorrow;
- Objective 3: to conceptualize and analyse the management of knowledge and the role of R&D in education, knowledge societies and learning economies;
- Objective 4: to identify significant innovations in education and evaluate 'what works';
- Objective 5: to analyse and evaluate educational and other innovative strategies for inclusion and social responsibility in education (OECD, 1998).

CERI's most important contribution to the development of educational research is no doubt its long-term work on education indicators. In the introduction to the 1997 edition of its annual *Education at a glance—OECD indicators*, the undertaking's objective is described as follows:

To inform the process of policy formation and to reinforce the public accountability of education systems, OECD continually seeks to develop indicators that can provide an insight into the comparative functioning of education systems—focusing on human and financial resources invested in education and on returns to these investments.

A quantitative description of the functioning of education systems can enable countries to see themselves in the light of other countries' performances. Through international comparisons, countries may come to recognize weaknesses in their own systems, while also identifying strengths which may otherwise be overlooked in the heat of domestic debate. OECD education indicators also show whether variations in educational experiences within a country are unique or if they mirror differences observed elsewhere (OECD, 1997).

The forty indicators prepared by OECD are divided into seven categories:

- demographic, social and economic context of education;
- financial and human resources invested in education;
- access to education, participation and progression;
- the learning environment and organization of schools;
- social and labour market outcomes of education;
- student achievement;
- graduate output of educational institutions.

OECD has recently begun to organize the requisite surveys to obtain data for the preparation of indicators on student achievement (see its Project for International Student Assessment—PISA). OECD, a governmental organization, has taken over this task from the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), a non-governmental organization and a pioneer in this field, which organized the recent Third International Mathematics and Science Study.

Another major contribution by CERI, which culminated in its publication *Educational research and development—trends, issues and challenges* (OECD, 1995),

will be briefly analysed later in this article in the section 'Assessment and evaluation of educational research in the 1990s'.

#### THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The role of the Council of Europe in the field of educational research differs from that of OECD. Its educational research committee was dissolved as a result of internal restructuring during the 1970s; the organizational chart of the Council of Europe now includes a Higher Education and Research Committee, but co-operative projects containing research components are also managed by the Education Committee. The 1997 report of the Council of Cultural Co-operation, to which the two above-mentioned committees belong, covers the following projects: (1) language learning for European citizenship; (2) democratic security, social cohesion and educational policies; (3) education for democratic citizenship; (4) learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the twentieth century; and (5) the European dimension of school education. Another series of projects is based on the topic 'Building the university of tomorrow: policy and practice for European higher education' (Council of Europe, 1998).

Contrary to what its name implies, the European Documentation and Information System for Education (EUDISED) project does not cover education as a whole, but merely collects and disseminates data on educational research. This project, launched in the early 1970s, has produced two major instruments. First, there is the *European education thesaurus*, a structured multilingual list of 3,300 keywords or descriptors for the indexing of educational documents. This thesaurus, which is available in seventeen different language versions, is managed jointly by the European Commission and the Council of Europe. Secondly, information relating to educational research projects collated by thirty-four national agencies is stored and made accessible in the EUDISED database. These data are also published annually by the Council of Europe in the *European educational research yearbook*.

It is not certain whether EUDISED will continue in its present form; it is possible that co-operation between EUDISED and EERA will be established in the near future.

#### THE EUROPEAN UNION

Though the Treaty of Rome (1958), the constitutional basis of the European Economic Community (EEC)—which has since become the European Union (EU)—does not mention education, it is now an important EU activity for two major reasons. The first is the recognition of education as a key factor of human capital and of the latter as a key factor of economic development. The second is that EU aims and objectives extend far beyond the bounds of economics, as is indicated by its new name.

With education and training among its most important activities, the EU did not hesitate to take up educational research as well. The Council and the Education Ministers meeting within the Council adopted a resolution on educational research and statistics on 25 November 1991 (European Union, 1991). The resolution stressed

the importance of comparative research for the promotion of co-operation in all fields of education and recommended that the best use be made of national and international research, that the implementation of research projects be facilitated and that the dissemination of research findings be promoted. In addition, the Council and the Ministers welcomed closer co-operation among research institutes, higher education institutions and independent educational researchers, and encouraged the organization of joint research projects, particularly in priority areas such as the European dimension in education and the learning of foreign languages.

It is worth noting that the research and technological development (RTD) policy of the EU aims to strengthen Europe's scientific and technological base and thus help to develop the competitiveness of European industry and promote the quality of life of Europe's citizens (European Union, 1998). EU-funded educational research forms part of 'Targeted socio-economic research' (TSER), which was introduced into framework research and technological development programmes in 1994 and currently focuses on the following topics: science and technology education; use of new technologies in education and teaching of these technologies; labour market requirements in terms of vocational training; and inequalities in access to knowledge.

A special role in educational research and documentation is played by EURYDICE, a coordinator of a network of national units located mainly in ministries of education or affiliated organizations. It publishes studies on the organization of education systems and on specific topics of community interest. The most important examples are the following:

- a decade of reforms at compulsory education level (1984-1994);
- secondary education in the European Union: structures, organization and administration;
- structures of the education and initial training systems;
- pre-school and primary education;
- consultative councils and other forms of social participation in the education systems;
- school heads;
- in-service training of teachers;
- pre-school education: current thinking and provision;
- the role of parents in the education systems;
- measures to combat school failure: a challenge for the construction of Europe;
- measures taken in the European Union to assist young people in the European Union who have left the education system without qualifications.

#### UNESCO

The activities of UNESCO in the field of comparative educational research have been entrusted to the International Bureau of Education (IBE), an integral part of UNESCO since 1969. The ultimate aim of these activities is to strengthen the capacity of national authorities to analyse educational problems and to help solve them by introducing innovations. At present, the main research work focuses on curriculum,

teaching methods, teacher training, relations among educational actors and interactions between the school and the community. In addition to IBE, UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), established in 1963, contributes to educational development throughout the world by spreading knowledge and by training specialists. It offers a forum for the exchange of ideas and concepts in educational planning and management; in particular, it has been entrusted with research on the major aspects of educational planning.

#### ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN THE 1990S

Education, having been pushed into the background for some time, regained priority on political agendas in the 1990s. This has had repercussions on educational research, as evidenced by the ministerial statements of the EU (1991, see above) and OECD (1990, see below). As a result, there appeared two distinct, though partly linked, trends to review progress and determine future prospects. First, a number of countries took stock of educational research and drafted national reports. Second, in 1990 the Ministers of Education of OECD Member States published a communiqué on educational research, which became the basis for intense activity by OECD. The organization held a series of regional seminars on educational research and development and, in 1995, published a report entitled *Educational research and development—trends, issues and challenges* (OECD, 1995).

According to the Ministers' Communiqué (OECD, 1992), the level of investment in research and development in education and training was far lower than in any other sector of comparable size; therefore, it was recommended that the potential of educational research be better exploited.

The 1995 report that came out of the series of regional seminars constitutes an initial synopsis of the general state of affairs. As a starting point, it takes the crisis of confidence between research and policy-management that occurred towards the end of the 1970s, in consequence of educational research having fallen far short of expectations. External and internal critics charged that research was too fragmented and thus of little use to decision-makers; it only had a superficial relation to educational practice; its quality did not always meet scientific criteria; and its cost/benefit ratio was poor. The report also attempts to define what educational research can and cannot achieve. It cannot solve standard-setting problems; it cannot always meet the needs of decision-makers and practitioners directly and immediately; and it cannot provide a quick solution to every educational problem. On the other hand, it can improve the knowledge base on various aspects of education; it can raise questions, identify problems and highlight hitherto neglected facts; and it can provisionally produce useful knowledge for educational policy-makers and practitioners. One of the major conclusions of the report is that communication between research, policy and practice must be improved (OECD, 1995). The report was drawn up by a small group of experts from various OECD Member States and therefore goes beyond the national framework. It lists the major problems currently besetting

educational research and development (see above). The problems that characterize the situation of educational research and development will be taken up more generally and with a view to the more distant future in the section on prospects at the end of this article.

The individual national reports cannot be analysed here. In general, however, they all reflect a new and heightened interest in educational research. While they are directly useful at the national level, they have yet to be analysed on a comparative basis. The following is a list of at least some of the European countries that have produced such reports: France (Association, 1985; Charlot, 1993), Switzerland (Société Suisse, 1988; Gretler, 1994), Germany (Weishaupt et al., 1991), United Kingdom (Economic and Social Research Council, 1992), Austria (Lassnigg et al., 1994), Portugal (Paivo Campos, 1995), Sweden and the Nordic countries (Wallin & Tuijnman, 1995; Rosengren Öhngren, 1997), the Netherlands (Kloprogge et al., 1995), Scotland/UK (Nisbet, 1995) and Romania (Birzea, 1995).

## Prospects

These final observations have a double focus. On the one hand, they outline a possible work programme for the educational research community; on the other, they are based on a conjecture as to the future role of educational research. In both cases they deliberately transcend the European framework, maintained throughout this article.

Educational science, as can be seen from the above historical overview, is a relative newcomer. It is therefore hardly surprising that it is not yet as structured as older scientific fields. Such structuring, which can only be achieved through dialogue in the research community, is nonetheless necessary and is an indispensable condition for the accumulation of knowledge (produced, above all, by basic research, but this is not been the focus of this article) and for making this knowledge available.

The very nature of education demands that educational research be interdisciplinary. In reality, however, it is still far too often confined within the narrow field of a single scientific discipline. More and more frequently, it is carried out on a multidisciplinary basis, the desirable and necessary transition to interdisciplinarity remaining an unachieved goal. The issues of structuring and interdisciplinarity in educational research are linked to the discipline's identity crisis, involving the tension between the collective identity of the field and the individual professional identity of the researcher engaged in the constant conflict of loyalty to his or her scientific discipline, to the spirit of free inquiry and to his or her own career interests.

This article suggests that a good start has been made in international co-operation and comparative assessment in the field of educational research, but there is no doubt that their significance should grow in the future. It is generally true, however, that education is deeply rooted in the local, regional or national culture which it serves. It will be no easy task to harmonize these deep roots with the growing internationalization of education.

The links between educational research, policy and practice have been identified as a crucial nexus in the current educational research situation. One cannot deny that progress has been made in communication among these three areas, but problems remain and are far from being solved. It will therefore be necessary to establish and institutionalize permanent mutual interaction, allowing for more effective dissemination and enhancement of research findings and better accessibility to the future knowledge base.

To conclude, let us briefly summarize the past and future of education and educational research. It was the French Revolution that gave education its public and political importance. Compulsory education for all became a necessary part of the building of democratic States and the emergence of industrialized economies. This situation consequently led to the creation of educational research as an area of scientific progress. In our present world, education is characterized by great inequalities. The times call for world-wide even-handed development, taking into account the unavoidable cultural diversities which ought to be maintained. This task is enormous. Educational research promises to make important contributions to its accomplishment.

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# EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

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## IN FRANCE

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*Dominique Groux*

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The following article does not pretend to give an exhaustive survey. It reviews educational research facilities in France, the main features of such research and the main discernible trends. It is based on the studies carried out by Langouët, Mialaret and by the *Association des enseignants et chercheurs en sciences de l'éducation* (AECSE—Association of Teachers and Researchers in the Educational Sciences) in 1998. Three separate aspects of this subject are examined: the 'selective' location of research in a few particularly active departments and institutes; the great variety of educational research, which is not confined exclusively to education departments; and the indisputable development of a few reference disciplines, such as history, economics, philosophy and comparative education. Finally, a recurrent debate on the relationship between researchers and policy-makers continues to arouse keen interest in the scientific community: how to reconcile the interests of researchers, decision-makers and practitioners.

### **Research facilities: a few figures**

In 1967 the educational sciences earned official recognition in France by becoming a university discipline (seventieth section of the National Universities Council). At the time they were taught in three universities: Bordeaux, Caen and Paris V. 'The educational sciences consist of a series of disciplines which, constantly interacting with one another, make it possible to carry out research and build up a body of knowledge on the

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situations, practices and systems of education and training' (Charlot, 1995, p. 67). They are also, as Charlot observes, 'epistemologically ambiguous, imprecise and hybrid'. He adds that 'this is brandished before researchers in the educational sciences as evidence of an inherent epistemological weakness. [But there may be] another interpretation: the educational sciences deal in fact with a subject that is ambiguous, imprecise and hybrid and it could be that blame is being laid on this discipline for something that is, in fact, a characteristic of the subject itself'. We shall not dwell any longer on the 'global, multidimensional and elusive' nature of educational practice. But I should like to point out that a subject of research is not the raw material of everyday life, but rather 'a constructed subject' (Charlot, 1995, p. 27).

Today, thirty years later, doctoral degrees are awarded at twenty-five universities and at Centre national des arts et métiers (CNAM—National Centre for Arts and Crafts). Between 1990 and 1994, 422 doctoral theses were presented (Association des enseignants, 1998). Four universities alone, Paris V, Paris VIII, Strasbourg II and Lyon II, graduate over half the doctoral candidates in France (53.08%). The majority of the doctorates awarded between 1969 and 1989 went to men (55.32%), but this trend is now being reversed (Association des enseignants, 1998). The supervisors of research are also mostly men: in 1992, there were seventy men and nineteen women professors of education (Charlot, 1995). Sixteen per cent of the supervisors handled 52% of the doctoral theses (Association des enseignants, 1998).

It may also be noted that in 1992 there were 176 lecturers on education, 106 in the provinces and seventy in the Paris region. Every year over 6,000 students are enrolled in educational science courses, generally in conjunction with another subject. About 60% of these students are primary or secondary school teachers, 10% of them non-French, while almost half the postgraduate students are foreigners. According to estimations, there are almost 400 students enrolled in postgraduate diploma (DEA) courses, of whom half currently qualify (Langouët, 1994).

Each year, about 100 theses are produced, which has led to a considerable number of candidates applying for posts as lecturers—twenty-five to thirty applications per post (Langouët, 1994). In addition to the number of doctoral theses, which is by no means negligible, the scale of educational research is shown by the publication each year of about 100 works by teacher/researchers in the educational sciences (Association des enseignants, 1998). Training in research is carried out in conjunction with research laboratories. These, as stated by Langouët, are expected to expand their activities. Some of them are associated with the *Centre national de la recherche scientifique* (CNRS—National Centre for Scientific Research),<sup>1</sup> for example the educational sociology laboratory of the University of Paris V or the *Institut de recherche sur l'économie de l'éducation* (IREDU—Educational Economics Research Institute) at the University of Dijon.

Research is also carried out at an institution which is not part of the higher education system but has over 100 researchers: the *Institut national de recherche pédagogique* (INRP—National Institute for Pedagogical Research). G. De Landsheere (1986) notes that INRP was discouraged, by its 1970 statutes, from carrying out basic research. Its research can be divided into three main groups:

- descriptive research, relating to various aspects of the functioning of the education system and its problems;
- research on innovation, which seeks to help the system adapt to general trends;
- research for purposes of validation, which compares the results obtained with the results expected.

De Landsheere observes that 'the flaw is obvious' and that 'since there is practically a ban on basic research at the Institute, it is deprived of the benefit of immediate cross-fertilization from applied basic research and development' (p. 169). However, he goes on to say that 'the focus on the daily workings of the education system is conducive to close contacts with the grass-roots' and that the impact of INRP's work on schools is wide-ranging and varied, e.g. new methods of teaching French in primary schools (the 'Rouchette plan'), proposals for the teaching of mathematics, natural science, geography, etc. He adds that since 1976 the influence of INRP has decreased owing to its concentration on research at the expense of documentation. Nonetheless, it is still 'cut off from basic research and its attention directed towards practical everyday issues' (p. 170). This fact, as he points out, 'largely explains the difference in style and approach between American research, for example, and French research'. What has happened since these remarks were made?

Since 1986 INRP has been 'strengthened to enable it to operate more effectively on the ground and co-ordinate innovations and action-oriented research' (De Landsheere, 1986). Vigarello in his introduction to the book *Chercheurs en éducation* (Researchers in education) points out that 'some institutions and some individuals have formed groupings and lasting partnerships, thereby exercising a key influence on the training of educational researchers' (p. 9), and he mentions INRP, which 'lies at the intersection of several different lines of approach. Not that this body stands alone: the fact that it is often cited is merely a reflection of the influence exercised by those circles that are already established as institutions on those that have yet to be institutionalized'. He adds that 'INRP's focus has been that much stronger on account of the close relationship that the Institute has with primary and secondary school networks' (p. 9).

INRP is now being restructured and is likely to implement new lines of approach.

It is also worth noting that the university teacher training institutes (IUFMs), which since 1991 have provided two-year initial professional training for future primary and secondary school teachers and, since 1998, have also been providing in-service teacher training, should also afford interesting opportunities for research. The Ministry of Education received ten project proposals to set up teams of young researchers within these institutes in response to the public invitation for the submission of projects in May 1997 by the *Comité national de coordination de la recherche éducationnelle* (CNCRE—National Co-ordinating Committee for Educational Research). None of these projects was accepted. However, two teams from IUFMs are taking part in projects set up within universities (Association des enseignants, 1998, p. 44). The absence, within university training institutes, of research teams recognized by CNCRE is regrettable, although these institutes do

carry out research activities (under two-year contracts) with outside technical assistance and IUFM funding.

The research projects that were accepted, as the secretariat of the CNCRE has observed, made use of 'approaches involving different fields (education and training, learning and socialization), links between several disciplines, a wide range of methodologies, international comparisons and/or collaborative links with foreign teams and networking with several teams' (Association des enseignants, 1998). These approaches all display a desire to break new ground and look outwards. This refusal to recognize traditional boundaries can only be beneficial.

It is also worth noting that researchers in the educational sciences have worked on national commissions responsible for examining problems in education and educational research. Langouët notes that several commission chairmen (e.g. Schwartz, Peretti, Legrand, Fauroux, Meirieu) were professors in the seventieth section. This shows that to establish links between educational research and educational policy is certainly possible. We shall come back to this point later.

Research findings may be circulated in published works and in reports, but also in articles published by various journals, such as the *Revue française de pédagogie*, *les Cahiers pédagogiques*, *Éducatons*, *Les sciences de l'éducation pour l'ère nouvelle* and *Recherche et Formation*. The time lag for publication may be as long as two years in the case of the *Revue française de pédagogie*, produced by INRP (Langouët, 1994), but they find room for the many articles submitted to them. The general conclusion to be drawn is that educational research in France is in good health. Let us now turn to an examination of its main features.

## The main features and the main trends in research

Educational researchers exhibit a great diversity of professional backgrounds and pursue a kaleidoscopic variety of lines of inquiry (Vigarello, 1992). However, 'educational research is action-oriented' and all researchers stress their links with educational practice and their familiarity with it, even if successful research ought to keep some distance from practical interests (Vigarello, 1992).

The thirty-three researchers who have reported, since 1985, on their research activities in *Perspectives documentaires en éducation* (Hassenforder, 1992, 1993) help us identify some of the main trends in educational research as well as areas of strong interest, such as adult training and teaching methods. Vigarello notes this in the following comments:

These 33 reports reveal a restructuring of opposing sides and debates and new ways of defining different areas and topics, showing how much educational research has evolved in recent years. The field is in increasing and urgent need of restructuring in several respects [...], as regards research on adult education, for example, and also on teaching methods in different subjects (Vigarello, 1992, p. 12).

Following the same approach as in *Chercheurs en éducation* (1992), recurrent themes of research can also be identified, on the basis of the focus of papers presented at

congresses (University of Paris X Nanterre, 1996) and a study of works published on the educational sciences (Hassenforder & Etévé, 1998). The main concerns of researchers have changed in some respects as compared with the situation prior to 1992.

The proceedings of the International Congress on the Current State of Research in Education and Training (Association des enseignants, 1998) show, as Sirota remarks, how much attention is now devoted to teaching methods (20% of the papers), which hardly attracted any attention at the 1983 Congress, and also to school situations (12% of the papers) and to educational institutions and those they serve (10% of the papers). Some of the research focused on subjects that lie outside the strictly educational field, such as the training-work-enterprise triad (10%) and the child-family-school triad (10%).

Sirota points out that these research topics, as well as the subject of intercultural relations, were all present in much the same proportions at the previous Congress. However, new themes have appeared, in particular higher education (6% of the communications), the biographical approach and attitudes to knowledge (10% of the papers).

Another noteworthy feature is the greater emphasis on the economics of education, the philosophy of education, comparative education and the history of education, and the small number of papers adopting a clinical or cognitive approach. Sirota wonders whether such approaches are less often adopted nowadays or whether their readers and selectors are simply more receptive to other lines of inquiry (Sirota, 1998, p. 8–10).

Works published in the field of educational sciences from 1967 to 1995 (Hassenforder & Etévé, 1998) and surveyed in a critical note in the *Revue française de pédagogie* (1,198 bibliographical references published in 113 issues) also offer some indication of the main features and trends in educational research. Hassenforder points out that this bibliographical survey 'shows how the educational sciences have developed over three decades' and that 'this corpus enables us to analyse the evolution of ideas and research over a long period'. He adds that 'the current situation in education is reflected in many of the titles published, which enables us to follow the appearance and development of areas of investigation and the emergence of disciplines which now come under the educational sciences. The inclusion of foreign publications helps us to see how research in France has gradually taken its place in an international framework and benefited from research done in other countries' (p. 6).

The way the studies have been classified clearly reveals both their variety and their multidisciplinary character. Thus, Etévé observes that 'this is a pedagogical tool that helps to show students both the development of the educational sciences as a whole and their epistemological links with the disciplines on which they rest. It represents an attempt to map research carried out on education and training' (Hassenforder & Etévé, 1998, p. 7). However, such an attempt also highlights the limitations of this method of classification, largely because of the dynamism of developments in educational research. For example, how are we to classify studies in the cognitive sciences that contain elements of several different disciplines (linguistics, information technology, psychology and biology)? Where are we to place research

on gender differences or research on school effectiveness, as investigations substantially different from evaluation of students' performance? Finally, what about studies on multiculturalism, which are coloured by philosophical, sociological or pedagogical attitudes? (Hassenforder & Etévé, 1998).

In fact, there are two approaches to the classification of educational research: the first is to link it with the basic discipline serving as a framework of reference, while the second concentrates on the subject of the research itself. The emphasis which educational research in France lays on the link with a particular discipline offers an indication of its orientation.

Careful study of this system of classification reveals the following entries and percentages:<sup>2</sup>

Entries according to their links with basic disciplines (50%):

- humanities and educational sciences (4%);
- philosophy (2%), history (5%), comparative education (2%);
- education (3%);
- sociology and education (13%);
- economics, demography and education (2%);
- psychology and education (9%);
- psychosociology and education (3%);
- semiology, communication, linguistics and education (2%);
- medicine, health, sexuality (1%);
- educational organization and policies (4%).

Entries according to the subjects of research (50%):

- levels and branches of education (8%);
- educational and training staff (4%);
- vocational guidance, employment (5%);
- educational environment and school life (1%);
- teaching methods and evaluation (14%);
- teaching aids and educational technology (2%);
- teaching of disciplines (12%);
- special education (2%);
- out-of-school education (2%).

This analysis shows that the most popular areas of research are sociology and education, psychology and education, the levels and branches of education, teaching methods and evaluation, and the teaching of particular subjects.

This would seem to confirm one of the trends already identified, namely that the attention devoted to teaching methods has considerably increased. As for particular disciplines, it is clear that sociology and psychology still occupy a central position, but other disciplines, such as history, philosophy and comparative education, also attract significant interest (Association des enseignants, 1998).

We can now compare this picture with the survey of educational research issued each year in *L'année de la recherche en sciences de l'éducation*. The aim of this publication is to 'draw attention to the variety of research in the educational sciences and the diversity of the methods used [...], so as to facilitate contacts between

researchers with a view to encouraging more collaboration between them [...]. And also, in some cases, to draw attention to the similarity of the research' (Mialaret, 1997, p. 213).

Four hundred and fifty-three research projects carried out by educational researchers are listed, some of which have led to articles or published works. However, as the titles alone do not provide sufficiently accurate information on the field of research or on the reference disciplines, we cannot use this publication in the same way as the Hassenforder & Etévé book, since therein titles are accompanied by critical notes explicit as to the subject matter. That certainly explains why this survey—which questions researchers about research subjects, but concentrates on research methods—was not followed by an analysis, although its authors plan to provide a report on how it may be scientifically exploited in a newsletter of the *Association francophone internationale de recherche scientifique en éducation* (AFIRSE—International Francophone Association for Scientific Research in Education).

However, there is one interesting element in this survey that could be exploited immediately. Material published on education does not come solely from departments of educational science, but may, as Mialaret points out, be produced by other types of research centres, e.g. institutes of psychology, land-use planning or sociology.

This survey of educational research not only illustrates the field's great range and variety and draws attention to the wide diversity of methods, but also shows the similarity of some research products.

The main task of the *Comité national de coordination de la recherche en éducation* (CNCRE—National Co-ordinating Committee for Educational Research) is to deal with problems of overlapping in research. It is 'chaired by the minister responsible for research [and it] was established by decree in 1995. It has twenty-seven permanent members: seven *ex officio* members, seven representatives of bodies designated by the minister with responsibility for research (university principals, directors of IUFMs, INRP, CNRS, CNECSP, CENR, Inspectorate General), a rector and twelve other qualified individuals, either French or foreign, appointed by the Minister for National Education, Research and Technology. It has three complementary mandates: gathering information, providing guidance and evaluating. These involve:

- collecting information on the activities of bodies working in this field and on the dissemination of their work to users, both public and private, as well as carrying out comparisons with the situation in other countries;
- identifying priority themes and issues on which research should focus, and also the best ways of encouraging such research and disseminating its findings;
- carrying out regular evaluations of research projects'. (Report on the responses to the request for research project submissions by CNCRE, October 1997. Published in *Association des enseignants*, 1998, p. 39.)

Most of the larger research teams responded to CNCRE's call for project submissions in 1997. Of the eighty-five projects submitted, fifteen were chosen (six in the Ile de France region and the others in the provinces). The main reference disciplines



(sometimes several are identified for one project) are psychology (seven projects), teaching methods and the educational sciences (six projects each), the multidisciplinary approach (five projects), sociology (three projects) and linguistics and sociolinguistics (two projects).

Ten of the fifteen projects accepted adopt 'approaches that involve different fields, links between several disciplines, a variety of methodologies, international comparisons and/or co-operation with foreign teams and the establishment of a network of several teams' (ibid. in Association des enseignants, 1998, p. 44).

Ardoino is certainly right in observing that 'overlapping, duplications, convergences and interference between adjacent disciplines are becoming more and more frequent, requiring all researchers to become familiar with several disciplines, although not to the extent of merging one with another. Even more than "multidisciplinarity" or "multidimensionality", it is "multi-referentiality" that is now required' (Ardoino, 1990, p. 23). There needs to be an awareness of the relevance of international comparisons, leading to a kind of 'multi-referentiality' that would go beyond national frontiers.

A look at educational research in Réunion, a French Overseas Department (*Département d'Outre-Mer*), can serve as a means of checking Ardoino's observations.<sup>3</sup>

On the island of Réunion, the development of educational research is associated with four main centres:

1. The non-university bodies that produce data (mainly the Education Authority of Réunion and the departmental unit of INSEE).
  2. UPRESA 6058 of CNRS with, historically, the communication aspect, which deals as much with qualifications as with communication.
  3. The University Institute of Teacher Training (IUFM).
  4. The Department of Education of the University of Réunion, established in 1992.
- It is worth noting that the university department is only one of four items on the list.

Research themes on which the various teams are working include:

- aspects of the Réunion school system: research on the relationship between school career and the socio-demographic background of schoolchildren in Réunion, research on the attitudes to school and knowledge of families in Réunion, local ethnographical study of schoolchildren, research on the teaching of French in the context of 'contact languages', studies on school psychology in the Indian Ocean, on the family and violence, and on the history of education in Réunion;
- comparative research on the impact of different schools and different teachers and on the effects of educational policies in the different countries of the south-west Indian Ocean.

These studies instantiate research conducted on the basis of different disciplines. Some are multidisciplinary or multi-referential, to use the word in Ardoino's sense. Such is the case with research in comparative education—which includes international comparisons.

The guidelines of the project selection process carried out by CNCRE in 1998 provide us with information on its recommended research focus areas in France. It raised the following questions:

- What are the effects of early school learning (such as the learning of a foreign language or pre-school attendance from the age of two)?
- Has the autonomy given to schools, together with more flexible rules regarding school districts, made them more responsive to the requirements and needs of schoolchildren? What impact have these changes had on strategies and on the development of school systems?
- What is known of educational practices and arrangements introduced by schools for the benefit of pupils or students with difficulties? What is known of their effects? Attention might also be given to the practices that have developed outside the usual school framework and timetable.
- How are the information and communication technologies used within the education system? Are they bringing about changes in the nature, content and methods of learning, and in the knowledge acquired, the relationship to knowledge and the attitudes of pupils, students and teachers?
- Have the information and communication technologies helped to improve the educational effectiveness of distance education?
- As for inter-ethnic relations in schools, how much is known about discrimination and integration? (Ministry of National Education, Research and Technology, 1998.)

The purpose here is to assess the current state of knowledge in specific fields 'so as to contribute to the educational debate knowledge which the academic community considers firmly based' and also 'to produce findings of political and social relevance' (*ibid.*).

The formation of CNCRE raises the problem of the application of educational research findings in policy-making. This subject is often raised by educational researchers, although it is of broader interest.

V. De Landsheere, who focuses on the purpose of educational research, draws a distinction between 'conclusion-oriented research (which seeks the advancement of knowledge) and decision-oriented research (which seeks to obtain the maximum amount of reliable data so as to enable the action taken to be as enlightened as possible). Such decision-oriented research may be dictated by a policy (e.g. how to avoid academic failure of students), or intended to help define a policy (e.g. priority given to the development of pre-school education rather than to university expansion?)' (De Landsheere, 1992, p. 604). There is room for debate on the place of these two kinds of research, on the need for them to co-exist, and on the dangers of research that is entirely subordinate to policy-making.

## Linking research and policy-making

In France, relations between researchers and politicians have always been tainted by a considerable degree of suspicion (De Landsheere, 1986). As Ardoino states, 'scientific inquiry and the political world have never got along very well, the latter's "dirty hands" disturbing the former's more lucid, if not "objective" approach' (Ardoino, 1990, p. 22).

Researchers' interests appear to be set in a long-term context (building up a body of knowledge, constructing scientific theories) and are most often free of pragmatic constraints, while policy-makers obviously operate in the short term since their role is to find solutions to pressing problems (Hutin & Weiss, 1994). Educational research seems to straddle these two types of concerns, and joint definition of the terms of co-operation between policy-makers and researchers seems essential.

Policy-making needs scientific inquiry, and scientific inquiry needs to proceed with great caution in attaining its objective so as to preserve an uncompromisingly scientific approach and build up an independent and critical body of knowledge. 'Any social practice effectively leads to casuistry, in response to the need for and dangers of compromise solutions [...]. Scientific work will always depend [...] on maintaining a balance between involvement and distance, which will mostly be achieved through the use of different approaches (methodological and conceptual tools)' (Ardoino, 1990, p. 25–27).

In a context of conflict, researchers, decision-makers and practitioners all pursue their own separate interests. In a context of collaboration, there is 'cooperation and harmonization of the interests of researchers, decision-makers and practitioners. Collaboration will be based on the assumption of shared interests rather than of differences between the "three communities"' (Tuijnman, 1995, p. 243). This approach implies mutual respect and an understanding of other groups' interests, although it also requires that research be regarded by everyone as providing an independent and critical body of knowledge.

Thus CNCRE, in its 1998 call for the submission of projects, held that 'the role of research is to provide reliable information as a basis for responding to the problems faced by the various practitioners and decision-makers involved'. While all educational specialists must take a stance on this matter, it is important to keep in mind that the kind of collaboration discussed above does not imply the elimination of basic research. The example of great discoveries, such as those of Pierre and Marie Curie, reminds us of the significance of free inquiry.

This study on educational research in France has, I hope, made clear the 'selective' location of research in a few particularly active departments and institutes, the great diversity of research carried out, which is not confined to departments of education, and the indisputable development of several basic disciplines as frameworks of reference, such as history, economics, philosophy and comparative education. Finally, it has outlined the terms of the debate on the links between researcher and policy-maker, which is still a point of contention in the French academic community: how can the interests of researchers, decision-makers and practitioners be reconciled?

## Notes

1. The National Centre for Scientific Research, 'the leading research body in France, is divided into seven scientific departments, one of which covers the social sciences. The departments are divided into forty sections. [...] During this last decade radical reforms

- have been introduced in the organization of research, the criteria being the establishment of teams on particular topics, the grouping of isolated individuals and, as a corollary, the elimination of "dead wood" in the organization. Consequently, sociology (like some other disciplines) within CNRS is dispersed among several sections, since reorganization is no longer carried out on the basis of disciplines' (Aubert, 1996, p. 194–196).
2. Half the works published may be classified, without too much difficulty, as coming under a particular reference discipline, while the other half can only be classified on the basis of the subject that they deal with.
  3. The source of most of the following information is a note by F. Tupin. For published works on the topic, see references.

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# TWO EXAMPLES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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*Michel Carton and Orlando Mella*

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## **NORRAG—Northern Policy Research Review and Advisory Group on Education and Training<sup>1</sup>**

It was in 1977 that the International Development Research Centre (IDRC, Canada) took the initiative of assembling a consultative group of twelve people from the 'North', responsible for advising it on its policy directions for research on education in the 'South' and on co-ordinating that policy with the decisions of aid agencies. The group, christened Research Review and Advisory Group (RRAG), was made up of Gelia Castillo, Bill Fuller, Wadi Haddad, Jacques Hallak, Kenneth King, Pablo Latapi, Errol Miller, Pote Sapianchai, Ernesto Schiefelbein and Tunde Yoloye.

More than twenty years later, several of the founding members of RRAG are in key positions in international education research and policy, while different regional networks are active in the same fields all over the world. These networks, considered more effective than the RRAG itself for carrying out the work of analysing

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research on education in different contexts, were set up at the beginning of the 1980s: the South East Asian Research Review and Advisory Group (SEARRAG), the Education Research Network for Eastern and Southern Africa (ERNESA) and the Latin American Network of Information and Documentation on Education (REDUC) reflect this policy of decentralization.

On the initiative of Kenneth King, co-ordinator of RRG since 1983, the idea of a network for the 'North'—NORRAG—was launched in Stockholm in 1985. At that time, the North represented a clearer concept than it does today and the international community was paying much more attention to aid policies: it was this niche that NORRAG began to exploit successfully, through the support of the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA) for the bi-annual publication of *NORRAG news*. Considered by many of those involved in education in the South as 'the South's eyes on the North' (P. Cariola, CIDE, Chile), NORRAG's status evolved between 1985 and 1992 from that of an informal club to that of an international non-governmental organization, based in Geneva.

Since then, a proper network made up of over 200 paying members (belonging to universities, agencies, NGOs and the private sector) has developed not only in the North, but also in the South, irrespective of country of origin or residence. Through the support of SIDA up to 1997, of the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC) since 1992, and of other agencies such as Deutsche Stiftung für Entwicklungshilfe (DSE, Germany) and the Department for International Development (DFID, United Kingdom), NORRAG has been able to develop an original approach. Meetings of experts and member consultations, often starting from a critical view of aid agencies' policies and thinking, provide the material for *NORRAG news*, compiled and formatted by its editor, K. King. *NORRAG news* then serves as the basis for an annual conference (often co-ordinated with a conference held by an international organization). The final stage in this sequence of events is the publication of a document. 'Changing international aid to education: global patterns and national contexts',<sup>2</sup> a recent joint publication by NORRAG and UNESCO. This book perfectly reflects NORRAG's concerns: faced with a world where the pace of globalization is accelerating and with aid policies that are undergoing profound changes, researchers, decision-makers and field workers are seeking new avenues and new values for education and training. It is only through strengthened dialogue between partners in the North and South, in the world of research, politics, the private sector and NGOs, that relevant and realistic proposals will be found.

This is the direction in which NORRAG is currently reformulating its objectives and method of working, to re-examine the essence of RRG's originality at the end of the 1970s—genuine international dialogue. The joint production of *NORRAG news* with partners in countries in the South, the conducting of joint research (for example, on aid to education in South Africa) and the activity of the Working Group for International Co-operation on Development of Professional and Technical Skills illustrate the new direction of a network which, in order to retain its credibility and effectiveness, will continue to give priority to that which globalization tends to marginalize: human contact and relationships.

## REDUC: the Latin American Network of Information and Documentation on Education

REDUC is a co-operative system of people and institutions producing information in the field of education in Latin America and the Caribbean. The network has operated without interruption since 1972 through twenty-two associated centres in all the countries of the region. These centres:

- Gather relevant papers and studies;
- Abstract them;
- Process these abstracts and include them in documentary databases containing some 15,000 items;
- Offer these abstracts and complete texts of abstracted studies to users in consultation rooms and through Internet sites;
- Open user networks, both paper-based and electronic, for REDUC users to assemble information relevant to their needs.

The success of the REDUC model, based upon flexibility and personal contacts in its co-operative organization, is illustrated by its long-term existence as a network. This fact has also been recognized in several studies published by international bodies. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- The use of up-to-date technologies in the information field;
- Co-operation between people and different kinds of institutions;
- The use of its products to create opportunities for dialogue and for assembling information.

REDUC products are aimed at promoting exchanges among different kinds of users, such as educational decision-makers, researchers, university professors, school-teachers and students in higher education. REDUC's products are the following:

- *Analytical abstracts on education (RAE)* in databases (15,000 items), accessible through electronic media and through the Internet site [www.reduc.cl](http://www.reduc.cl);
- *Specialized databases*, by subjects, available on CD-ROMs;
- *Studies* prepared by specialists belonging to REDUC;
- Various kinds of *courses*, such as: (a) *Courses for policy analysts*, a master's degree programme aimed at training people participating in educational decision-making; (b) *Training course for researchers and documentalists in English-speaking African countries* in agreement with the Educational Research Network in Eastern and Southern Africa (ERNESA) and the Deutsche Stiftung für Entwicklungshilfe (DSE).
- *Databases of press clippings*, available on CD-ROMs with a search facility developed by REDUC.
- The electronic review *Umbral XXI*, accessible through the site [www.reduc.cl](http://www.reduc.cl), which issues recent articles on education every two months from the perspective of the new millennium.
- Collections of *relevant studies* on education, available on CD-ROMs with a search facility.



REDUC structure is the sum of co-operation between people and institutions. Its highest body is the Biennial Assembly, which establishes the guiding policies of the network. These actions are carried out by associated centres under the co-ordination of one of them and under the supervision of a Steering Committee. At present, the Co-ordinating Centre is the Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Educación (CIDE) in Santiago, Chile; the director of the co-ordinating centre acts as REDUC chairperson, and nominates a General Co-ordinator in charge of the system, who is assisted by a professional team.

REDUC activities are financed by the centres themselves, by the sale of products, by national projects and by international donors. Throughout its history, REDUC activities have been supported by the following international agencies: the Ford Foundation; the Netherlands Agency for International Development (NOVIB); the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada; the World Lutheran Council (WLC); the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

A list of people associated with REDUC is included in the list of specialists that can be found on the Internet site [www.reduc.cl](http://www.reduc.cl). These people may be contacted through their e-mail addresses. There are twenty-two REDUC associated centres; and they and their Internet sites can also be consulted through this same website.

## Notes

1. NORRAG : Northern Policy Research Review and Advisory Group on Education and Training, c/o IUED, P.O. Box 136, 1211 Geneva 21, Switzerland.
2. Kenneth King and Lene Buchert, eds., *Changing international aid to education: global patterns and national contexts*, Paris, UNESCO Publishing in co-operation with NORRAG, 1999. ISBN: 92-3-103514-2. 328 p.

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# SOME THOUGHTS ON TRENDS IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH<sup>1</sup>

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*Ferran Ferrer*

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Research in educational science is currently experiencing a very favourable period as a result of the priority being placed on education in societies world-wide. Certain issues and trends have emerged in all countries in a similar fashion, though at different times and under different conditions depending on the specific local context. This article outlines these common issues in the light of four guiding principles of educational research: theoretical approach, methodology, objectives and practices, and relations with external entities. Finally, the challenges and obstacles that will apparently shape the future of educational research are identified.

Educational science research is a broad and complex field of study, not allowing for easy summing up. Providing an overview of international trends makes the task even more difficult. The present analyses are largely based on the previous five articles in this issue of *Prospects* and aim to highlight the salient differences and similarities between the articles and outline the future prospects of educational research in terms of content, methods and organization.<sup>2</sup>

## **Educational research: an emerging, changing reality**

To interpret educational research within the scope of educational science, we need a set of effective parameters that allow us to comprehend not only the diversity of existing situations, but also certain similarities which are—perhaps only by chance—observable world-wide. We must understand that the character of educational research

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in different national and regional contexts is not simply determined by the individual attitudes of researchers. There are three core factors that explain the global trends:

1. The historical development of benchmark education systems (including the educational research conducted within such systems).
2. The problems that these education systems are undergoing at present and the respective reforms.
3. The social, economic, cultural and political background of these education systems.

It is hardly surprising that the fields of study and the methods, as well as the objectives, are to a large degree conditioned by factors that cannot be controlled by the researchers themselves. As shown in the article by Pérez and Akkari, educational research, for example, in Latin America has changed significantly over the century, having shifted from neo-Marxist methodologies to approaches linked with the theory of human capital and from clearly descriptive, quantitative standpoints to more participatory, qualitative perspectives.<sup>3</sup>

The trends observed in the five preceding articles should be regarded as 'poles' in a field of tension. This is because educational research has so far not developed in a linear fashion; rather, it has been continuously adapting itself to changes in the environment. Though it would be difficult to find a country whose educational research was established exclusively around one of these poles, it does seem that research always tends in one of the outlined directions.

#### THE THEORETICAL APPROACH TO EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

##### *Basic research versus applied research*

One of the fundamental issues is whether preference should be given to basic or to applied research, and to what extent. Basic research is conducted in order to produce knowledge of the investigated area, even if the results do not serve an immediate purpose. Applied research, on the other hand, takes for a maxim that topics should be researched only if the results can be transformed into an immediately usable product e.g. a CD-ROM or implementation of an educational programme in an indigenous community.

A glance at the international situation reveals that only a small number of countries have the economic resources necessary for basic research. Since many countries feel the pressure of urgent economic and educational needs, priority is usually given to applied research. Basic research—which in many cases lays the theoretical foundations for the educational models sustaining applied research in developing countries—is mostly conducted in developed countries, which consequently exert indirect control over educational research elsewhere. The cause is not necessarily their intention to do so, but rather the existing imbalance in the distribution of human and economic resources.

A separate issue is the impact of applied research on the educational reality of a country or region. India is renowned for the numerous educational innovations it

has introduced in recent years; in reality, however, their impact on the country has been less significant than theoretically expected (see Mishra's article in this issue). This shows that to promote applied educational research—and the underlying educational programmes which it often entails—is not sufficient. Its pragmatic success also demands appropriate economic, political, social and cultural conditions.

#### THE METHODOLOGY OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

##### *Quantitative research versus qualitative research*

The two terms in the heading, as we know, can refer to two different research methods used within a single project. At the same time, however, one can (and frequently does) isolate quantitative or qualitative research as such. Quantitative research includes procedures ranging from purely descriptive research to experimental or quasi-experimental methods. Qualitative research encompasses methods pertaining to the fields of anthropology (such as ethnographic studies) and hermeneutics. The academic and professional careers of many researchers, as well as policies of research centres, often instantiate a clear shift from one pole to the other.

Researchers setting out to objectify the reality under analysis often find themselves faced with isolated data that do not suffice to reflect the observed complexity. Seeking an explanation, they look for the key to understanding why a fact changes according to the context, period or educator. Hermeneutics is particularly pertinent here. Gretler's article rightly emphasizes that though quantitative research also seeks general principles, it is qualitative research that aims first and foremost to interpret phenomena.

An analysis of the global situation suggests that if a country or region makes significant progress in educational research and its researchers and research centres become authorities in the field, the potential for interpreting reality increases progressively. This is largely thanks to the fact that the uncertainty of educational phenomena becomes accepted as a principle of educational research. Although there are some exceptions to the rule, this is borne out by experience in Latin America and Europe. A prime example of the acceptance of qualitative research methods is the application of ethnographic studies, which has yielded useful results in the study of educational processes within cultural minorities in the Americas and Africa.

For many countries it is still very difficult to carry out quantitative research, primarily due to the lack of stable structures for the collection of reliable data. A frequent major pitfall is the absence of a statistics office in the Ministry of Education with sufficient resources. Where such an office does exist, it must be staffed with highly trained and experienced professionals in order to employ the required complex techniques.<sup>4</sup> A number of countries thus have difficulties in providing even basic figures, let alone updating them within a reasonable time-frame. For countries with other serious problems in the educational sphere, the costly maintenance of a statistics office becomes a debatable investment and it is not excluded that these restrictions—manifest in many developing countries—may have fuelled the development of qualitative research methods as an alternative approach.

The idea that quantitative and qualitative research are complementary rather than exclusive is becoming increasingly recognized. World-wide, this appears to be particularly the case in universities or equivalent research centres while not so in international organizations. Mundy (1998) seems right in suggesting that this is not the result of an ideological choice but rather of the nature of the studies and research that these organizations must conduct: they work on larger projects and therefore tend to give priority to quantitative aspects.

### *Interdisciplinary research versus multidisciplinary research*

Interdisciplinary research is nowadays an established scientific approach and studies that are simply multidisciplinary are gradually losing relevance. Research topics are more and more often being determined by the problems affecting society, not by the interests of a particular scientific discipline. This feature of present-day scientific progress comes to the fore when researchers attempt to categorize a country's research on the basis of simple disciplinary criteria rather than broader, societal issues. In her article on educational research in France, Groux offers a classification with both these aspects in mind and shows the difficulties of such a task.

In educational science in particular, the need for an interdisciplinary focus is even more pressing. Educational research the world over still appears to be excessively confined to the traditional compartmentalization of university departments. However, requests from international organizations and many governments to research certain issues or areas of education that are not associated with a particular discipline have led to the emergence of interdisciplinary educational research. Such an initiative could not have come from within university departments, and international organizations have consequently played a very positive role. The proposed projects of OECD, the World Bank and UNESCO, outlined in several of the previous articles, all underline the importance of an interdisciplinary approach.

However, balance is needed and one should be aware of the potential risks. Educational science does not only need to adopt an interdisciplinary approach, it also needs to lay deeper foundations and to be more precise. Contributions of other disciplines to the development of education should be understood as a challenge to produce better quality educational research. Instead of letting isolated findings be dispersed among related sciences, researchers ought to try and reinforce the knowledge base at the core of educational science.

## THE OBJECTIVES AND PRACTICES OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

### *Contract research versus voluntary research*

Projects in the sphere of education obviously differ as to their purposes. Following Mishra's distinction, we can speak of two main categories.

First, there are projects intended to meet a specific need of an entity external to the research team that requires research into a specific problem or educational

topic. The entity may be an international organization, a government body or an educational institution, which is in some cases the team's own university. The project can be assigned directly to the group, or a public competition can be organized with several projects on offer. In any case, the external entity specifies the general conditions under which the project should be carried out (in particular, its duration and budget). As Mishra stresses, the final outcome can vary according to the relations between these conditions, the quality of the research team and the field of study.

The second type of research may be conducted purely at the initiative of a researcher or group of researchers. This form of research ideally enjoys full freedom, as it corresponds solely to the theoretical as much as personal and professional interests of the researchers. For example, researchers may wish to demonstrate their value to a certain discipline for the purpose of an institutional promotion. At any rate, they are clearly less restricted in this case and the practical usefulness of the outcomes can consequently be more uncertain. At the same time, as Mishra also underscores, funding is scarce for voluntary research and this circumstance can result in poor quality results.

From the studies included in the previous five articles, it is clear that voluntary research is much less widespread than contract research. The need to find room in scientific reviews and bulletins published by educational research associations and international organizations, as well as to obtain sufficient financial funds in a relatively restricted system, brings about a situation in which most research projects are completed because an external body requests them. Interestingly, this phenomenon is common to research groups the world over. One might think that in economically developed countries, researchers would be more independent vis-à-vis their choice of research topics. However, although their degree of independence is probably slightly higher, they clearly remain dependent on external bodies. This is due not only to the fact that research groups want to practise this type of research on a contract basis, but also to the influence of pressure groups, mostly government agencies, seeking to optimize economic resources earmarked for educational research.

Furthermore, there is a tendency for university professors to act as business managers of their own universities, collecting the maximum amount of research funds available for their institution (Welch, 1998, p. 9).

### *Research for creation versus research for circulation*

The heading summarizes another possible division. First, there is research primarily aimed at the creation and construction of new knowledge: efforts are concentrated on developing new methodologies, new instruments and new theoretical paradigms allowing for better interpretation of reality, so that new information is created. But research can also aim to produce an end-product intended for circulation. The entire research process—the research plan and internal structure, the selection of a team of researchers, funding, etc.—is therefore geared to this objective. In this case, the findings are less important than what is eventually presented in an article or a research report.

Many people tend to assume that research only exists if it is published. Indeed, some universities require students who want to obtain a doctoral degree to publish their doctoral thesis, even though the students often have to pay for the publication. This seems to be an extreme position; the principle that one should publish in order to validate one's results can be accepted without subjecting the research process to similar constraints. I suggest that 'creation of new knowledge' can be a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for conducting educational research.

Among problems related to this issue, there is the limitation of language. A research project which was outlined in an article for, say, a Spanish journal potentially appeals to a very wide readership and receives substantial publicity in this respect; in reality, however, only a small percentage of researchers may have access to this project because of the limitations of language. Not being able to read much of the nationally based literature leads some people to assume that research is, in fact, circulated only in journals or documents that are published in several languages by international organizations, such as the United Nations, along with all the organizations within its system. The review *Prospects* is an example.

The articles presented also show that the research mentioned has been circulated through various educational channels, particularly through the most prestigious media in the scientific community. This becomes evident when references are made to the traditions of certain research groups in different countries. The situation in Latin America, as presented in the Pérez and Akkari article, leads us to conclude that many of the major research groups and researchers would not have been as well known if they had not had their own circulation channels. Furthermore, in certain cases, they would not have received such positive feedback if they had not been politically motivated to circulate their innovative ideas in both the political and the educational arenas. (In my opinion, this holds true of Paulo Freire, though such a statement ignores his merits as an educationist.) The tendency for educational research to be oriented more towards publication and circulation than towards building up a body of knowledge is also emphasized by Serpell with respect to Africa. In short, there is a clear effort to publicize research and to occupy the national and international spotlight. The degree to which research groups give priority to this aim over construction of knowledge is difficult to measure objectively.

#### THE ORGANIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

##### *University research versus research in other centres*

The classic distinction between research centres independent of universities and university research departments remains pertinent. Often it is based on a clear intention to differentiate between research conducted by government bodies and by universities. Strictly political and ideological reasons as well as purely economic ones have fostered the establishment of state-owned research centres. In the case of the European Union, Gretler emphasizes that these new research centres are the result of governments' increasing desire to integrate educational research into their decision-making. As

regards France, Groux mentions that since 1986 the *Institut national de la recherche pédagogique* (INRP—National Institute for Educational Research) has been reinforced to apply research and new techniques in education to real-life situations.

The causes may be debatable, but the trend is manifest, even if its impact must always be judged in the given context. As Pérez and Akkari point out, in Latin America, for instance, it appears more important for individual governments to maintain their own research centres and to foster their mutual co-ordination than to create new ones which would extend the network already existing in the region. In some countries, though, the problem is rather the lack of government-funded educational research centres independent of universities.

Universities continue to be important in a wide variety of cultural and geographical contexts. As shown by the respective articles, in the European Union, Latin America and India, the contribution of universities to educational research is clearly essential. It may, however, decline owing to the increasing emphasis being placed on teaching, a phenomenon which is often accompanied by a decrease in the quality of educational research.

#### *Globalization versus localization of research*

Education, just as is the case for other sectors of society, has to be both local and global. There is a resultant manifest transition from one pole to the other. In this respect, educational research follows trends set by the educational community rather than its own needs.

An important aspect to be considered when looking at globalization versus localization is the impact of international organizations on educational research over the past few years. Some international organizations continue to conduct research and implement programmes locally. As cited in the Pérez and Akkari article, UNESCO and the World Bank have been instrumental in this respect. There is a trend, however, particularly in economically developed countries, to carry out global comparative studies (Ridell, 1997). A pertinent example of this trend is OECD, which, as Gretler points out, has focused the majority of its educational research on the formulation of indicators of education systems. For slightly different reasons, the European Union has also favoured this type of research through the EURYDICE network. The need to harmonize certain aspects of the education systems of the Member States, or at least to co-ordinate research in the field, has resulted in a significant portion of the budget destined for educational research being allocated to international, comparative research.

And these research methods are on the increase. As Serpell underlines in his article, researchers often support and prefer international research projects, which are more prestigious and offer better chances of gaining promotions within university research centres. Local studies tend to be relegated to the bottom of research rankings, being perceived as less complex tasks, which can be conducted by less experienced researchers.

Nonetheless, despite the negative fall-out, the participation of international organizations in educational research is clearly positive. For one, the closer contacts



which have been established between groups of researchers from different countries and international agencies (Serpell) will likely be beneficial to the development of national research teams.

### *Short-term research versus long-term research*

An interesting aspect to analyse in educational research is the time-frame set for a research team to complete its studies. Research is organized with respect to the amount of time available and its character can vary significantly depending on this factor. For example, certain research techniques require more time than others as they are more complex and involve educational phenomena that must be observed over time to ensure that the data and the final results can be deemed reliable. Thus these techniques can only be used in long-term research.

It is important to understand that both short-term and long-term research have their pros and cons. While with short-term research, results can be obtained almost immediately and thus rapidly open up new lines of research, long-term research can more accurately consolidate scientific findings. However, these features are always relative and it would be misleading to suggest that long-term research is always the better option—even when it is viable. For a given project long-term research may be excessive, thus resulting in a waste of time and work; a less time-demanding approach would in such a case be more appropriate.

The previous five articles suggest a general trend towards expecting immediate results from educational research. The fundamental reason for this is that international organizations and governments need to obtain justifiable results within a reasonable time-frame. The decision to select a particular group of researchers for a project and to allocate the corresponding funding is also taken on the basis of cost/benefit and duration/results parameters. It seems inconsistent to criticize international organizations for this. The amount of time to be spent on research should always be assigned in accordance with its scope and the economic resources invested. Many factors (budget, number of researchers, expert control, travel expenses, etc.) directly impact on the total time spent on a research project. With careful management, it is certainly possible for short-term research to yield the desired results. Mishra nonetheless focuses on the risks. He argues that researchers generally deem short-term research faulty, on the assumption that it is conducted by researchers with little experience in the field. It follows that the conclusions would also be invalid and the policy decisions taken on the basis of this type of research are speculative. As shown above, however, this need not be the case.

## RESEARCHERS' RELATIONS WITH EXTERNAL ENTITIES

### *Researchers versus politicians*

Analysing educational research from the perspective of relations that researchers establish with entities indirectly involved in the process is an important aspect of its

international development. The relations between politicians and members of the educational science community are widely recognized as problematic (Ginsburg et al., 1992). This is probably due to the fact that both parties differ as to their needs and their timing, at the same time being heavily influenced by the context in which they act.

In democratic countries, politicians have to publicly demonstrate the usefulness or uselessness of resources destined for educational research with respect to the improvement of education in their countries—a constraint from which researchers are free. Furthermore, politicians have to support educational research, but instead of actually carrying out the task themselves, they merely provide financial assistance. On the other hand, researchers put their reputations at risk in the scientific community and can be subjected to sanctions through prestigious journals or conferences. They are responsible for their findings, but exercise only indirect control over the end product of their research. They also far too often make the mistake of generalizing about reality on the basis of excessively specific or fragmented data, whereas politicians—and education policy-makers in turn—frequently lose touch with what is really happening in the education system.

As the previous studies show, this problem has yet to be resolved in both developed and developing countries. The situations outlined in India are comparable with those of European Union Member States: politicians want fast, explicit and concrete results that can be applied to specific cases, while researchers demand more time, which would allow them to explain their findings in detail and qualify them rather than having them immediately applied to real-life education systems.

The direct interaction between politics and educational research evolved several decades ago. Gretler traces this relationship back to the 1960s in Europe. He stresses that from the very outset, relations were not smooth and certain periods were marked by intense mutual mistrust. Developed countries at present are faced with the need to link educational research increasingly to one of the major problems of our time: the management and evaluation of the quality of the world's education systems. As Gretler emphasizes, a good example of such an effort is the INES project concerning educational statistics and indicators implemented by OECD and, more specifically, the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI).

The complex relations between politicians and researchers must be straightened out. As Groux underlines, areas of co-operation need to be defined, provided that researchers can maintain their independent and objective approach.

#### *Researchers versus educators (teachers, etc.)*

Educational research has frequently been accused of being too far removed from reality. This criticism often comes from people who are directly involved in educational institutions and programmes, i.e. teachers and other educators. To what extent can this criticism be considered valid? I suggest that it is in line with the general criticism which has been levelled at university departments for many years, namely that they are out of touch with day-to-day concerns in education. Cloistered in 'ivory towers',

universities have long found themselves on the sidelines of the interests and needs of society in general, and education in particular. The concept of university autonomy has been inappropriately used to defend this position. This misconception has spread to educational research which confuses 'autonomy' with distance from the reality of education.

It is true that considerable changes have occurred over the past few decades. The preceding five articles show that educational research increasingly necessitates the assistance and participation of educators. Qualitative research has helped enormously in this sense by providing techniques for obtaining data that force researchers to work on-site with members of the educational community under study. The research in Africa outlined by Serpell and the experiences with indigenous groups in Latin America both underscore the close relationship between researchers and educators.

## **Future prospects of educational research**

Educational research and global trends in education have always developed in step. When Rosselló put forward his now famous theory of educational trends from the vantage point of the International Bureau of Education (IBE), this link was already clear. There are many examples to be found, both in the previous articles and elsewhere. Clearly, educational research follows the 'educational trends' specific to an era. As Pérez and Akkari stress, it is logical that in the 1960s, for example, educational research in Latin America was focused primarily on educational funding. These countries were clearly concerned about the expansion of their education systems in a framework of economic growth. The relationship between education, social change and politics was also present in many research projects carried out in the 1960s and the 1970s, thus underscoring the link between on the one hand the development of education in general and education systems in particular and on the other the main fields of study of educational research.

On the eve of the twenty-first century, we see that education has experienced a sea change in many countries. Fortunately for the future of humankind, education is increasingly becoming a priority for the majority of governments world-wide. People are more aware of the undeniable impact of education on other fundamental sources of development and survival. Two prestigious reports, the Delors Report (1996) on education and the Pérez de Cuéllar Report (1997) on culture, coincide in underscoring the current importance of education.

Educational research has vast prospects at present, perhaps greater than at any other time. The 'learning society' or the 'knowledge-based society' no longer entail the utopian vision of the 1970s and could, indeed, become a reality in the immediate future. Educational research should help to shape this future. Its final impact, however, will depend largely on the ability of research groups to meet the needs of society. Researchers also have to be able to strike a balance between the various 'poles of tension' mentioned above, instead of opting for only one or the other.

Let us now look in detail at the major challenges and the obstacles which characterize the future of educational science.

#### CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

On the basis of the five articles in this issue of *Prospects* and research by other specialists in the field, five main challenges for educational research can be identified:

The first challenge is its ability to emerge from the social isolation in which, far too often, it remains, and openly address social needs. To avoid confusion, it should be noted that social needs are not only requests from politicians. The demands of citizens have also to be explored through other intermediaries who may not be elected officials but who exert significant influence over society (intellectuals, teachers, voluntary organizations, etc.). The ability of educational research to prove its significance for society, as well as to make its results clearly visible, will largely determine its future.

The second challenge is the necessary creation of research group networks. This is one of the most developed factors in other fields in the scientific community. We cannot approach education from the perspective of one isolated team of researchers, not even a handful. The increasing number of associations formed to foster co-operation confirms that we are on the right track. In his article, Gretler emphasizes the thriving state of educational research in Europe by referring to the creation of the European Educational Research Association (EERA) a few years ago and underscoring its current development. Other associations focusing on different aspects of educational science, such as comparative education and the history of education continue to organize conferences and other activities successfully. These exchanges need to be consolidated and widened.

I would suggest that the third major challenge is strategic, but by no means less important. It deals with the ability of research teams, especially the most established ones, to manage their funds adequately. In certain cases, these teams have started to generate resources that must be deployed effectively and transparently. The creation of 'centres of excellence in research' in various countries suggests that numerous resources are concentrated in a few hands. Such resources require proper management.

The fourth challenge for educational research is the circulation of findings. There is a two-fold objective here. On the one hand, the aim is to establish effective platforms for the propagation of new knowledge among the scientific community. In this case, the role of new technologies, particularly the Internet, will be fundamental. New avenues of communication should be explored to maximize opportunities, such as web mailing lists. In the field of comparative education, Spain's national research network, Rediris, maintains by electronic means a virtual community of specialists.

On the other hand, and without over-simplifying the issue, the findings of educational research should be circulated not only among experts but also among the general public, particularly the educational community. As stated above, visibility is a key factor here. OECD's recent studies on indicators of education systems stress

that this information needs to be transmitted to different audiences (the general public, parents, politicians, researchers, etc.) in different ways, i.e. with different degrees of complexity that must not distract attention from the most important aspects of the work. This should also be the case with the findings of educational research.

The last challenge, which is also decisive for the future, involves integrating educators in research processes (Pérez de Cuéllar et al., 1997). The objective of a large portion of educational research is change and educational innovation, and it is clear that this goal cannot be attained without the active involvement of people who work in education on a daily basis. There are several forms of co-operation between educators and researchers, although not all of them are appropriate for all types of research. They must be adapted to the circumstances of the research process as well as to its goals and methods. Sánchez's article on the ethical aspects of educational research from 1997 provides a good outline of the relationship between researchers and educators.

#### OBSTACLES TO EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

I have drawn out four major obstacles to educational research.

The first obstacle involves the creation of research teams. It has been noted in various political and geographical contexts that there is an increasing concern regarding the lack of incentives to maintain or expand current research teams. Several factors hinder the development of educational research, including bureaucratic restrictions that often turn researchers into simple research project managers, the lack of specific ongoing programmes to train researchers and the growing tendency to favour teaching at universities.

Another obstacle resides in the major differences between research teams in economically developed countries and teams in the rest of the world. This imbalance actually hinders the development of new methods and the creation of new knowledge. Furthermore, it encourages a certain degree of 'colonization', albeit a largely unintentional one, of some countries by others. This is clear with regard to the methods and techniques used, the theoretical models on which research is based, the innovations which emerge from it, etc.

The third obstacle that impedes research in many countries is the lack of funds. No country has been able to resolve this issue entirely. Educational research funding is not only a matter of a government increasing the budget for research. The budget must be maintained for perhaps several years, as needed, irrespective of the political slant of the government, in order to guarantee the continuity of research projects and the consolidation of the research groups involved. Society at large has to regard educational research as essential, regardless of political trends.

The final obstacle to the development of educational research is the conflict between the interests of society and those of politicians. Some of the issues in educational research which are considered essential today and outlined in the previous articles are not very important for governments, as their impact on society is only

an indirect one. Curriculum reform, teacher training and the interdisciplinary approach may not interest governments, but they are examples of areas specific to educational research at present, which can be defended from a purely technical and pedagogical stance.

However, equitable access to education, the urbanization of rural education, social exclusion via new information and communication technologies in education and the development of a two-tier educational network (public and private) are also issues that urgently need to be studied. These have indubitable political and ideological repercussions, which does not imply that they not also be given priority in educational research. In fact, we must convince politicians that these issues should also be studied independently and impartially by educational researchers.

Looking at education from an international perspective, I would like to conclude with an observation by Gretler, as presented in his article based on OECD's Synthesis Report (1995) on educational research with respect to its limits and possibilities: being excessively utopian or pessimistic will only lead us further away from reality.

## Notes

1. I would like to dedicate this article to Carmen Vidal, who was a professor in my department and who, in her short but active life, made a significant contribution to the development of educational research in Catalonia.
2. We will not go into the relevance of educational research here. It is nevertheless relevant to refer to Wolf's suggestion (1993, p. 16) that research is in opposition to other means of knowledge, such as authority, tradition and personal experience.
3. Further information on the development and issues of educational research in Latin America can be found in Nazif and Rojas (1997).
4. For details, see UNESCO's *Statistical yearbook*.

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# TRENDS/CASES



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# SECONDARY EDUCATION

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## IN GHANA

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### AT THE DAWN OF

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### THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY:

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### PROFILE, PROBLEMS, PROSPECTS<sup>1</sup>

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*Hubert O. Quist*

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The special edition of *Prospects*, vol. xvii, no. 4, 1987, on secondary education examined issues relating to curricular economics in developing countries, youth attitudes, the planning of secondary education and the prospects for reform. The authors were unanimous about the continued importance of a generalized secondary education that serviced societal demands and expectations and kept pace with rapidly changing technology. Notable is the introduction by Morsy to this theme, entitled 'Landmarks: the secondary education debate'. Morsy examined the constraints and seeming progress made by secondary education the world over, noting the achievement of the advanced industrialized countries in making secondary education free, but that it 'has not been adapted to deal with the present crisis as well as the exponential growth of science and technology' (Morsy, 1987, p. 4).

The entire edition underestimated the implications of globalization for secondary education, especially for developing countries such as Ghana. Nor did it tackle the relationship between secondary education, nation-building and modernization — an issue crucial for Africa where recent developments in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo point to this seemingly difficult task. Comprehensive research

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*Original language: English*

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on education in Ghana (Foster, 1965; McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975; Antwi, 1990); on secondary education reform and its associated difficulties (Foster, 1965; Ahiabla-Addo, 1980; Scadding, 1989); on the development of education in particular regions of Ghana (Bening, 1990; Quist, 1990; Quist, 1993); or the contribution of the churches to educational growth and expansion (Bartels, 1965; Smith, 1966; Pfann, 1970; Quist, 1994) have also paid little attention to the theme of secondary education, nation-building and modernization. Only Agyeman (1974) analyses education and nation-building in Ghana, but on the macro level and with limited focus on secondary education.

This paper will thus seek to address the discontinuities between secondary education, nation-building and national development in Ghana, as well as examine the problems of secondary education development. Here attention is focused on secondary education financing and the impact of globalization. Kelly's (1982) study on Viet Nam and Bray's (1986) on Nigeria provide indicators and a programmatic paradigm for analysing education's role in nation-building. These emphasize the horizontal and vertically integrative nature of such a role.

The horizontal integrative framework stresses: (a) the significance of a national language; (b) reduction of regional, ethnic, gender and geographical imbalances; and (c) the implementation of a quota system. It also addresses issues on gender differences, curricula reform, the cultural influences of the West and the effects of globalization. Vertical integration describes the hierarchical relationships and the processes, especially educational, which seek to reduce the gap in communication and thus promote social and occupational mobility. This paper dwells more on the horizontal integrative component, whilst conceding that its successful implementation ultimately promotes the vertical integration of society.

It is argued that the academic bias of secondary education could not create in sufficient quantity a pool of middle-level manpower that was technologically skilled and essential for sustainable economic, technological and scientific development. In this respect, the economic imperatives of education for nation-building have been neglected. This limitation was crucial in informing the new secondary education reforms implemented since 1987. By 1990, gender disparities remained with girls' education in rural Ghana lagging behind, even though it has been recognized that sustained attention and support for female education, empowerment and emancipation in the developing world are essential to national development and nation-building.

This paper is divided into three parts. First, it provides a profile of secondary education as a context for a critical analysis, and in the second part, of the problems associated with its development. Third, it focuses on the prospects of secondary education as a vehicle for sustainable nation-building and national development at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

## **A history of secondary education in Ghana**

Secondary education in Ghana is more than a century old. Since its beginning in 1876 with the establishment of the Methodist (Wesleyan Mission) boys' secondary

institution, Mfantshipim School, at Cape Coast in the Central Region of Ghana, secondary education has continued to enjoy popular support nation-wide. These institutions included the Anglican-established Adisadel College, a boys' secondary school at Cape Coast (1910), and the first Catholic boys' secondary school also at Cape Coast—St. Augustine's College (1930). The colonial government only joined the enterprise in 1924 when Governor Gordon Guggisberg (1919–27) established a co-educational secondary institution. This process culminated in 1927 with the opening of Achimota School (initially Prince of Wales College) near Accra, the nation's capital. Achimota, modelled on the English 'public' school system, was the only secondary institution established by the colonial government.

Cape Coast quickly emerged at the end of the colonial era as the hub of secondary education in Ghana, priding itself on being the custodian of some of the best and most prestigious schools. In addition to Achimota School, the Cape Coast schools, including two female institutions, namely Wesley Girls High (1935) and Holy Child Schools (1946), attracted the cream of primary school graduates. There was also an increased participation of educated elites in private secondary education development. By 1950 there were two government secondary schools with an enrolment of 857; eleven government-assisted secondary schools with a total of 1,919 and forty-four non-assisted ones with an attendance of 3,386 (Foster, 1965). Yet, no quota system was instituted throughout the colonial era for the benefit of educationally neglected areas such as the northern part of the colony even though Guggisberg was aware of the 'educational backwardness' of this region. Further, gender, class, ethnic and geographical imbalances also remained. Williams (1964, p. 299) asserts that the data spanning the 1920s and 1930s confirm that the ratio in government and government-assisted schools was 1 girl to 4.8 boys, whereas in 1891 the ratio was 1:3.9. Consequently, Williams concludes that 'whatever one's interpretation, the hard facts are that the ratio of girls to boys was approximately the same at the end of the Governor's period of office as it had been thirty years earlier'.

By 1960, most of the secondary institutions in Ghana were already well established, providing a seven-year programme structured on the British model. This consisted of five years of 'O' levels and two years of sixth form studies leading to 'A' levels. Mfantshipim and Achimota schools provided the two main traditions of secondary education. The 'Mfantshipim tradition' was single-sex and church-established. It was assimilated and re-appropriated in ways that blended Western and Ghanaian cultural elements. The 'Achimota tradition', on the other hand, was co-educational, solely state-founded and financed. It sought to combine unsuccessfully a British elite school model with an American one intended for the training of African-Americans in manual work in the period following the American Civil War (Williams, 1964; Berman, 1971, 1972).

A third model, the 'national school', was introduced in the post-colonial era by the Ghana Educational Trust (GET) established in 1957 by Dr Kwame Nkrumah, the first president. It was a product of Ghanaian and post-Second World War nationalism and part of Nkrumah's 'nationalist' project. GET became the major driving force behind secondary education expansion between 1957 and 1964 and

served as a co-ordinating body for the schools and colleges Nkrumah founded (Ghana, National Assembly, p. 163). It aimed to build and increase access to secondary schools nation-wide, particularly in rural and deprived areas. Between 1958 and 1963, it established nineteen secondary schools nation-wide. Table 1 shows the number, type and enrolment figures of secondary schools in Ghana from 1951 to 1960. Twenty-three of these schools were built, managed and controlled by GET. The Trust's activities were considerably aided by the Accelerated Development Plan for Education, 1951 (ADP), the main educational blueprint for the period 1951-60. Both the ADP and the GET were instrumental in projecting and affirming the post-colonial State's unrivalled role in secondary (and primary) educational expansion, a role that completely surpassed that of the churches. Church schools, however, retained a standard of academic excellence absent in many state-established secondary institutions, except Achimota.

TABLE 1. Secondary schools in Ghana, 1951-60: types, number and enrolment

Year	Government & approved schools		Private schools		Total	
	No.	Enrolment	No.	Enrolment	No.	Enrolment
1951	13	2,937	49	3,964	62	6,901
1952	26	5,033	27	2,709	53	7,742
1953	30	6,066	28	2,337	58	8,403
1954	31	6,936	19	1,666	50	8,602
1955	31	7,711	28	2,306	59	10,107
1956	35	8,908	23	2,157	58	11,065
1957	38	9,860	22	2,259	60	12,119
1958	39	10,423	24	2,773	63	13,196
1959	39	11,111	30	4,206	69	15,317
1960	59	14,000*	52	6,000*	101	20,000*

\* Approximations.

Sources: *Ghana educational statistics, 1959*. Accra, Ministry of Education, p. 1-2; Foster (1965).

The climax of state control and greater influence in secondary education was attained under the Nkrumah administration (1951-1966) with the passage of the Education Act of 1961. By this Act, the State acting through the Minister of Education sought to take over and control all pre-university institutions. The medium, at the secondary level, was to be the board of governors that each school was required to establish. This board was to be controlled by the Minister, who was vested with authority to constitute, dissolve and reconstitute its membership. He appointed a majority of the board members. Out of a membership of twelve, for example, the Catholic Church only had three representatives. Importantly, this Act secularized education and increased state control at the expense of the religious and voluntary

agencies whose control was confined to disciplinary measures, where even so the rules and regulations had to be approved by the Ministry of Education. This was, however, actively contested by the Catholic Church, especially its Archbishop, John Kodwo Amissah of the Cape Coast Archdiocese. This Act (with amendments in 1965) remained in force until 1991.

A major change in the secondary educational structure occurred in 1987 when the government of Flight-Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings (1981–91) mastered the political will to implement a revised version of the 1974 Dzobo Education Committee Reform<sup>2</sup> recommendations on secondary education (Ghana, 1974). The 1974 recommendations stipulated a 3-2-2 secondary structure: three years junior; two years senior secondary lower; and two years senior secondary upper. The revised 3-3 structure—three years of junior and three years of senior secondary education—implemented since 1987 was apparently based on similar structures prevailing in the United States of America, Japan and Nigeria. This constituted a significant departure from the colonial British model of 5-2. For the first time, it shifted the Ghanaian secondary education structure away from its original British model to an American/Japanese pattern.

The examination structure also changed with the 1987 reforms. It now consisted of two parts: the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) taken at the end of three years of junior secondary education; and the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) administered at the end of three years of senior secondary education. Despite these measures, a complete reform of the system in ways that were Ghanaian (i.e. African) was still lacking. One conspicuous and significant change was the compulsory replacement of the old middle school with three years of junior secondary education. This popularized secondary education for all primary school graduates for the first time in the country's educational and political history. In the new content at the junior secondary level, courses such as cultural studies, Ghanaian languages, environmental studies, agricultural science and life skills based on Ghanaian themes assumed greater significance. Subjects introduced at the senior secondary level were also radically revised to reflect both academic standards and new expectations. Even so, the senior secondary programme retained some of the essential features of the old system, notably course designations, preparation and management of the examination and certification process.

Whereas in 1957 there were thirty-eight secondary schools in Ghana with an enrolment of 9,860, by 1966 when the Nkrumah era ended the number had escalated to 129 with 49,822 students enrolled. In 1972 there were 163 secondary schools in Ghana with a total enrolment of 71,581. At the beginning of the 1981–82 academic year, there were 206 senior secondary schools with 141,980 students and 116 junior secondary schools with a total enrolment of 168,192. Secondary education in Ghana at that time had an enrolment rate of approximately 40%. Enrolment nation-wide at the primary level was approximately 75%. By 1990, there were 252 senior secondary schools and 4,918 junior secondary schools. The junior secondary schools had an enrolment of 507,168. By 1993, the rate of secondary enrolment in Ghana at the junior secondary level had reached approximately 80% while at the senior

secondary level it remained at about 40%. With the 1987 reforms, however, only senior secondary education remained the prized aspect of secondary education since it guaranteed access to the universities of Ghana and to other tertiary institutions.

## **Secondary education, nation-building and national development**

Since colonial times most parents and the educated elite have valued secondary education as a channel for social and occupational mobility, notwithstanding its limited access (Foster, 1965; Antwi, 1990). For the colonial government it was a tool for ensuring the success of colonial subjugation and an efficient bureaucracy. For the churches, it supplied ministers to pursue its triple objectives in the country: education, evangelization and enlightenment. In the post-colonial era, its significance as a human resource and manpower development tool was unquestioned, advocated and more actively pursued (Harbison & Myers, 1964). The objective was to use this new policy agenda as a corrective instrument for the limitations of colonial education and national development policies.

Two main policies underpinned the development of secondary education. The first, in the colonial era, was 'education for adaptation' with its consequent associations and implications, namely 'education for citizenship' and 'education for the progress of the colony'. In the post-colonial period, the aim was to promote 'education for nation-building' and 'education for modernization'. The colonial government never pursued 'secondary education for nation-building' or 'secondary education for national development'. Indeed, 'development' as a concept with economic and social implications only assumed international currency after the Second World War. Furthermore, the concept of 'nation-building' also gained legitimacy during the process of decolonization in Africa. It is arguable that the greatest apostle of 'education for adaptation' and 'education for citizenship' in the colonial era was Governor Guggisberg, the most progressive of them all. He was committed to the progress of the colony. There was, however, some interest on the part of both the churches and the colonial government in 'education for human resource development'.

Under Guggisberg, Achimota was developed as a complete education system in itself. Achimota produced elite graduates, like those of Mfantsipim School, St. Augustine's College and the other church secondary schools. These aspired to the respectable professions in law, medicine, engineering, academia and accountancy. The school accomplished one significant aim, namely training the future leaders of Ghana, and indeed other African countries. Examples here include Presidents Nkrumah and Rawlings, and the first Prime Minister of Nigeria, Nnandi Azikiwe.

Achimota became an important testing ground for two transferred models of education. The first was from the United Kingdom and was patterned on the English 'public' school system, namely Eton and Winchester. Strikingly, whilst being educated in a school that had elitist inclinations, pupils were expected to appreciate 'labour as the young Englishman in England did' and, at the same time, to develop their

potential in the sciences and arts. Second, it was expected to combine the English model with a supposedly 'inferior' training programme patterned on the Hampton-Tuskegee model from the United States (Berman, 1971; 1972; Spivey, 1978). The latter became part of the colonial government's education policy, namely, 'education for adaptation' (Bude, 1983; Lewis, 1954; Scanlon, 1964). Mfantshipim and other church schools were not particularly keen on this policy, for the Basel Mission (later Presbyterian Church) already pursued intensive training in agriculture as an essential part of its school curriculum. Significantly, 'education for adaptation' first attained official proclamation in 1925 in the Colonial Office Memoranda, and at the peak of Guggisberg's administration. It stated that:

Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life; adapting them where necessary to changed circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution (Lewis, 1954, p. 17; Cowan, et. al, 1965, p. 46; Scanlon, 1964, p. 93-94).

As a mainstream policy it echoed the recommendations of the Phelps-Stokes Commission, which visited Africa in the 1920s, for British Tropical Africa. The commission's reports, issued in 1922 for West Africa and in 1925 for East Africa, stressed the provision of manual training of a vocational and technical type with a focus on simple trades and crafts, such as basketry, masonry and carpentry. This was the type of education that had been promoted by General Armstrong and Booker T. Washington at Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes for African-Americans during the period of reconstruction in post-Civil War America.

In adapting education, the colonial government was also influenced by its own confirmed opinion about the 'educable African'. Such an African was incapable of intellectual and rigorous academic education in the arts and sciences, and could only be taught mechanical skills, farming and the like, which he or she was less likely to forget (Lyons, 1970). Questions were raised regarding what adaptation meant, what was to be adapted and how adaptation was to be carried out. Kay and Nystrom (1971, p. 252) assert:

To the Phelps-Stokes Commission it (adaptation) implied education similar to that received by Negroes in the American South [...] those with a Rousseau-like view of Africans interpreted it to mean preserving their past. The racist saw adaptation as a means of keeping the African in his inferior position, and the bearer of civilization viewed it as a remedial type of education. Those who regarded the Africans as children thought in terms of modifying educational methods, while those who saw them 'different' wanted changes in the curriculum (Barrington, 1983, p. 65).

'Educational adaptation' was obviously as problematic as it was unwelcome. It was misrepresented and misinterpreted by all parties involved in the secondary education enterprise, namely the colonial government, the missions and the educated

elite. It was resisted by the Fanti educated elite of colonial Ghana (Kimble, 1963), notably John Mensah-Sarbah, Joseph Casely-Hayford, John De-Graft-Johnson and the journalist Ato Ahuma. They saw it as essentially racist, humiliating, obsolete, second-rate and ultimately reactionary, curbing aspirations for academic education, further study or urban migration (Barrington, 1983, p. 65). Moreover, it was dependency—rather than development—oriented. As Berman (1971, p. 145) asserts:

Implementation of the Phelps-Stokes Commission's concept of education would have radically altered the course of modern African history, and not in the African's favour. It would have placed the African countries several centuries behind the advanced countries and would also have deepened the stereotype generally accepted in the West about Africa even today.

In the post-colonial period, considerable stress was placed on 'education for nation-building' and 'education for modernization' (Ghana Planning Commission, 1965), especially under the Nkrumah government. This found greater meaning in the new challenges that confronted the nation, especially in matters of economic and social development.

In this era, education and development policies were influenced by the desire to compete internationally and also by the nationalist impetus stimulated by the new political leadership. These proved crucial and were considered to be development-oriented. Consequently, a strong academic secondary education system capable of feeding the universities with excellent students keen on becoming doctors, engineers, lawyers and teachers, among others, became the main concern. The colonial policy of 'adaptation' received little support. Vital also was the elimination of regional, gender, geographical and ethnic imbalances in education as a means of promoting national integration. If we refer to Bray's (1986) indicators, successive Ghanaian governments between 1951 and 1987 used secondary education to promote nation-building in three major ways: as a human resource development objective; through curriculum reform that stressed Africanization; and through the provision of scholarships aimed at increasing opportunity.

As a human resource and manpower development strategy, secondary education expansion was undertaken through the establishment of GET. The Trust (1951–64) aimed at providing access for all Ghanaian youth irrespective of class, ethnicity or gender. It gave attention to the poor and deprived rural areas. Unlike the 'Achimota tradition', the 'Trust tradition' popularized and demystified secondary education in Ghana for the first time. Established with a paltry sum of £G10 from Kwame Nkrumah's own personal savings, the Trust had built more than ten schools by July 1951 (Ghana, National Assembly, 1963, p. 163). This was possible following increased and sustained funding from the Ghana Cocoa Marketing Board (now the Ghana Cocoa Board), which endowed it with initial seed money of £2.5 million. Within a short period of three years—September 1959 to September 1962—GET controlled and managed no fewer than thirty-four well-equipped secondary schools, together with an up-to-date middle boarding school. By September 1963, GET alone



had put up forty-six buildings, increasing access and opportunity to secondary education for many Ghanaian students irrespective of ethnicity, gender and social class.

In the post-Nkrumah era, notably as from 1987, junior and senior secondary school reforms further promoted the goals of human resource and manpower development. This new reform, the first since independence, made three years of junior secondary education compulsory for all primary school graduates. The objectives were to increase literacy and to ensure an adequate and well-informed, educated labour force. The economic and development benefits of this measure for the accelerated development of Ghana will only become evident by the year 2020.

The second approach by which secondary education was used to promote nation-building and national development was through Africanization of the curriculum in history, geography and religious studies. This approach, however, raised numerous questions. For instance, did it mean teaching more agriculture and technical subjects, African languages, customs or beliefs? Or did it merely mean replacing 'Europe' with 'Africa' in the new curriculum? Should 'education for adaptation' actually be understood as the Africanization of education? How far had the secondary education curriculum been Africanized by 1990? Awudetsey (1978, p. 19) notes that:

Africanization of education [...] implies not only teaching more agriculture, technical subjects, African languages and customs, the traditional subjects of the curriculum; or breaking with former colonial masters if that is for the good of the country; but also a change in the attitude of those at the helm of affairs so that they can look at Africa with an educative eye and upon things African with pride. Finally, Africanization of education is a political decision which each country will have to make now or some day.

Fundamentally, what this meant was adapting education to the needs, realities and aspirations of Africans and Ghanaians. As a cultural project, Africanization resonated with Nkrumah's own definition of the concept. Nkrumah called for the development of an African personality, pride and consciousness. With Nkrumah, Africanization assumed a new meaning, being promoted by a leading African statesman, ruler and nationalist who was also a highly educated politician with international experience.

During the Nkrumah era secondary education was Africanized mainly through the school curricula for history, religion, civics and geography. These were revised, with greater stress being placed on Ghanaian history, geography and religion—subjects that could be evaluated by examination. By 1990, these features were still evident at the senior secondary level. At the junior secondary school level cultural studies focusing on Ghanaian drumming and dancing, and Ghanaian music was taught, while school festivals stressing cultural activities were organized. Subjects such as environmental studies and life skills that promoted Ghanaian values were also underscored. What remains a challenge is the Africanization of the physical, mathematical and biological sciences. Attempts were also made to train a Ghanaian teaching staff for the secondary level.

A third measure by which secondary education was used to promote nation-building and national development was the implementation of scholarship schemes, such as those of the Cocoa Marketing Board and the Northern Special Scheme. These have persisted since the Nkrumah era. The latter most especially has been aimed at assisting needy, brilliant and promising students from the less deprived northern, upper east and upper west regions of Ghana. Further, the Northern Special Scholarship Scheme has been directed at bridging the alleged fifty-year gap between the south and north of Ghana in terms of standards and level of education, modernization and social development. As horizontal integrative measures, these remain crucial in addressing imbalances arising from limited and unequal access to secondary education.

## **Problems of secondary education**

Secondary education development has since colonial times been saddled with numerous problems. First, its role in the nation-building process remains unclear. Problems of adequate and continuing funding remained and, by 1991, comprehensive curricula reform addressing the country's development problems in a scientific and technological age had yet to be put forward. Lastly, questions remained regarding the cultural and developmental implications of sustaining a secondary educational structure and content that were essentially Western.

In view of its complexity, nation-building presented its own problems. Should attention be geared to the Western liberal or eurocentric viewpoint (Smith, 1971; Hobsbawm, 1990) which stresses one language, culture, tradition and national identity or rather to the African perspective (Boahen, 1975; Hobsbawm, 1990) which called for unity amidst diversity? However, using Bock (1982) as a starting point of analysis, a clearer insight is attained regarding the role of secondary education in nation-building, modernization and national development. He argues that the traditional or mainstream view resorts to the assumptions of the functionalist and equilibrium explanation for social change, while the alternative perspective draws on conflict theory. Within the mainstream paradigm, Bock contends that education is viewed as the primary social agency for training the young for competent adult role(s) required by the emergent needs of changing societies. Also important are the differentiation of these roles and the socialization of the young to value the consensus upon which society's stability and continuity are believed to rest. Consequently, from this perspective difficulties of nation-building and modernization are attributable to the inability of education to produce the needed human capital. In this situation, improvement in human capital emerges as a solution to the problems of nation-building and modernization. This viewpoint accounted for the emphasis placed on secondary education as a human resource development channel by both the colonial but most especially post-colonial governments (Harbison & Myers, 1964).

On the contrary, the alternative framework derived from neo-Marxism contends that social stratification is not simply a by-product of modernization. This approach sees the role of education—notably secondary education—in the pursuit of nation-

building and modernization as that of 'socializing the young to an expanded level of knowledge and competencies considered to be essential for participation in a modern industrial society' (Bock, 1982, p. 89). Such socialization embraces the inculcation and development of attitudinal modernity, civic knowledge, participation, equity and equality within the school system.

In the post-colonial era, secondary education was used in a functionalist and balanced way to promote the goals of nation-building, though with limitations and criticisms. Issues of conflict and dispute regarding imbalances were, however, brought to the fore. One notable example under the Nkrumah administration was the distribution of GET schools. Parliamentarians in the 1950s and early 1960s were embittered about what seemed to have been a discriminatory policy favouring powerful ministers and their political constituencies (Ghana, National Assembly, 1964, p. 72-98). Rather than popularizing secondary education and removing gender and regional imbalances, GET was criticized for concentrating on some parts of the country, such as the Central Region, which already had leading prestigious secondary schools.

According to Foster (1965) and Ahiabile-Addo (1980), curricula reforms also proved problematic. Two issues were outstanding: the continued use of English as a medium of instruction; and the policy of Africanization. The curriculum, until 1987, was also criticized for alienating secondary school students from the communities (Busia, 1964) in view of its essentially Western flavour and character. Implementation of the policy of Africanization was also fraught with difficulties arising from distrust about its supposed intentions. Clearly, globalization and Westernization also remain major obstacles in the path of Africanization even as they are shaping and influencing educational thinking and systems world-wide.

Educational financing, however, remained the most intractable problem. Secondary education since independence had been financed from revenues derived from domestic sources, such as cocoa exports and taxes, as well as from international co-operation. Such funding, despite its consistent and sustained nature, always competed with other aspects of the economy, namely health, transport and communication, and public works and housing, and even with primary and university education. Consequently, funds for education, in particular secondary education, never amounted to half of the total national revenue for development projects.

In the colonial era, secondary education financing was heavily biased in favour of Achimota School. By 1958, Achimota continued to draw more funds than any other secondary school in Ghana. Church-established institutions came to depend on the colonial government for grants-in-aid, of which Achimota became the measuring rod. In the post-colonial era, government expenditure on secondary education was gradually equalized for all institutions. The Nkrumah government emphasized education more than all other social services, including health. However, between 1958 and 1965 secondary education did not attract more funds than defence, or the colleges and universities as a whole, nor than primary education, except in 1960/61. In Table 2, the total education vote of £G66,003 in 1965 constituted 65% of the entire social services budget for the whole country.

TABLE 2. Revenue and expenditure of central government on education: combined consolidated and development funds, 1958-65, compared with selected sectors

Sector	(Percentages in parentheses)			
	1958/59, £G	1960/61, £G	1962/63, £G	1965, £G
Educational administration	1,244.5(13)	778.4(5)	998.3(4)	3,280.6(5)
Primary	3,031.6(31)	4,534.9(30)	8,709.5(38)	23,921.5(30)
Secondary	756.1(7.8)	4,995.1(33)	1,919.6(8)	7,902.9(12)
Colleges & universities	3,858.2(40)	3,245.4(22)	8,251.1(36)	28,261.8(43)
Teacher training	93.4(1)	543.1(4)	616.9(3)	1,393.0(2)
Adult education	—	—	—	—
Libraries & museums	(6)	(4)	(2)	(2)
Other	165.9(2)	253.3(2)	1,924.5(8)	160.9(0.2)
Total	9,682.1	14,973.3	22,865.2	66,003.0
Overall total for social services	19,895.5(49)	27,730.8(54)	40,171.7(57)	101,358.0(65)
Defence	3,495.5	9,972.2	11,076.9	25,384.5
Health total	3,835.5	5,987.5	9,583.2	19,660.0
Transport & communications	11,770.8	13,918.9	9,762.2	22,374.4

*Sources:* Compiled from: Ghana. *1962 Statistical year book*. Second issue. Accra; Central Bureau of Statistics, 1964, p. 148; Ghana. *1964 Statistical year book*. Fourth issue. Accra; Central Bureau of Statistics, 1967, Table 153, p. 163; Ghana. *Statistical year book 1969-1970*. Seventh issue. Accra; Central Bureau of Statistics, 1973, p. 144-45.

\*Percentages derived by author were rounded off to the nearest whole figure.

In the Five-Year Development Plan spanning 1975/76 to 1979/80 and presented in Table 3 education was allocated 12.6% of government funds. Agriculture received 25.5%, transport and communications 21.6%, and utilities 13.8%. Education was a fourth priority for the government.

Under Rawlings the financing of secondary education came to be linked with efforts at economic recovery and structural adjustment. The economy of Ghana had deteriorated following consistent failures in domestic policy implementation and management, political instability arising from frequent military coups between 1966 and 1981, the droughts of 1982-83, and the escalation in world oil prices.

Anyemedu (1993, p. 13) observed that:

Real GDP stagnated and per capita incomes declined at the average annual rate of about 3%. Inflation averaged over 50% during that period and reached triple digits in some years. By 1981, cocoa output was less than at independence in 1957 and only 45% of the 1965 peak. The other major export commodities—gold, diamonds, and timber—had all suffered significant reductions in output [...]. Agricultural output stagnated throughout the 1970s in spite of the fact that population grew at an annual rate of about 2.5%.

TABLE 3. Five year development plan, 1975/76 to 1979/80: public expenditure on various sectors of the national economy

Sector	Amount (expressed in cedis)	Percentage of total
Agriculture	999,065,876	25.5
Transport and communications	845,950,044	21.6
Manufacturing industry	166,648,110	4.3
Mining	335,019,560	8.5
Forestry	59,800,000	9.5
Game and wildlife	19,081,000	0.5
Education	496,257,425	12.6
Manpower and employment	33,421,301	0.8
Health	119,339,014	3.0
Housing	290,540,891	7.4
Social welfare	17,962,820	0.5
Utilities	541,662,935	13.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,924,748,976</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Ghana. *Five-Year Development Plan, 1975–76 to 1979–80. Part III: Public Investment Program*. Accra; Ministry of Education, 1977, p. iii.

The effects of this situation on secondary educational standards, resources, facilities, infrastructure, equipment and personnel nation-wide were debilitating. To tackle the economic problems, the government, supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) initiated Economic Recovery Programmes (ERP) in two phases from 1983. Phase one (ERP1) extended from 1983 to 1986 and represented the stabilizing phase, while phase two (ERP2) from 1987 to 1989 constituted the structural adjustment and development phase.

The government also received funds from international sources. By September 1987, it had received a total of \$34.5 million from the World Bank, the Overseas Development Agency (ODA), the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries Fund (OPEC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Norwegian Government to initiate the first phase of the reform package at the basic education level of formal education (Dei, 1993, p. 53). This phase involved replacing the existing four-year middle schools with a three-year junior secondary school education. The government also removed subsidies as a result of the implementation of ERP1 and ERP2. This affected secondary education. In the *Programme of actions to mitigate the social costs of adjustment, 1987*, it was observed that 'secondary school students have already been hit by the removal of government feeding and boarding subsidies and the charging of economical fees for the use of textbooks' (Ghana, 1987, p. 37). To make up for subsidy removal, however, steps were taken to improve the quality of secondary education by

undertaking intensive rehabilitation and the repair of many secondary schools whose infrastructure had deteriorated.

These foreign loans, however, only increased Ghana's debt problem. The long-term debt outstanding and disbursed in 1982 stood at US\$1.1 billion (Orivel & Sergent, 1988, p. 459–69; Bray, 1986, p. 129–36). Together with the agencies of the United Nations, donor agency financial support for the 1987 educational reforms in Ghana amounted to US\$231.7 million. The World Bank's share represented about 79.5% of the total investment for the education sector. This amount of foreign aid notwithstanding, Orivel and Sergent (1988, p. 462) rightly point out that Ghana, together with other African countries considered poor on the basis of GNP calculations, continues to receive the smallest amounts of foreign aid (less than \$1 per head).

Orivel and Sergent also argue that foreign aid, rather than being a panacea for the ailing educational problems, only exacerbates them, mainly because most donor agencies seek to promote particular interests which in some cases are at odds with what the country actually wants. This raises questions about the purposes and usefulness of foreign aid. Such financial constraints ultimately thwart efforts aimed at effectively using secondary education for nation-building and modernization.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, I submit here that education—particularly secondary education—remains the single most important instrument for achieving the goals of nation-building in Africa, especially through horizontal, and then vertical integration. But the task can only be simplified if nation-building is perceived as a process of getting people to appreciate unity in diversity, respect for diversity and the richness of diversity itself. A modern secondary education system that is progressive and tailored to the realities and needs of a multi-ethnic and lingual country such as Ghana, depicting the concept of a 'salad bowl' rather than a 'melting pot', stands as a more plausible alternative. Such a system should stress egalitarian values and strategies. The prevalent practice of mixing students from different ethnic backgrounds in secondary schools needs to be intensified. In this way unity, integration and the goals of nation-building can be guaranteed—ethnicity notwithstanding.

## **Prospects for sustained and viable secondary education**

Even though the scenario depicted is typically Ghanaian, these issues were and have been similar for most sub-Saharan African countries, almost all being ex-colonies of the United Kingdom or France. Further, secondary educational disparities exacerbated by scarce funding continue to plague all of these countries, including Ghana, thus endangering the goal of nation-building. Indeed, the strategies that Ghana adopted until 1987 to rectify the anomalies of the system were similarly implemented in Nigeria, as Bray's (1986) study shows—with somewhat similar consequences and constraints. They were also implemented in the United Republic of Tanzania under Nyerere and with similar intentions and expectations.

I started off by pointing out that the *Prospects* edition of 1987 that inspired this paper under-recognized questions surrounding secondary education and nation-building, among others. This Ghanaian example, doubtlessly, raises broader issues surrounding the purpose to which sub-Saharan African States intent upon accelerated development should put secondary education and how much attention should be paid to this level of education. Importantly, questions also arise about the future of secondary education in the wake of the Jomtien plan of action (Thiam, 1990), which calls for an involvement of all the countries of the developing world in the struggle against illiteracy and underdevelopment.

Present efforts in Ghana aimed at its becoming a middle-income country by 2020, promoting economic growth and multi-party democracy will only be successful when questions relating to nation-building and modernization, with implications for secondary education, have been addressed. I contend, contrary to Psacharopoulos' (1981) findings about higher rate of returns to primary education, that secondary education is as important as primary education, if not more so, as far as the development of Ghana is concerned. Without secondary education, the most accessible form of higher education in the country, hopes of accelerated development will remain a dream. The question remains: what are the prospects for sustained secondary education development that addresses national development and nation-building needs in Ghana?

First, a rethinking of secondary technical education that is more responsive to the techno-scientific development (Heyneman, 1987, p. 64) is imperative. The rapid techno-scientific development and modernization of Ghana—and Africa—in the twenty-first century would depend more on an increasing provision and support for secondary technical education of a higher quality that is also development- and technologically-oriented. Here, the government needs to court the active participation of the Ghanaian business community and privatize this aspect of education, while supporting it with substantial funding. Second, there is the need to explore the potential of a revived Ghana Educational Trust as a secondary (preferably) technical education endowment fund with the intent of providing more secondary schools in rural Ghana. Such a trust should raise funds nationally and internationally and should operate as a corporate institution with financial investments. Third, periodic curriculum reforms stressing science, technological, agricultural and business education are essential. This should not, however, be pursued at the expense of the humanities and arts since their contribution to the cultural, aesthetic and humanistic dimensions remains unsurpassed.

These measures would create a significant impact if new equity strategies that focus on girls' education are formulated and implemented. The present ratio of boys to girls in urban Ghanaian secondary schools is about 1:3, whilst in rural secondary schools it is almost 1:6/7. Good-quality education for girls impacts positively on a country's fertility and population growth rates. It also increases the chances of education for these women's children, improving the nutrition and health of their children. Women in sub-Saharan Africa, in exercising their responsibility for the nurturing, upbringing, socialization and education of their

children, are key actors in the process of human and national development (Browne & Barrett, 1991, p. 275). Thus, more quota and scholarship schemes need to be instituted as a practical and development-oriented issue. Further, the Special Northern Scholarship Scheme established by Nkrumah needs continuing attention and revision.

## Notes

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2. The committee was chaired by Professor N. K. Dzobo of the Faculty of Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

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**PROFILES OF  
FAMOUS EDUCATORS**

FRANÇOISE DOLTO  
1908–88

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# FRANÇOISE DOLTO

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(1908–88)

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*Éric Binet*<sup>1</sup>

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## A Christian educator out of the ordinary

The tenth anniversary of the death of Françoise Dolto and the four-day seminar devoted to her work earlier in 1999 at UNESCO are a reminder to us that this psychoanalyst is still influencing our understanding of children. Although she was trained as a paediatrician, the setting up of the Maison Verte as a care centre and her co-operation with the school in Neuville were her principal achievements. No doubt, her popularity was also due to the radio talks that she gave over a period of many years.

It can nevertheless be seen from her biography that even at the age of 8 she wanted to be an 'education doctor'. Significant events prompted the desire to support parents by teaching them to educate their children. The fact that she turned to medicine and psychoanalysis was therefore no accident, but the outcome of suffering endured in the course of her childhood and adolescence.

On the other hand, while Françoise Dolto is still famous for her clinical skills or her contributions to theory, notably the unconscious image of the body, the ontological status of her ethics remains less well known. She examined the Gospels via psychoanalysis, just as she looked at psychoanalysis and education in the light of the dictates of the Gospels. It could even be thought that her view of the human being, endowed with desire and language, linked up with that of the humanist educators of the sixteenth century and their Christian fervour. By recognizing the otherness peculiar to each individual and the tolerance that this calls for, her very

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*Original language: French*

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numerous books (more than thirty) have done much to clarify the rights of the child and the duties of adults.

## **The childhood of an 'education doctor'**

Françoise Marette was born in Paris in November 1908, the fourth of seven children of a well-to-do family of engineers. Right from the start, her distinguishing characteristics seem to have been originality and a sense of exclusion. The best-known anecdote concerns her cocaine-addicted Irish nanny, who was summarily dismissed when her escapades with Françoise in a high-class brothel were discovered. Those first six months spent with the nanny were so emotionally fraught that they came close to killing her. As she was to repeat on several occasions, only her mother managed to save her.

During her subsequent childhood Françoise often suffered from the incomprehension of adults:

And I used to wonder, having once been small and having grown up, how people could be so strange since they had been children. And I said to myself: 'When I'm big, I'll try to remember what it's like to be small' (F. Dolto, 1986, p. 43).

That perplexity developed a sense of questioning and communication tinged with a good measure of outspokenness. To cope with the silence of adults and the meting out of punishments, a self-taught attitude, common to many educators, emerged.

Her personal teacher, trained in the Froebel method, saw her through her first steps in education. Kindergartens, it may be recalled, were originated by Froebel (1782-1852) and employed a method based on motherly love and metaphysical and religious principles. The way of learning to read that developed out of this enabled Françoise Dolto to discover self-reliance and respect for the desire to learn.

Hence her wish, at the age of 8, to become an 'education doctor', to 'help parents educate and understand their children' (Dolto, 1988, p. 48). The fact that the adults did not understand this plan only added to the pain. In short, where a proper balance was lacking in her life, a desire to put matters right arose, the desire of the doctor 'who knows that when there are snags in education, children get illnesses that are not really illnesses but cause trouble in families and complicate children's lives which could be so peaceful' (Dolto, 1986, p. 44).

Other events outside the family influenced her decision, particularly the First World War with all its missing and wounded, but above all the sight of women who, without any training and having lost their husbands, fell into poverty and utter isolation.

The final ordeal Françoise Marette had to undergo concerned her elder sister. At the age of 11, on the eve of her first communion, her mother instructed Françoise to pray for the recovery of her sister, stricken with bone cancer. Her sister's death provoked an extremely violent reaction in the mother, who put all the blame on Françoise, even regretting that she was still alive instead of her favourite daughter.

This rejection seems to have so marked Françoise that she entered on a process of redemption or exoneration. In so doing, she was following a path trodden by all the women of the family, all fated at one time or another to save a family member.

## Discovery of paediatrics and psychoanalysis

After sitting her *baccalauréat*—against her mother's will—Françoise waited seven years before beginning medical studies with her younger brother Philippe. In 1930, however, with her mother's consent, she passed her nursing diploma.

On beginning her medical studies at the age of 23, she met M. Schlumberger, who subsequently became a psychoanalyst. He advised her brother to begin psychoanalysis with R. Laforgue (founder of the *Société psychanalytique de Paris*). A year later Françoise began her analysis with Laforgue. This lasted three years and gave her a start, before her meeting with Jacques Lacan, in training as a psychoanalyst.

Her hospital training took her to the most well known department at the time, run by Dr G. Heuyer, who was a pioneer in child psychiatry and speech therapy. That was where she also met S. Morgenstern, the principal proponent of child psychoanalysis in France, particularly through the use of drawing as a means of therapy. Despite this fruitful contact, the way in which care was organized led her away from being a non-resident student to being a house officer.

In 1938, however, she met Dr E. Pichon at the Hôpital Bretonneau and his teaching influenced her particularly. The next year she presented her medical thesis: 'Psychoanalysis and paediatrics' (1971).

In 1942 she married Boris Dolto, who was to become an eminent physiotherapist in France.

After the Second World War, the only contact Françoise Dolto maintained with hospitals was through her free consultations at the Hôpital Trousseau from 1940 to 1978. She was also a consultant at the Centre médico-psycho-pédagogique Claude Bernard from 1947 onwards, and later entered the CMPP Étienne Marcel, where she remained from 1964 to 1981. Another activity nevertheless caught her fancy, halfway between education and clinical practice, which was that of psychoanalyst for Radio France-Inter, from 1976 to 1978. Three popular books based on her broadcasts confirmed her listeners' interest.

In the meantime, she became a member of the Société psychanalytique de Paris, until the split of 1953. She then took part, with J. Lacan, D. Lagache and J. Favez-Boutonnier, in founding the Société française de psychanalyse. After the second split, in 1964, she remained with Lacan, the founder of the Freudian School in Paris, which she left in 1980.

## Conditions and aims of education

In 1945, in her fundamental text on education and psychoanalysis, Dolto described her aim of supporting the human being in its integrity and in all its otherness. In her writings we find constant references to developing the awareness and releasing the

desire of the child. This precaution was so central that she saw it as a means of preventing neuroses.

Nevertheless, she still had misgivings about our techniques and about our anticipation of a future that escapes us: 'We prepare children for a life about whose course we know nothing, and yet they must be different from us precisely because they have acquired experience that was not ours at the same age' (F. Dolto, 1985, p. 330). Hence her harsh criticism of our education system, whether in the family or at school, as not developing in children the means of seeking the fulfilment of their desires: 'The important thing about education is not at all the "why" but the "how"' (F. Dolto, 1973, p. 100). This choice is reminiscent of a definition of the educator as being there not to lead children but to teach them to lead themselves.

As she saw it, the respect of children can be won only through co-operation between child and adult. Such a view implies accountability that works both ways and experience based on real life—the example set by the adult. It is therefore not surprising that she did not lay any particular store by institutionalized educational methods: 'The adult who serves as a role-model does not claim to offer a method. Method is anti-pedagogy' (F. Dolto, 1985, p. 276). In emphasizing how much more important the distinctiveness of each individual was than any theory, she would repeat to all and sundry that it was ridiculous to seek to 'do it Dolto's way'.

The foundations of her educational thinking are close to those of the active methods advocated by psychologists like Célestin Freinet, or psychoanalysts like A. Adler and A.S. Neill. In this respect, her educational thinking also ties in with the institutional pedagogy movement that drew its inspiration from institutional psychotherapy (F. Tosquelles). She remained convinced that every child possessed a revolutionary potential that traditional education sought to stifle.

Freud maintained that educating, treating and governing were three impossible jobs, and Dolto took the principle further, with a certain sense of disillusionment: 'As children see it, we always fail'. Freud put it like this: 'Whatever you do, it will never be right' (Dolto, 1989, p. 69). This paradox, which led her to say that education is successful when it is a failure, is explained by the child's reaching maturity. Only when children have established themselves in relation to adults by means of rejection do they display their capacity to become educators in their turn. According to Dolto, it is also on the basis of this position of rejection, accepted by adults, that children believe in their own judgement.

## Unconscious image of the body and education

Psychoanalytical theory served Françoise Dolto in the treatment of children and adults, but not on its own. She evolved a personal theory around such key concepts as subject, language, desire and body. This is the theory of 'the unconscious image of the body', which she described in detail in 1984 in all its complexity.

The originality of this theory is based on the idea that, unlike a medical chart of our body, an image of the body is built up in the unconscious right from the foetal stage, the reason being that it is 'the unconscious symbolic incarnation of the desiring

being' (F. Dolto, 1984, p. 16). Hence the idea of organizing advantageously the development of this unconscious image of the body through a form of education, or humanization, which she called 'symbol-generating castrations' (*castrations symboligènes*).

This unconscious image of the body is neither unique nor static; it possesses several components (a basic image, a functional image, an image of the erogenous zones and a dynamic image). Without going into details about the interconnection between these elements, the essential idea to bear in mind concerns an archaic relational experience marking our memory as we become structured. And where Dolto concurs with another famous psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, is when she asserts that this structuring is only possible once all these archaic experiences have been verbalized, that is, symbolized.

The symbol-generating castrations referred to above are thus symbolized by language, on the basis of a 'castrating statement'. Why speak of castration here? Simply because what is involved is a taboo fostering 'renunciation of cannibalistic, perverted, murderous, vandalistic and other impulses' (F. Dolto, 1984, p. 76). These castrations are all the more humanizing when the child knows that the adults submit to these taboos. This is also why, according to her, children can intuitively recognize adults with incompletely castrated archaic impulses. In this connection, Dolto recalled the situation of adults experiencing difficulty in letting a child grow up and become independent; for that often means that they are still subject to archaic impulses and have not renounced them.

## The new ethics of education

In attempting to picture the ethics of Françoise Dolto in her practice as a psychoanalyst, we should consider first of all that she undertook to differentiate between morality and ethics. As a therapist, she was opposed to the 'categorical imperatives' of Kant, 'moral obligation' and maxims, addressed only to the ego, the empirical self. As she saw it, in weighing on the conscience, morality disregards the complete individual by ignoring the unconscious: 'The dynamics of desire has no use for morality since the unconscious is unaware of the conflict of good and evil' (F. Dolto, 1987, p. 131).

Dolto, in fact, recognized only one universal law, that of the taboo of incest. In short, she referred to no principle or purely theoretical moral code. There were at least two reasons for this. The first is that the human being is not confined to the ego, even if represented by the transcendental unity proposed by Kant; hence Dolto spoke to infants, whatever their physical or mental health, without bothering herself over whether or not they 'reasoned'. The second reason stems from her discovery of the lack of oneness of the human being:

The human being is fundamentally three. For a human to appear, it is not enough just to place a man beside a woman. From the moment of its conception, the infant has a desire to live and grow. To the desire of its parents must be added that of the infant wishing to develop, to become a being endowed with speech and responsibility [...]. The reason I wanted, from



the age of 8, to become an 'education doctor', was because I had observed, in my family, what happened when the atmosphere became stormy—the children reacted straight away (B. This, F. Dolto, 1980, p. 10).

Rejecting any domination of the human person, she never intervened imperatively, but indicatively. She thus condemned any morality that might control a person and threaten a person through obedience or imitation. In the educational relationship, therefore, the risk of alienating the child's desire in that of the adult seemed to her to be inevitable. Hence her wish always to ensure a comparison of desires between adults and children, because 'if desire is always satisfied, it is the death of desire' (Dolto, 1985, p. 226).

Thus, the fact that word and desire were not taken into account in the family threesome prompted Dolto to elaborate an ethical code of education. It is therefore not a coincidence if we find in her childhood the roots of this consideration of the link between these three desires, particularly through respect for the word—as the mediator of desire—that maintains the oneness of person and desire. However, this support of the child, of whatever age and ability, was in her view only possible through trust: 'For its development to be sustained, the child must be considered in relation to what lies ahead and trust be placed in the adult it aims to become' (Dolto, 1985, p. 230).

Further progress in understanding Dolto's ethics calls for a remark prior to any argument about their 'utility'. In what she has to say, she does not confront the reader with a will to convince or to provide justification. All she offers, in fact, is her own subjectivity, refusing to make 'her' truth 'the' truth. Dolto merely supplied a testimony, that of a Christian; her ethics can be understood solely as the meaning she gave to her life.

We could understand these ethics as the ethics of tolerance: 'Tolerance towards the different behaviour of each individual, self-confidence always restored to every pupil, the freedom left to everyone to express themselves, with no store ever being set by imitation or rivalry, with children being taught day by day the laws governing buying and selling and the sexuality of the country in which they live; this is how to prevent deficient moral training, a deficiency far more dangerous for a society's future than poor performance at school' (Dolto, 1986, p. 42).

## **The creation of the Maison Verte**

The opening of the Maison Verte in Paris dates back to 1978. It is a place that takes in children from birth to age 3 accompanied by an adult. It represents a departure from the plan to build a day-care centre in the sense that children are never left alone at the Maison Verte, and it follows Dolto's original plan for organizing early prophylaxis.

Regarded as a place of transition, before admission to a crèche or nursery school, the Maison Verte mainly seeks to limit the adverse effects of an unprepared separation. By involving adults and children, a gradual separation is effected: 'The

social group co-operates all the better as differences are signified in words. Diversity gets each and everyone to work together with due regard for everyone else' (Dolto, 1985, p. 413).

This transition through the mediation of language, which the Maison Verte attempts to prepare between the family unit and society at large, is based upon a major ethical presupposition, which is that every person seeks, very early on, to communicate with others. Hence Dolto's idea of restoring, in a social context, 'an invitation to comprehensible language, to camaraderie with children who are different, to mutual help' (Dolto, 1986, p. 409). This was something which impressed itself upon her day after day and alerted her since it is disregarded by adults: 'We are only in the very first stages of an essential discovery, which is that the human being is a language being from the moment of conception; that every human being is vested with desire; that there are potentialities which we support or we discourage' (Dolto, 1985, p. 415). This is particularly so since any violence surrounding this quest for contact corresponds to a traumatism, an 'early micro-neurosis'. These 'things unsaid' or 'misunderstandings' usually affect the autonomy of the child's desire, contributing to the emergence of emotional or even physiological troubles.

From this point of view, what Dolto (1985) observed was that there were a number of risks in keeping the child confined with its parents, a confinement reinforced by an urban environment. It is no surprise then that weaning should have been one of the prime considerations at the Maison Verte: 'It works for the prevention of weaning, which is the same thing as the prevention of violence and, consequently, of social tragedies' (Dolto, 1985, p. 396). Nor is it surprising that the success of the Maison Verte is to be explained by this accession to early independence offered to the child. Through this liberation, it ensured that there was no family alienation: 'The mother can thus, from one day to the next, cast off the slavery in which most mothers [...] become ensnared as victims of the exclusive care of their children, at great risk to the latter's education' (Dolto, 1986, pp. 409-10).

The main interest about the way in which the Maison Verte operates lies in the presence of parents reassuring children when they begin to explore, at their own pace, an environment outside the family. The contacts between parents, accompanying persons and children, together with the pleasure they derive from them, amount to offering a new form of preparatory care, a form of social prophylaxis. Dolto described this early preparatory care as informing and dispelling misunderstandings: 'Preparatory care must, above all, enlighten the attitude of parents while the child is in the foetal stage, how they imagine the child and how they communicate with it; then, at birth and in the early months' (Dolto, 1985, p. 423).

The basic purpose of the Maison Verte is therefore to let children acquire the security of being their individual selves: 'One first has to be assured that one is oneself and that this "oneself" is in a state of security such that, no matter where, one knows what the body needs and one is not ensnared by a look or by what one hears' (Dolto, 1985, p. 416). For, as can be verified at each successful departure from the Maison Verte, the child leaves with a confidence acquired in and with the group.

## **The school at Neuville: a workshop for Françoise Dolto's educational thinking**

The school was founded in 1973 by F. d'Ortoli, M. Amram and P. Lemaître in Neuville-du-Bosc, in Normandy. Every year for seven years, it took eight children into a single class. The school was subsequently transferred to the Château de Tachy, near Paris. There are now four classes (two primary and two secondary) with some forty children under the supervision of six adults.

With a curriculum extending from primary level to the fourth year of secondary education, this 'institutionalized living community' offers a great variety of educational opportunities (printshop, computer workshop, cinema club, photographic laboratory, etc.). The educational ideas, drawn essentially from the institutional pedagogy movement (Makarenko, Neill, Célestin and E. Freinet, Deligny, Oury and Vasquez), can be summed up in this phrase from Makarenko: 'It is not the educator who educates, but the environment'. Prompted by the idea of well-being and non-compulsory activities, this scheme for reconciling children with school has, through their active participation, made it possible to organize a cordial and stimulating collective existence.

Collaboration by the founders with Françoise Dolto began before the school was built and continued until 1979, the year she ended her private consultations. Up to then, she used to send them children who were receiving therapy from her. Since the school has a very mixed batch of pupils, it is quite common for children with serious psychological difficulties to be accepted. As Dolto saw it, taking children like this teaches the other children tolerance. 'The fact of seeing children who are wild and disturbed is a great help to other children since it shows them that life is not fun for everyone the whole time [...]; for them it is an introduction to the difficult life of humans, who are all the time caught between reality and the imaginary. They thus acquire a real understanding of the mind' (F. d'Ortoli, M. Amram, 1990, p. 101).

Dolto's influence subsequently made itself clearly felt through repeated meetings with the founders on the occasion of 'educational surveys'. One of the major consequences of this collaboration was brought to light through the discussion of wishes as part of the life of the school. The most interesting point around which the life of Neuville is organized concerns the 'grumbles' book and the meetings. To quote Dolto: 'Once the meeting becomes a place where everyone speaks without fear of being judged, or punished, the group [...] can enable all participants to communicate and so advance' (d'Ortoli & Amram, 1990, p. 60). All the children are able to write down all their complaints, ideas, and so on in a book. The book is then gone over, read and discussed at a general meeting at the end of the week.

All this institutional machinery works like a 'purification unit', and its operation has the effect of binding the group together. 'To express oneself in words is to purge everything from oneself that hinders mental circulation' (d'Ortoli & Amram, 1990, p. 155). This mechanism, fully described by Dolto, can be explained by the time-lag that exists between writing and the moment when the problem is dealt with. It is a very important mechanism, not to say a discovery: that of going beyond and

relativizing suffering. It is a transition after which children cease to lie: 'A child will lie on the spur of the moment but not after having had time to think' (d'Ortoli & Amram, 1990, p. 156). Likewise, although "grumbling" represents a need for mediation in order to get out of a conflict-ridden, sterile and inextricable relationship' (d'Ortoli & Amram, 1990, p. 63), it can be seen that the community is not an agglomerate but a body linked with a place where the identity of each individual can take shape. This 'grumbles' book also represents a really good way of learning to read and write. The children prove the correctness of Dolto's central idea about the learning of reading, and understand that the book in question plays an active part in awakening the desire to be able to read and write.

## Conclusion

Her brief experience of paediatrics and her subsequent discovery of psychoanalysis gave Françoise Dolto access to a therapeutic practice enabling her to apply ethical principles that were in conformity with her view of the human person. This path led her to develop a prophylaxis, put to the test in various institutional projects, with a 'socializing' or 'educational' value.

Psychoanalysis thus not only enabled her to bring the light of ethics stemming from it to bear on the therapeutic process, but also stimulated her in her educational and spiritual activity.

It was, no doubt, that feature of her thinking that prompted Dolto, in her relations with others, always to use speech for the benefit of the person, by calling or recalling each person to his or her archaic desire. This is perhaps the origin of what prompted in her readers and listeners that jubilant enthusiasm so decried thereafter. There is a paradox here between the rejection of any claim to set standards and any imitation, and the power to attract an extensive readership or audience that 'imitated' and 'set standards' and, above all, was not steeped in the ethical convictions that she alone knew to be essential to any application of her 'advice'.

The very inner distinctiveness of her therapeutic, educational and spiritual action no doubt explains the absence, as Dolto saw it, of pupils to whom she might have taught the essence of her practice, since her subjectivity—the sense of her genius, her faith—is not something that can be taught.

## Note

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The association 'Archives et documentation Françoise Dolto, 21 rue Cujas, 75005 Paris, tel.: 01.40.51.72.05; fax: 01.40.51.74.27; e-mail: dolto@wanadoo.fr, is at present the only centre where all the writings of Françoise Dolto can be consulted, together with all translations.

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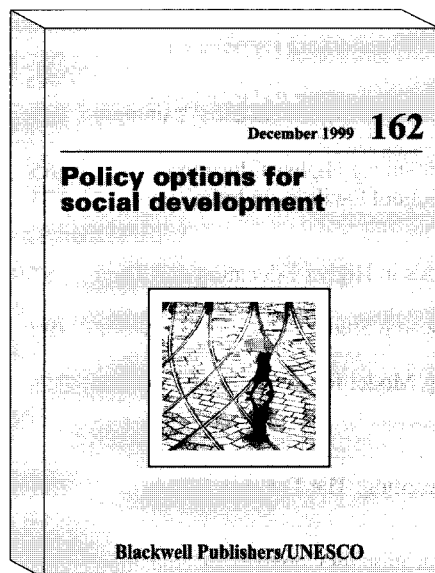
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