Editorial

Research into the several dimensions of education is well established as one of the branches of social science. Cross-national research in these areas is similarly well established, as the recent Fifth World Congress of Comparative and International Education Societies bore out. With the procedure of much of such research there appears to be no issue of principle. Americans, Germans, Swedes, Russians and Japanese study each other with mutual encouragement. Until two decades ago much the same seemed to be true of all nations. Indians were at liberty to study British education, Ghanaians could doubtless look at Brazil, if they were so inclined, and Zambians and Tanzanians could examine the Chinese experiences.

The then 'unity' of cross-national research was gradually riven by the impact of certain observations. While it was true in principle that educational investigators from whatever country could pursue issues anywhere else, actual research showed a gross imbalance. Investigators from the so called developed countries certainly were to be found busy in many so called developing countries, but the reverse did not obtain at all. The reasons were all too obvious. Most developing countries, whether ex-colonies or not, simply did not have either the traditions or the researchers or the financial resources to sustain cross-national research to any significant degree.

Such a one-way flow of interest and activity might be circumstantially unavoidable. However, it was bound up with features which made it appear objectionable. There was 'academic imperialism' in the sense that researchers collected and made off with raw data, processing and publishing the results for their own exclusive credit and benefit. There was 'dependence' in the sense that the foreigners with their apparently superior technology and resources made or found themselves focuses of unthinking limitation. Flowing from that was 'underdevelopment', in the sense that, even if the foreigners were not 'imperialists', their very presence and operations inhibited the emergence of endogenous and indigenous capacities, modes and paradigms of research. If the studying of Britain by Dutch researchers, say, might lead to cross-fertilisation and mutual stimulus between Dutch and British educational practices, a large reason would be the feeling of equality between the two sides, which would facilitate open-mindedness. Obvious inequalities of resources or attainments, on the other hand, tend to undermine the confidence of the less well endowed party and to make that of the better endowed overweening. Linked, then, to imperialism, dependence and underdevelopment was the possibility of arrogance, paternalism and patronage.

Responses to these observations have of course emerged. That each society or country should have its own capacities for research in education as in other fields is acknowledged. Programmes of institution building for that purpose have long been under way, often substantially financed by external sources. To be sure, such foreign support has often been characterised as yet another symptom of patronage and dependence, or even as a covert means of external political control. That is part of the dilemma of aid. There has been growing stress on collaborative research, undertaken jointly and on equal terms by autochthonous and foreign researchers. The point of collaboration has at the same time been shifting to ever earlier stages in the research. Whereas once researchers in a developing country might be invited to join in on research already conceptualised and fully designed, now they are asked to help formulate the initial idea. Indeed, collaboration has been extended in the past decade to the concept of participation: those to be researched might also design the research and determine its execution and application.

The criticisms and responses, as well as the strengthening research capacities of developing countries, have required continuing revisions in the relative roles of foreign and indigenous researchers and their sponsoring institutions. The terms of research have been changing, with a persistent drive for negotiation between the autonomy of the

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individual foreign researcher and the needs of a particular educational system as perceived by those within it: 'policy relevance' has become a standard demand upon research proposals. Assurances are also sometimes required that foreign researchers will act as trainers, fostering the development of indigenous expertise and initiative.

Educational research has in this way become a matter of political interest. And, as education itself involves political resources, research into it has been affected by requirements for government permission to do research, by restrictions on the topics that may be researched, by limitations on the freedom to use the data gathered or to publish the considered findings. Foreign researchers then cannot regard themselves as free-floating scholars intent only on elucidating problems. On the contrary, they are enmeshed by ideologies, ethics, moral obligations and political sensitivities; and they are racked by debates about their own legitimacy, values and usefulness in relation to developing countries.

Accordingly, that researchers native to developed countries, but interested in education in developing countries, should want to take periodic stock of their situation is natural and desirable. The articles which follow are the product of just such an occasion. A conference on 'Conditions of Educational Research with and in Developing Countries' was held at the IDS from April 9 to 13, 1984, at which the papers on which they are based were discussed. The partners sponsoring the meeting were the Committee on Educational Research in Cooperation with Third World Countries of the Educational Research Association in the Federal Republic of Germany and the Education Study Group of the Development Studies Association of Britain and Eire. The immediate organisers of the occasion were the IDS and the Educational Area of the University of Sussex.

By happy fortune, members of the Netherlands Development Research Working Group for Education in Developing Countries, as well as visiting scholars from India, Mauritius and Morocco were able to contribute to the discussions. So, too, were members of the World Bank, UNESCO, the Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation (NUFFIC) and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.

The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft kindly supported the attendance of the group from Germany and the British Economic and Social Research Council made a most helpful grant for the reproduction of the conference papers. *J.O.*