EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN LATIN AMERICA:
HIGHLIGHTS AND TRENDS (*)

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SUMMARY

This paper examines some issues concerning the development and trends in Latinamerican educational research. The focus is centered upon the influence of northern paradigms and research approaches upon intellectual production in the region during the past three decades as well as the importance of foreign funding in the development and present status of this field of research.

The main sources of information are provided from papers prepared by leading Latinamerican researchers in education for IDRC's meeting on educational research held in Ottawa by July, 1985. Some additional papers prepared by IDRC's staff members were particularly useful, too. All of these writings are included in the bibliographical references.
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INTRODUCTION

This paper raises two issues concerning the development and trends in Latinamerican educational research during the past decades, its present status and perspectives for the near future.

The first issue rests upon a shared conviction among Latinamerican researchers. This prays that educational research in the region has developed in close relationship with the development of theories and paradigms produced in developed countries (particularly Europe and the U.S.A.). It is argued that such paradigms, although valid as a coherent set of theoretical principles, laws and instruments to approach educational problems, have proved to be inappropriate to explain these phenomena in a context which is marked by changing socio-political conditions and a growing scepticism in front of past experiences in education and development. Although moving targets have placed renewed theoretical challenges for educational research present restrictions for intellectual work leaves little or no space for researchers in the region to elaborate alternative or appropriate paradigms that will contribute to the growth of knowledge and enable a better comprehension of educational phenomena in the latinamerican countries. Most probably, future theoretical efforts will continue to evolve upon the contributions of developed countries although accumulated knowledge as well as the critical appraisal of existing models may bring positive results concerning both the adequate selection or transformation of prevailing and emerging theories and the introduction of changes in educational systems and practices.
Such a statement leads to the second issue. This is concerned with the climate and organization of educational research in Latin America but, most of all, with the funding of these practices. Research in education has traditionally been supported by foreign donor and funding agencies. Further, during the last decade both research and researchers have survived thanks to the external aid. This has had a double effect. On one hand, researchers have tended to adopt both their objects of research and methodological approaches to those trends and priorities established by donor agencies. On the other, interaction among researchers and foundations as well as among researchers from developed and developing countries has produced a positive impact on the quality of educational research and on the communication and dissemination processes. With such an impact a significant contribution has been made to a better understanding of the specific problems in one and other context and of the existing relationships between central and peripheral countries.

Although educational research shows a substantial growth in the region and seems to have accumulated a significant amount of information both on educational systems and pedagogical practices it is far from having achieved a consolidated status. Due to socio-political obstacles and funding constraints vulnerability seems to be the best word to characterize its present status and future perspectives. In fact, the future of educational research largely depends upon major social and economic changes in the region and the funding research priorities of donor agencies. The first ones are not likely to occur in the near future. And even if they did occur, they are not likely to affect national funding policies of educational research. Thus, such practices will
continue to depend upon external sources. A fact which although positive in some aspects also has some negative consequences. It affects the institutional consolidation of research centres, the continuity of research work, the accumulation of substantial knowledge and the production of appropriate theories as well as the integration and consolidation of an academic community devoted to scientific work.

With such issues in mind this paper is organized in three parts. The first one provides an insight on the highlights in the development of educational research in Latinamerica focusing upon the influence of northern paradigms upon existing models and trends. The second part considers the present status of research in education having as the focus of analysis the climate, organization and funding of such practices and present trends within ongoing activities. The third and last part raises some concluding remarks upon past and future perspectives of research in education within the region.
I. HIGHLIGHTS AND TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

1. The Influence of Northern Paradigms

Educational research emerges in the context of a period marked by the belief that education could be used as a powerful mechanism to achieve social development and economic growth. It was then believed, as it had also happened in developed countries, that by means of expanding the educational opportunities other social, political and economic objectives could be met. Among others, the creation of modern democratic states, the acceleration of economic growth and the modernization of traditional structures which appeared as one of the obstacles for development.

In the educational field various processes were put forward at the time in the belief that education was one of the essential tools to achieve the above mentioned objectives. The expansion of the educational systems in order to universalize compulsory education, the modernization of the universities by means of the university reforms, the creation of adult education and literacy programmes were processes associated to the need of obtaining trained manpower for the requirements of development as well as to enhance a wider social and political participation. Planning was believed to be the most adequate instrument to rationalize the use of scarce resources and to reach an equitable distribution by means of planned reforms conducted through the State. It was a role of the State to ensure progressive adjustments in order to secure any possible distortions in the distribution of social and economic opportunities.
Although research capabilities had not been built by the early sixties the preoccupations of the few researchers working in the field of education (mainly at the Ministries of Education and specific programmes in human resources) dealt with educational outputs. They were mostly devoted to the analysis of the adjustments between education and the productive needs of the economic model. Prevailing approaches were those which emphasized the relations between human resources and educational systems. The theory of human capital had been widely accepted and the educational system was seen as self-contained and neutral vis-a-vis social classes and political power. There existed a generalized belief that educational structures and pedagogical practices could be changed by means of introducing technical changes in instruction and curriculum. Macro-level focused research was oriented towards the demonstration of inequalities in education, socialization of modern values, training of elites and student movements while micro-level focused research emphasized upon issues related with the educational system and pedagogical issues. Among the first ones, topics were related to issues that prevented learning such as the lack of instructional materials, limited development of educational technologies, poor quality of teaching and learning processes. Among the second ones, special importance was attributed to the assessment of the effectiveness of directive and non-directive pedagogical models in the quest for the best teaching methods. Both micro and macro level focused research had a highly detached, empiricist and technocratic orientation with little capacity to focus and explain the dynamics of social and educational transformations, the way in which these practices were linked to other social processes, contradictions between the educational expansion and the increasing marginality
of the poorer groups or the influence being exerted upon teachers and other social movements by local or autonomous efforts for improving, by means of educational activities, the life and working conditions of the lower classes.

There is a general consensus among Latin American researchers concerning the fact that the theories which lied behind a large number of studies carried out during this period could be classified, in J.J. Brunner's words:

"under the frameworks of functionalism with its emphasis in social integration through shared values, the theory of human capital; the school of modernization and, from the economic point of view, Keynesian theory applied to the active role of the State in obtaining a macroeconomic balance and in setting anti-cyclical policies. In Latin America it was the thinking at ECLA that provided an original combination of these trends proposing if not a scientific model (for research) a political and theoretical framework for public action and the production of knowledge" (Brunner, J.J.: 1985: 4-5).

Some authors identify this period as an "optimistic" phase concerning the role of education in development (Tedesco, J.C.: 1985). Research was supposed to provide the necessary information for the application of reforms that would secure an adjustment between educational outputs and the requirements placed by the productive system as well as demands in education and other demands on public resources. Nevertheless, things did not work in such a mechanical way. Educational systems were modernized, illiteracy was reduced and significant changes were introduced in contents and methods. But disparities in school services resulted in wider gaps between educational levels as well as in different groups and regions. The quantity and quality of education for the lower classes
proved to be a diminished version of the education provided to the elites. Urban-rural disparities in school services were and continue to be evident today. Illiteracy continued to prevail among the poorer groups in urban and rural areas. In spite of the economic value assigned to education, unemployment or under-employment became a constant phenomenon. Job markets came to be varied, segmented and fluctuating and the State was no longer the major employer. As proved by some studies, (UNESCO/CEPAL/PNUD: 1980) demands for education followed paths that were different from the demands of the labor market. Concerning research's informative function it was soon evident that such an activity had a weak capacity to contribute to policy-making processes or influence upon decision-making practices. Besides, research in education soon came to lose the unified approach to educational phenomena and other definitions and approaches were adopted for the analysis of the relationship between education and development as well as specific issues within such a relationship.

This occurred by the end of the sixties once it was evident that the type of societies built upon principles of modernization, social integration and economic growth had not succeeded in reaching a more stable, egalitarian and autonomous social order. Neither had it succeeded in creating a modern, democratic State and building up a national identity. In educational terms, educational systems had grown beyond the planners' expectations. Education had been able to cope with the human resources demand but this did not correlate with the predictable requirements of the labor market. In political terms, marginality was not seen any longer as a problem of social integration but rather as the particular
way in which the poorer groups were inserted in society. In Brunner's words, education had played a central role in social segmentation, in creating segments of social classes that, based on their ability to control access to certificates, also controlled access to different amounts of wealth, status and power (Brunner, J.J.: 1985). By that time it was evident that the optimistic standpoint of the role of education in development and the research approaches which came with it were no longer suitable to explain the dynamics of educational change.

Various are the authors who offer an overview of the changes occurred during this period and the shifts in the demands upon educational research. Robert Myers (Myers, R.: 1981) points at the change in theoretical constructions by saying that by the seventies the technically-oriented research had given path to a critically-oriented one. In a similar perspective, Brunner's paper referred to in previous paragraphs makes a difference between the research done during the sixties, where the major topic was that of the role of education in development through its contribution to training human resources, and that carried out from the mid-seventies onwards. This author makes a distinction between studies related to education and social stratification and those which deal with education and the labor market. Among the first ones he outstands three theoretical and methodological orientations: to begin with research oriented towards the description of inequalities in education with emphasis in quantitative aspects and stress upon accurate measurement in its findings. Such an orientation is labeled as "methodological empiricism". Secondly, studies which subscribe the so-called conflictive theories in contrast with
functionalist theories of stratification in education. Last, but not least, studies which are influenced by the so-called "reproductivist" theories. A view which was widely accepted during the past decade in Latin America in spite of the fact that their assumptions not always correlate with the practical findings of research (Brunner, J.J.: 1985: 8).

A brief stop at reproductivist paradigms is necessary insofar the influence of "reproductivism" is also recognized by J.C. Tedesco in his paper on paradigms in educational research (Tedesco, J.C.: 1985). According to this author, reproductivism came to substitute both the liberal tradition which had predominated up to the fifties and the economist and developmentalist tradition which existed during the sixties. Although reproductivist theories had emerged in Europe to explain educational problems in highly institutionalized educational systems and advanced technological societies they were uncritically adopted in Latin America by the time in which the expanding cycle of development and the optimistic climate of reform had almost been overcome. There was at the time a generalized crisis of democratic regimes, rise and fall of popular governments had occurred in some countries and authoritarian styles of development were progressively taking account of a significant number of societies. In economic terms, models based upon social exclusion and economic concentration had produced sharp peaks and throughs in the economic cycle, massive unemployment, etc.

Paradoxically, the so-called "reproductivism" or "critico-reproductivist" phase was a fruitful one concerning the development of educational research and the production of alternative paradigms for the interpretation of Latinamerican
educational phenomena. It also was a period of institutional building of research capabilities, as it will be later seen.

The late sixties and early seventies saw the emergence of the theory of dependence, a native Latin American scheme of interpretation of social and economic processes (Faletto, E., Cardoso, F.H.: 1969). Such a theory soon began to influence other areas of social and cultural concern. Among them some few, but important, educational studies (Vasconi, T.: 1970). At the time, Marxist approaches were frequently used to explain the existing class structure and the perpetuation of values detrimental to the lower and working classes. But, most important of all, in terms of their influence upon the Latin American educational thought, were Illich's proposal for deschooling society and Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed (Illich, I.: 1970; Freire, P.: 1970).

Although not directly linked to the reproductivist paradigms the above mentioned proposals were not alien to some of the assumptions in such a theoretical framework. Emphasizing upon educational relationships and pedagogical practices these proposals, as well as reproductivist theories, were based upon the extrapolation of social categories to educational reality. In such a perspective, educational systems were seen as a means for reproducing social inequalities and transmitting the dominant ideology of society. The dominant/dominated relationship was at the base of most educational interpretations at the time. Looking at a controverted reality in such a mechanical way had, in the end, negative consequences for the development of an appropriate paradigm to explain education in its own context.
specificity. Although important among the theoretical paradigms which make up the so-called critical sociology, and in spite of the influence exerted upon educational and sociological thought, not very many pieces of research may be found which are based upon reproductivist assumptions. At least not very many referred to the educational system (such as Baudelot Etablet's L'Ecole Capitaliste en France). On the contrary, such approaches were frequently adopted by researchers working on adult and popular education which, although non-formal in nature, were originally created and supported by the State and greatly demanded by workers and peasants. But, even in this field, recent explorations and the adoption of other theoretical assumptions have produced a marked anti-reproductivist reaction in the region as well as a wider acceptance of new theoretical and practical influences.

Reproductivism had a wider impact upon academic circles than in practical research projects. Although still accepted by some researchers there is a growing consensus in the region related to the fact that such models are unable to explain the unexpected growth of educational systems as well as the underutilization of skilled manpower and the devaluation of schooling within the labor market. Unable to explain the permanent demand for education, particularly within the lower classes, in spite of the fact the education in itself cannot meet other expectations which generally underlie such a demand (i.e. social mobility, integration, migration, access to labor market, etc.). Just as models built upon a mechanical relation between economy and education were unable to explain the political dimension of educational changes and most of their assumptions had to be reviewed and transformed upon the
recognition of the specific problems being faced by Latin American societies.

Lessons learnt from past experiences in the adoption of theoretical models have taught that single models based upon single cause explanations no longer represent an alternative for an activity which is influenced by a multiplicity of social factors. A lesson which has led to a new way of focusing the role of education in development and, consequently, to accept a wider selection of theoretical and methodological approaches. The decisive element, according to Brunner, is that:

"...we are no longer starting out from a standardized view of the role that education should play in social change. On the contrary, it is assumed that such a role is a complex one and can vary in different social situations which, in turn, leads to the study of its multiple influences on changing or preserving social order. This leads to a change in the way research problems are conceived (favoring) the selection of new theories and methods..." (Brunner, J.J.: 1985: 11).

The above is translated in the search of a higher equilibrium between macro and micro-focused research. The school system and its organization as well as the learning and teaching processes have become as important as education seen as a social and economic phenomenon. Different approaches interact within such a perspective and a more pluralist selection of theories and methods may be clearly perceived (i.e. the increasing acceptance of ethnographic approaches or qualitative rather than quantitative research techniques, as well as approaches based on symbolic interactions and sociology of language among others).
This new way of focusing and approaching research problems, also labeled as a "critico-historical phase" in the development of research in education (Tedesco, J.C.: 1985), may be also described as a pragmatic way of focusing research problems. These are no longer conceived as objects of social policy as it was in the past, but as problems placed in a double-fold perspective: objects of social policy and relevant issues for the production of universally valid knowledge. Research nowadays is progressively seen as an activity which fulfills an informative function but is also oriented towards the production of cumulative knowledge. This explains the diversity of research areas and research approaches. In some cases research is oriented towards the identification of groups and issues amenable to be changed particularly at behaviour and attitudinal levels. In others towards the analysis of the effects of education in individual and collective terms. Some studies emphasize upon qualitative aspects while others point out at quantitative dimensions. Some describe at comprehensive theoretical paradigms while others prefer middle range theories. Empirical approaches coexist with ethnographic approaches and antropological perspectives. Approaches based upon the overall participation of social actors in research appear as a way of producing "socially significant" knowledge, that is knowledge leading to immediate action by groups or social movements involved in self-organization processes or specific programmes of autonomous development.

Such is the case of the so-called participatory research approaches, also known as "research-action" and lately labeled as participatory action-research. Such a term is commonly used to name research practices which aim at placing the
production of knowledge and its communication as part of one single process. It also aims at overcoming the dichotomy theory and practice and linking academic work with the needs and interests of groups and movements struggling for social and political change. Paradoxically, although the first experiences in the field were carried out in Latinamerica, in the context of a critical review of traditional paradigms in social sciences, participatory approaches began to be increasingly practiced during the decade of the eighties. In fact the term, methods and guidelines for research were widely accepted once they returned to the region as a proposal coming from the North and legitimated by European and American social scientist working in Third World countries.

Participatory approaches are basically used in studies which relate to adult, non-formal and, lately, in popular education practices. No attempts have been made with studies related to the educational systems. Some few experiences with teachers and classroom experiences have appeared during past years. But, as a whole, participatory research approaches have failed in their quest for formulating alternative paradigms for educational research. Most of the studies present theoretical shortcomings and methodological biases. Their impact concerning decision-making processes is reduced although it has shown to fulfill an important informative function for the groups involved in such practices. Nowadays these approaches are recognized as a valid strategy of research when oriented towards the implementation of educational programmes which aim at self organization and self identification processes. They are learning spaces rather than spaces for scientific production. And, unless submitted to a critical review, these approaches
will have little or no impact upon the growth of educational knowledge.

May be the progressive interest in producing universally valid knowledge approximates researchers from developed and developing countries. This may be explaining, too, the present preoccupation among Latin American researchers of building theoretical models that may help in a better explanation of educational behaviour in the region. Of course this is much more difficult, both logistically and financially, than producing knowledge leading to action. It requires a strong academic tradition and a well-constituted academic community. It also requires research circuits and facilities, efficient networks, publishing devices, and the necessary resources to ensure the continuity of the research processes. In spite of advancements little of this exists in the Latin American context. Both academic tradition and academic communities are weak and research facilities are reduced. Intellectual production is permanently menaced by the changing conditions and there are little or no possibilities of accumulating findings on a given issue. Although an important amount of valid and reliable information has been produced during the past two decades this appears to be a sum of fragmented and isolated pieces of research which have not been theoretically worked. Under such conditions, and considering the international division of academic labor, no theoretical breakthroughs coming from Latin American researchers should be expected in the near future. In his Brunner's words present obstacles for theoretical production condemns Latin Americans to produce within patterns received from abroad or to live in a world of knowledge and practices characterized by a lack of theories. Models will probably
continue to be legitimated and sacralized in the developed world to be later disseminated to developing countries through the traditional means (such as publications, studies abroad, circuit-riders, donor agencies or intellectual prestige of theories and theoreticians).

This seems to have been assumed by Latinamerican researchers when recognizing that the characteristics of educational research in the region are not given by the existence of a coherent set of theoretical principles but rather by the kind of problems being faced and the different contexts in which education takes place. These have been characterized in polarized terms. M. Wolfe puts it in the following way:

"On one extreme, the hypertrophy of higher education has gone far beyond an equitable and self-perpetuating distribution of opportunities to acquire the qualifications needed and rewarded by the style of development to an entrenchment of spurious education leading to spurious absorption into employment. On the other extreme, primary education of such a poor quality as to be equally spurious, confirms the marginalization of much of the population from a style of development that, in any case, has little need for them" (Wolfe, M.: 1980: 3).

The same author outlines some principles which should be taken into account when thinking about education and development. These are also valid for educational research if such a practice is to continue to look for the transformation of both research paradigms and educational realities. Among them the following deserve a special quotation: i) intellectual preparedness for an indeterminate future that cannot be projected with any
confidence from trends up to the present, and which calls for flexible and imaginative responses as well as continuous readiness to set aside pre-conceptions that conflict with emerging realities; ii) an effort to objectively understand, and draw conclusions, from the historical evolution of institutions and clienteles, their present structure, the interests and tactics of the actors in them and the constraints and opportunities they present for policy and planning and; iii) an effort to conceive alternatives for specific educational problems as well as for the system as a whole with the maximum of freedom from preconceptions, stereotypes and 'packaged' prescriptions (Wolfe, M.: 1980: 9-10).

The acceptance of such principles opens the way to the use of the most varied theoretical and methodological approaches. Structuralist approaches traditionally used in studies related to education and society may come to coexist with approaches which have recently been incorporated to the Latin American scientific theoretical field when analysing intraschool problems and learning processes. Obviously the use of one or other model determines the priority assigned to some problems in detriment of others. What is evident, though, is that in Latin America certain problems which are no longer relevant for theoretical purposes continue to be unsolved in practice. In developed countries certain paradigms exhausted their explanatory capacity once the problems which originated them had been overcome. This is not the case in Latin America. On the contrary, in this region old problems must be revisited with new approaches without forcing the available information into paradigms which do not correlate with educational reality. In such
a context any model being adopted or produced in the region necessarily needs to incorporate all available knowledge and contributions from the past. In the end, it is such an experience the one which has left important lessons for the future development of educational research and for the search of responses to the new theoretical challenges placed by old and endemic educational problems.

2. Accumulated Knowledge and Present Theoretical Challenges

Despite the problems faced by research in education this has had a steady growth during the last decades. A successful research capacity-building model based on a core of research centres was developed in the region. From past empirical research done by foreign scholars, sometimes associated with regional researchers, these centres have moved towards a selection of key issues and of a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches. A critical mass of information has been accumulated and a networking system been built. The quality of research has been improved as well as improvements in the diffusion processes are clearly observable.

Concerning the accumulation of knowledge the amount of research is significant. Not only concerning the different levels of the educational system but also concerning relevant issues related to theoretical work. Concerning research related with different educational levels recent papers (Garcia Huidobro, J.E., Gutierrez, G.: 1985; Rama, G., Tedesco, J.C.: 1980) shows that the highest amount of studies deal with basic or primary education and
particularly with the performance of the educational system. (1) A recent state-of-the-art refers to the existence of an approximate number of 500 studies in the last decade oriented towards the production of knowledge for the improvement of the educational system (Schiefelbein, E.: 1982). These include basic and applied research and, within them, descriptive, exploratory and explanatory studies as well as experimental programmes for further replicability at the national level. Findings show that school coverage and retention as well as school failure and early drop-out continue to prevail particularly in rural areas. Although the rates of compulsory primary education show a significant growth students enrolled who are not able to complete the cycle of basic or primary education are still very high. Learning of the basic skills such as reading and writing is not duly achieved and consequently lost in a few years due to lack of practice. Illiteracy and low primary school ratios tend to prevail as an endemic problem in the region being particularly high in rural environments and among indigenous populations which, in turn, present their own linguistic and cultural patterns. Schooling ratios and survival rates by levels and ages as well as school attendance, learning rhythms and promotion are factors which call for the attention of research. All of them relate to the school failure in children from the lower classes. Concerning basic education it is evident now that, in spite of the expansion of educational opportunities, the schools are unable to keep the students at school during the period of compulsory education. Both endogenous and exogenous variables are affecting school retention but little is known on the way they come to affect such a process. Among the first ones.

(1) Such an accumulation is expressed in a series of state-of-the-art reviews in specific areas of research. Among them teacher's effectiveness, nutritional effects upon education, use of textbooks, educational technology, etc.
it is believed that organizational forms of the school, existing human and material resources as well as educational contents and methods reflect standards that do not fit the users living and working conditions. Among the second ones, variables related to nutritional aspects, dwelling, socio-economic conditions, attitudes towards education, linguistic patterns need to be reconsidered in the perspective of the new economic and social processes occurring in the region.

At the level of secondary education most of the studies are referred to the correspondence between this educational level and the labor market. Standpoints have moved from the quantitative approaches measuring adjustments of educational outputs and demand for trained human resources to the effects of education upon internal differentiation of manpower in both modern and traditional enterprises as well as the relations between education and access to the labor market. In any case there are not many studies concerning this level of education and there is still a lack of reliable information concerning enrollment, school performance and social destination of students. Rather, studies have moved towards the area of education and production in wider terms than social and economic demands. According to Rama and Tedesco (Rama, G.; Tedesco, J.C.: 1982) this finds an explanation in the different phases of economic development in the region. In the first stages, they state, substitutive industrialization produced a significant number of jobs increased the opportunity cost of education. But the stagnation in labour demand and the fragmentation of the labor market as well as the emergence of a modern and informal sector in national economies had important effects on the link between education and work. Although the
opportunity cost of education tended to decrease, especially among youngsters, it also generated a wider demand of vocational and technical training particularly from unemployed adults with low ratios of schooling and those groups occupied in the self-employment sector. Within modern monopolistic enterprises with their own training policies the focus of research has rather moved, as stated before, towards differentiation and segmentation processes by effect of educational opportunities available to individuals.

Studies in higher education were a privileged area of research during the mid-sixties and early seventies. Nowadays the focus of research has moved from studies related to the system and its characteristics to specific issues such as the role of intellectuals in society and construction of social images. Past studies, were mainly oriented towards the analysis of the social origin of students, enrollment and destination as well as the relation among higher education and the labor market. Major advances give account of the consequences that massive enrollment has produce in the higher education systems. Among them, the internal segmentation of the system expressed in differentiated institutions according to social origin and academic quality, the increasing depreciation of higher education in relation to the labor market and the deterioration of the academic and scientific quality of studies (Ramó, G., et.al.: 1980: 8-9).

Some significative amount of research, mostly of a descriptive nature has been accumulated in a particular area of educational systems and educational practices: non-formal and adult education processes. Diagnosis of the structure,
contents and methodological trends have been carried out in most of the Latin American countries. A huge amount of analytical works on the history of ideas in Latin American adult education may be found in several countries, particularly Brazil and Chile. Evaluative research on literacy programmes as well as educational practices linked to rural development and peasant's organization have not been absent from research practices. Systematizing efforts of the so-called popular education projects and the construction of a theoretical frame of reference to explain the emergence and development of such practices and their contribution to social change has become one of the preoccupations of a significant number of researchers. Nevertheless, in spite of accumulated studies, different in style and results, no advances have been made in the construction of a theoretical frame of reference that may enable the integration of such findings. Research projects and experiences continue to grow in a theoretical vacuum. Further, contrary to what has happened in other levels, such as basic or primary education for example, no state-of-the-art has yet been prepared on this specific area of concern. Something which will soon appear as an imperative due to the huge amounts of fragmented information and the proliferation of new research projects in the field.

The above concerns accumulated knowledge on the different levels of the system. More may be added if reference is made to specific issues of research or thematic areas. Brunner makes a division between macro-focused research related to education and society and micro-focused studies related to the school and teaching actions. A separate category is the one related to action-research and popular
education (Brunner, J.J.: 1985). Of course macro and micro-oriented research is also found when referring to the different levels of the educational system. Thus reference is only made here to specific areas of research which have to do with social and political development and education. In this context, a relatively new issue is the one related to political regimes and educational changes. This area has emerged in most of the countries which are or have been submitted to authoritarian styles of development and seek to explain the consequences of changes occurring in educational systems and educational policies. Efforts in this direction have been made in Brazil, Argentina and Chile basically. Brunner distinguishes two stages in this area of research, as follows:

"In the first stage intellectual effort focused in understanding the new political situation that spring from the forceable installation of authoritarian military regimes and studying its effects on education. This approach necessarily leads to stressing certain macroscopic aspects of the relation between education and policies (overemphasizing) the elements of rupture (…). In the second stage (…) a more balanced standpoint (prevailed) when observing the way in which the appearence and consolidation of new political regimes affect the operations of the educational system and the educational transmission in society. Stress (has thus been) placed upon aspects considered to be crucial in the comprehension of existing relationships between education and politics. Among them, public policies; resource allocation; teachers behaviour; educational administration, public and private benefits from the different levels of education, etc." (Brunner, J.J.: 1985: 14-15).

Concerning micro-focused educational research the focus has moved from enrollment and school performance, internal efficiency of the system and factors affecting school
achievement to processes occurring in the classroom. Knowledge on what is going on in the schools seems to have caught the attention of researchers. This particularly after the failure of traditional paradigms in their quest for explaining the Latin American features of educational phenomena and the progressive adoption in the region of the approaches labeled under the term of "new sociology". Within these, particular attention is paid to the behaviour of different social actors in front of the educational processes, learning situations, interaction among teachers and pupils, teachers role and attitudes in front of their pedagogical practices, school rites and the organization of knowledge, contradictions between daily life and school organization, child labor and the school, are part of the topics which have recently appeared as relevant subjects of research. Socio-linguistic and socio-cognitive problems have also been defined as relevant issues within the frame of theoretical models which values the reappraisal of the potential of educational actors as well as the school and learning situations as important tools used by the poorer groups to ensure their survival strategies. This, in turn, has led to the initiation of a series of qualitative and ethnographic studies oriented towards the observation of interplay of social actors within the school and the classroom.

Although it is too early to speak on the result of these approaches to educational problems one of the principal expressions of such trends may be found in the Latin American Qualitative Research Network gathering twelve projects from different countries (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Colombia, Venezuela and Bolivia) which aims at the joint construction
of a qualitative mode of research and a conceptual frame of reference for studying and improving school teaching and redefining the teacher's role in the educational process. The original projects focused on specific dimensions and variables which might explain school failure in lower class children and look for alternative ways to deal with such problem in the Latinamerican context. A second concern, common to the projects was to establish a tight relation between theory and practice in educational research and to experiment and develop alternative research methods and approaches. In this sense some of the projects were fully ethnographic while others preferred the denomination of "participative", "critical" or "qualitative" to describe their methodological approaches (Rockwell, E.: 1985: 2-3).

The above denominations leads to another area which has been referred to in previous pages: participatory research projects looking to build alternative research paradigms for social and educational research. Experimentation in the field has been going on for almost a decade involving both social movements and governmental institutions. As stated before, most of such initiatives are linked to adult, non-formal or popular education programmes. In spite of sistematization and evaluation processes being carried out little or no dissemination of results are yet available. Nevertheless, after four international seminars and a significative number of national meetings a higher degree of maturity concerning the initial assumptions, seems to have been reached. Traditional academic practices are no longer characterized as being absolutely alien, both theoretically and practically, with popular problems, interests and needs as it was in past decades but rather as an alternative way
of approaching research problems. In this context, a serious preoccupation to build upon accumulated knowledge, to share with other approaches and paradigms and to build theoretically upon accumulated experience seems to be one of present trends within this area of research (1). Maybe such a disposition may help in overcoming the theoretical and methodological inconsistencies which have been pointed out in several studies, among them a state-of-the-art review (Gajardo, M.: 1985).

The balance concerning the quantity and quality of research in education may be seen as a positive one in spite of the fact of having worked upon "imported" theories and having privileged empirical research in detriment of other styles and approaches. According to information provided by E. Schiefelbein from October 1972 to December 1980 over 1900 papers were abstracted for diffusion purposes. Two-thirds of these were empirical studies (Schiefelbein, E.: 1982). Such a tendency has changed at present but these type of projects are valued in terms of their contribution in overcoming the lack of reliable information and enabling unexperienced researchers to obtain a practical experience in research techniques. In fact, such a practice led to diminish past critiques concerning the inadequate or irrelevant selection of problems, weak or inappropriate conceptualizations,

(1) The most significative efforts in building upon accumulated experience may be found in the systematization projects of popular education and participatory research experiences carried out in Mexico and Chile. ALER's evaluation of education through radio is another example of such a type of research in this particular area.
methodological weaknesses and social and political biases which made research useless for practical purposes. On the other hand, though disappointment with detached and empiricist styles of research led to a revalorization of new interpretative, micro-oriented approaches to problematic dimensions in education and a tendency to build in a pragmatic way. This, too, occurs in a moment when, despite difficulties, advances may be seen in the networking and diffusion processes as well as in exposure of Latin Americans to external patterns of evaluation and academic exchange.

Latin American efforts in trying to understand and explain its own educational reality and present obstacles for educational development have placed renewed challenges for research in education. A search for theoretical and practical answers to educational issues in a context of overlapping crisis and overloading demands may be clearly observed. Different authors place their proposals in a different but converging way. According to J.C. Tedesco the main axis of research in education for the near future come to be an expression of problems mentioned in previous pages. Problems requiring the attention of research are related with conflicts between educational expansion and increasing marginality, issues related to scientific and technical development, behaviour and expectatives of different social actors in front of education and conditions for learning including the teachers role in learning processes (Tedesco, J.C. : 1985).

A certain consensus has been reached concerning the fact that future research should be oriented towards the
analysis of those problems related to the quality of education and school failure as well as to the irrelevance of educational contents to the needs and reality of school beneficiaries. In another level, the unequal distribution of educational resources and bureaucratic rigidity of educational systems as well as inefficiencies of educational planning and management have come to be another issue which requires of future inquiry.

In any case present tendencies of emphasizing upon macroview-points oriented towards understanding the relationship between education and society and micro-oriented research centered upon the school and teaching actions seem to prevail. Within the first ones, besides those mentioned by J.C. Tedesco, the way in which democratization processes contribute towards educational change in Latin America will probably be one of the relevant issues in countries which are living under new political conditions. Micro-oriented projects will be probably linked to those subjects which prove to be more relevant in terms of its contribution to strengthen social movements and empower the spaces they are building up in the region.

Relevant issues and academic interest are not the only aspects to be met in order to ensure future research. Funding and related aspects is other of the factors affecting the development of research in education. Reference will be made to these in the next pages.
II. PRESENT STATUS OF RESEARCH IN EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA

1. Climate, Organization and Funding of Educational Research

There is a sort of truism concerning research organization and funding in Latin America: a significant amount of educational research is financed with resources coming from foreign donors, mainly foundations and international organizations. It was so in the past, it is nowadays and the situation is not likely to change in the near future.

A brief look at the way in which relationships between funding agencies and research centres have evolved in past years shows at least three different phases.

The first one, during the sixties and early seventies may be characterized as a period of building up research capabilities. Research and development centres were created in various countries, academic programmes were sponsored basically at the universities and research projects aiming at the improvement of educational systems, generally seated at the planning offices of the Ministerios de Educación, received substantial support. A double-fold objective underlied financial support coming from outside: facilitate the development of research in education and contribute upon educational development by means of providing policy-makers with reliable information to be used when making educational decisions. Training for research was particularly important during this period and funds were provided for postgraduate studies in the North. A great majority of young researchers
at the time left for a period of studies abroad mainly in
American and European universities. Besides, at the time
there were no training facilities in the latinamerican
countries and those occupied in research were young
professionals who had rarely received basic training in
social research.

The second phase was to be one of strengthening the
autonomy of research centres and programmes both
intellectually and financially. Latinamericans were supposed
to develop their own research according to existing problems
and, basically, with their own human and material resources.
Although, as already stated before educational research at
the time had a substantial growth, the quantity and quality
of research was improved and advances were observed in
networking and diffusion, political and economic changes
came to modify the expected trend of autonomous development.

Most of all the reversion of democratic tendencies in
the region seriously affected the institutional development
of research in education. A number of centres were banned
from the universities and existing programmes and "agreements"
were cancelled. This was particularly so for countries such
as Chile and Argentina. Economic restrictions affected the
support provided by the governments to educational research
in most of the countries in the region. Thus, instead of the
expected autonomy from foreign funding a search of financial
aid was initiated in order to secure a basic academic community
and the continuity of research. A phase of what could be
called as "autonomous institutional building" was
characteristic of the mid and late seventies. As part of
such a process different types of research institutions began
coexist. There were the traditional academic groups and centres, the private ones emerging under the new socio-political conditions, as well as old and newly created non-governmental organizations which although traditionally devoted to action were now experimenting with participatory and action-research. Besides some universities and Ministries of Education had not abandoned educational research. Although economic cutdowns had seriously affected their practices they faced a different situation from the one being faced by private academic centres and NGOs. These, different from the case of official centres, operated and continue to operate as non-profit organizations and only external support can ensure their continuity. On the contrary, governmental institutions counted and continue to count, upon State support both for the search of funds and the continuity of their work.

The third phase is the one being faced nowadays. To a certain extent autonomous institutional building has been achieved. There is an impressive number of private academic centres devoted to research as well as non-governmental organizations which in some cases combine action and research. All of them in open competition for the obtention of funds which tend to decrease rather than to increase. As Schiefelbein puts it research centres and researchers must increasingly sell their products (Schiefelbein, E.: 1982), in a context where private research centres do not obtain official support for research activities and few are the donor agencies which offer financial support for research only. Few are the agencies, too, which operate with flexible criteria concerning research priorities and areas of research to be emphasized. The huge majority of funding agencies have
established priorities and fundable research topics. Only a few work on problem-solving policies upon existing demands which enables local researchers to influence priorities and areas of research.

In this context the present phase may be characterized as a highly competitive one which has both negative and positive consequences.

The negative ones have to do with the persistence of a fragmented, atomized and competitive academic community. The little or no interaction among universities, private academic centers and NGOs; inexistence of national resources to carry out research and exclusive dependence on foreign aid a fact which, besides vulnerability, attempts against a continuous, equilibrated institutional development. But, most of all, the way in which donor's priorities affect thematic trends and options in the region. This has been already raised in the following terms:

"External funding for educational research poses and ambiguous problem from the perspective of cultural dependence. On one hand it enables our own production and, as such, becomes a substantial contribution to cultural independence. But, on the other, it also implies a certain temptation on behalf of researchers who tend to mimitize with the criteria established by donor agencies. This explains many "fashionable" research subjects in the region's educational research. It often occurs that problems and issues look more like a response to the priorities of donor agencies rather than an answer to our urgent problems" (García Huidobro, J.E., et.al.: 1985: 7).

Such a situation also affects accumulation of knowledge
and theoretical building insofar the tendency is to abandon certain subjects or areas of research without reaching a certain level of accumulation or without dissemination of existing findings. Possibilities of continuity within a determined problem or area is permanently menaced by the tendency of donor agencies to support new issues or innovations. Such a tendency, although understandable from the donors point of view, does not correlate with a lesson learnt through accumulated experience in Latin America: findings from educational research carried out in one society are not always sucessfully applied in another. This implies that each society must look for appropriate answers to their problems and research be carried out according to those approaches and methods which seem most adequate for the situation or problem being dealt with.

The questions which arise in front of such a "principle" are various and difficult to answer. How can latinamericans carry out, on an ongoing basis, their own educational research in a context which is continually menaced by social and political constraints? How can they indigenize the research process and produce theoretical models in such a vulnerable institutional context? Can latinamericans think of eliminating dependance upon external funding when working upon such fragile basis? How and when?

As it was stated before these questions depend upon changes occurring at societal level and, even so, external dependance is not likely to change. On the contrary, such a situation will probably create funding dilemmas for most of donor agencies due to the increasing and changing demands from researchers in the region. Up to now Latin America has
managed to build an important educational research capacity. Efforts have been made in order to train local researchers in the analysis and interpretation of their own environment. Efforts are being made to adapt foreign theories and methodological approaches to local conditions. Monitoring and evaluation of educational systems and practices have and continue to be a preoccupation of researchers. All of this has created new expectations concerning the consolidation of acquired knowledge and its future development. Expectations which will be necessarily translated in research proposals to be submitted to funding agencies for support.

In the meantime, increasing expectations as a result of the development of research in education in the region have up to now been satisfied through external channels too. During the last decade educational research has occurred in a high degree of social isolation within the national contexts. It is a shared opinion that its products seldom shape public opinion or are used by its potential beneficiaries. Although systematic efforts are being made, particularly on behalf of private academic centres, to increase the dissemination of research findings they have been more successful in obtaining international recognition rather than a national acceptance. Communication and information flows within latinamerican researches and research centres have increased substantially. Something similar has happened with communication among researchers from developed and developing countries. This, and other consequences, are the positive aspects which external funding has also produced.

Latinamerican researchers today are less localist-minded than in the past. They are nowadays open to the
mainstreams of educational thought and frequently look for interlocutors out of national frontiers. Efforts to be understood by the international academic community are more frequent now than in past decades. Interaction through formal and informal networks gathering researchers from the North and the South have significantly contributed to diminish the communication gap between developed and developing countries. Interest for networking issues have increased as well as interest to collaborate in specialized journals in foreign countries. Parallel to this productivity has increased notoriously in the last decade and is evidently higher now than when centres were part of the universities or depended upon national resources. Research centres nowadays, particularly those which depend upon external funding, tend to be more effective and efficient a reality which has been attributed to the lack of bureaucratic obstacles to carry out research but, most of all, to the need to respond to international patterns of evaluation and to work within a restrictied and competitive system of financial resources.

Research has become a professionalized activity although it cannot be said to have reached a consolidated status, as it will be seen in further paragraphs.

2. Ongoing Activities and Future Perspectives

The present panorama of research in education is one of a complex institutional spectrum of research institutions comprising a small number of research programmes or departments which depend from universities and governmental offices, an increasing number of private academic centres operating both
on national and regional basis and a huge number of non-
governmental organizations being a few involved in research
programmes which are directly linked to action.

Research institutions which depend upon university
structures or from the government are involved in large
national projects generally oriented towards the improvement
of educational systems and pedagogical practices. They are
in a better position to introduce changes in educational
structures and in the obtention of the necessary funding to
carry out such research. Small funds from the State are
generally complemented by significative financial support
coming from bilateral and multilateral agencies. In spite
of this, their efficiency is limited due to the bureaucratic
obstacles which condition research and dissemination
processes.

As indicated before private academic centres are small
research institutions which have come to operate in an
autonomous way, under the sponsorship of the Church or as
part of regional organizations of international cooperation.
They completely depend upon external funding and sometimes
operate upon the bases of consultancy with bilateral and
multilateral agencies. Their vulnerability is due to the
fact that they generally work upon a system of project to
project funding. Within them differentiated styles of
research may be easily observed. Among them, empirical
research, experimentation and evaluation of renewed
alternatives in educational development and theoretical
research in education. Areas of research are mainly those
indicated in previous pages. Although academically stronger
and less bureaucratic than governmental institutions they
have a smaller capacity of confronting research findings and proposals with official ones and introducing changes in educational spheres.

Non-governmental organizations operate under the same bases as private academic centres and they are not fundamentally oriented towards research. Nevertheless, during the last decade they have made some contributions in the experimentation and validation of alternative approaches to research in education.

Networking in the region operates upon the bases of established programmes and centres and are sponsored by the most varied institutions: international organizations, foundations, donor agencies, universities, etc. By grouping them according to their interest in the application of knowledge Schiefelbein distinguishes at least four groups: those interested in diffusing results through journals and newsletters; those interested in contacts across professional or cultural barriers; those interested in applying knowledge through concrete actions and research centres interested in assessing available information in given situations (Schiefelbein, E.: 1982: 26). Together with networks, journals and other periodical publications have doubled in number within a decade and mimeographed documents as well as books have a higher circulation now than in the past.

From a different standpoint the areas of research have come to be of a higher theoretical relevance than in past decades. Research concerning the relationship between education and development, the role of education in social change, the behaviour of social actors within and in front
of education have progressively occupied the researchers' attention. Recently other areas of educational inquiry appear as challenging issues of research: the effectiveness of knowledge skills and attitudes acquired through schooling and its relationship with the improvement of life and working conditions of deprived groups, relationships between education and society as well as education, economy and the State, education and the labor market among others have come to permeate the work of researchers occupied both in the study of formal and non-formal education.

As indicated before attempts have been made and continue to be made to seek answers to these problems through various and diverse methodological approaches, anthropological perspectives have come to coexist with empirical perspectives which prevailed in the past. New approaches are experimented, sometimes with failure sometimes with success, in order to understand the relationship between education and politics as well as bringing together theory and practice.

In spite of such advancements, though, no theoretical models have been developed that may provide these societies with universal answers to educational problems. Adopted paradigms from developed societies have proved to be inadequate to explain the Latin American reality and the coexistence, in it, of past problems and future challenges. Real trends seldom correlate with the theoretical assumptions used to explain situations which differ from the ones in the region. Latin American researchers have been drawing the attention on this theoretical vacuum. They have also pointed at the contradictions which begin to appear in the context of the emergence of new models for reshaping the
relationship between education and development. Models range from the technocratic conceptions which lead to the exaggeration of the potential of planning for the control of the future to participatory models which lead to the exaggeration of the potential of consciousness raising and popular creativity. Most of them evade the complex consequences of past educational development and its influences upon future challenges.

Problems are complex and multidimensional. Theoretical development, thus, will have to run on a parallel line of realistic appraisal of present realities and the search of flexible and imaginative responses to future problems. Some of the axis for future research have already been summarized in previous pages. Perspectives of finding the adequate approaches and developing alternatives on educational problems do not only depend upon the progressive freedom from preconceptions and packaged prescriptions. It also requires a solid and integrated academic community, the promotion of interdisciplinary work, the critical evaluation of diverse standpoints and proposals and, above all, the effort to secure the continuity of research teams and institutions as well as their specific areas of concern.

Future perspectives seem to be difficult and challenging at the same time. Although some aspects depend on local researchers other will still depend on external variables. Past dependance upon foreign expertise is likely to be redefined upon bases of cooperative work. But dependance upon funding, training of young researchers, dissemination of research findings, networking and communication among researchers will continue for the time being. Reference
has already been made on this. But nothing was said on the role played by donor agencies and international organizations in encouraging and financing meetings, seminars and workshops both at national and international level. The same concerning exchanges and cooperative programmes between developed and developing countries. A similar role has been played in the dissemination of research results and the realization of reviews of research in key educational areas.

Project by project funding as well as institutional grants have secured the continuity of research capacities and the possibilities of a collaborative action concerning the training of young researchers. The tendency today is to train researchers through their participation in specific research projects and encourage them for studies abroad once they have received their basic research training in Latinamerican centres.

Researchers in the region are conscious of the fact that resources are scarce and demands tend to increase. Conscious, too, upon the fact that donor agencies have to sponsor research that will effectively contribute to development by using knowledge for improving educational systems or finding solutions to concrete problems in different educational spheres. Although the uses made of accumulated knowledge is still restricted and increasing at slow rates the contribution of funding agencies may be also seen in terms of research development. Investments in Latin America have definitively enhanced local capacity for educational research. The tendency today is oriented towards securing such a capacity and looking forward towards the achievement of a relative autonomy concerning theoretical
and methodological development. Towards a relative autonomy concerning the determination of priorities and areas of research. Maybe in the long run these are achievable purposes. Nevertheless, no researcher would risk an answer on when and how financial autonomy will be possible. This, in the end, is linked to the way in which socio-political processes will evolve and the role which will be assigned to research under new political and economic conditions.

While the overall crisis persists in Latin America the efforts of scientific work will continue to be oriented towards theoretical elucidation and the search of practical answers to unsolved educational problems. In the end, in spite of persisting difficulties, this comes to be its main contribution to the construction of a new social and educational order.
IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper was introduced by saying that Latinamerica had not produced theoretical models for the explanation of educational phenomena in the region and, further, that this was not likely to occur due to existing constraints for academic work. Further it was sustained that funding was one of the main obstacles for a continuous and equilibrated development of research in the region.

The effort has been to provide evidence on these two issues for further discussion. Recalling on this it must be added that educational reality is a complex one in the region and research in education is not homogeneously organized around one or more models. Rather educational research has been progressively articulated around a set of problems and researchers have dealt with them in various and different ways. This has come to create what could be called as a latinamerican academic community mainly occupied in the accumulation of educational knowledge and in the elaboration of proposals that may lead to the improvement or transformation of educational systems and practices.

Different phases in social and economic development as well as diverse national features has progressively changed the expectations concerning the role of education in development. From macrosociological objectives of social change and structural standpoints on the role of education, research and researchers have assumed a less ambitious standpoint. Although objectives related to educational transformation that will serve an egalitarian and democratic social order have not been abandoned it is actually believed
that structural changes are as important as changes introduced through the cracks of the educational systems rather than in its main gears. As it was synthetized in a recent paper,

"research is seen not necessarily as the means to propose grandiose recommendations or to design strategies that will be readily adopted by the official educational system. Rather, it should have a special role in the discovery of unintended or unrecognized consequences; in the analysis of contradictions and conflicts within the system, particularly in schools and classrooms and in the identification of concrete arenas and actors that can generate and carry out educational and social change" (IDRC: 1985: 12).

Restricted academic conditions but, most of all, the lack of financial resources make such a task difficult but not impossible. The time will come when researchers will count upon the adequate institutional settings and the academic and financial resources to achieve major theoretical contributions as well as research which will be internationally valid and nationally efficient. In the meantime researchers and research centres must continue to survive and create.

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