

IDRC-Lib  
71039

RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT  
MID-CANADA AND THE THIRD WORLD

---

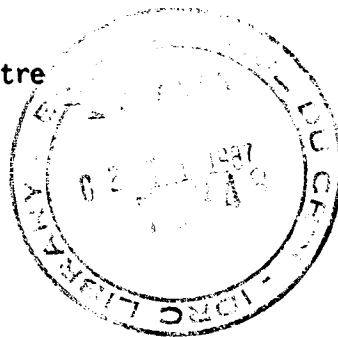
Papers presented for workshop discussion  
at a seminar organized by

the University of Manitoba  
and

the International Development Research Centre

Winnipeg, Manitoba

19-21 April 1983



WORKSHOP 1  
Social Sciences Research for Policymaking

---

APPLICATION OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH  
TO PLANNING AND POLICY

by

SUSANNE MOWAT

Deputy Director, Social Sciences Division  
International Development Research Centre

APPLICATION OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH TO PLANNING AND POLICY

Discussion Notes for Social Sciences Workshop

April 19 - 21, 1983

This brief paper, meant as a guide to ensuing discussion, takes education as representative of the social sciences. The three themes it introduces, and which are intended to be discussed, are as follows:

- (a) the role of education in development; and, closely connected, the role of research in education as enhancing this contribution;
- (b) IDRC and the "research process" in the social sciences; and
- (c) some lessons gleaned about research and policy formulation, in particular learned from the Research Review and Advisory Group in education, an atypical IDRC-sponsored project.

\* \* \* \* \*

A. The role of education and the role of research

There are clearly a number of social and economic conditions under which development takes place and clearly a number of social consequences that flow from any step in the developmental process. Social sciences' research, and educational research, is concerned with both.

In determining the role of education in development, in both Malawi and Manitoba, a number of questions follow. The complexity of these is illustrative of the intellectual and social world the committed social scientist inhabits. Does, for example, education help create the conditions for development or merely reflect (and hence perpetuate) existing conditions? Are social goals best attained when education acts to form an educated elite with a commitment to society's advance or when it seeks to raise the general level of discourse and understanding among a larger segment of the population? Should the formation of "good citizen" take priority, and if so according to whose definitions, ideals, or purposes, or the "good worker"? What even constitutes the "good worker" is now open to question in several developing countries as economic conditions worsen and cease to be comprehensible according to traditional norms. Should the worker be an unquestioning mass-producer, or a creative and entrepreneurial individual able to improve and modify the means of production even in unpredictable economic conditions?

Table 1, "Summary of rationales for educational expenditure found in 29 national plans", gives a listing of the perceived purposes of education as elucidated in several developing countries taken together; one of the first things that strikes the reader is how contradictory -- even mutually exclusive -- some of these rationales are. It would be illuminating to rank these purposes from a mid-Canadian perspective, and see in fact whether there is any agreement even among this relatively homogeneous group. Even more interesting would be to determine the extent to which the group's own research experience has informed its thought processes as well as the value and content of decisions reached.

The second strand of immediate concern is the role of research, not only in the establishment of parametres of this kind of discussion (no matter where it takes place), but in elucidating questions such as the above, and ultimately in determining a clear course of action among competing aims. There are those in developing countries (including serious scholars) who question whether the development of a "research capacity" should have priority when already identified tangible problems could easily absorb all available human energies even physically to alleviate. But this view perhaps concentrates on a relatively narrow view of reserach, i.e. its role in the identification of problems. There are other scholars -- and persons of action -- who concentrate on that aspect of research which identifies solutions, optimal solutions if possible. Still a third view would seek to unravel and understand the various pressures in social sectors which act both to constrain and inform policy decisions. Another view would have research seeking to demonstrate, if possible in advance, the likely consequences of various courses of action, in order to make if not entirely rational at least defensible policy decisions.

Questions facing an organisation like the IDRC include that of which of the foregoing types of reserch -- or others not yet noted -- most effectively serve a purpose of enhancing development. What kinds of research therefore should be supported, and undertaken by what clusters of persons in what institutions. What relative weight should be given the likely production of "good" research results compared to an increased research competence in a given area or discipline? What is necessary to establish university or other systems of research which can effectively respond to these questions such as those raised in the paragraphs in a given regional political, or economic context.

B. IDRC and the "research process"

Some six years ago the IDRC Social Sciences Division established the Research Review and Advisory Group in education, whose mandate it was to study and report on the content and state of educational research as it might be brought to bear on educational problems in developing countries. An idea underlying the establishment of this group was that if all available educational research results were sifted, a "miracle seed" might be found which at the very least would solve several educational problems at once, which proved not very feasible. The Group (known as RRAG) concentrated some of its energies on research results but, meeting over time, became equally interested in what it termed the "research process", i.e. all the stages in a research undertaking from its first appearance as an idea through collection and analysis of data, to production of results and even "use". Much of what it discerned as a result is generalisable to the social sciences as a whole, and certainly this rather broad view of research permeates the work of IDRC's Social Science Division as it seeks to respond to research needs in developing countries.

Otherwise put, our definition of "research support" includes a range extending from interest in how ideas for research are generated to interest in how results are disseminated and used. We are constrained by the operational procedures of IDRC to support for the discrete "research project" but interpret this as flexibly as possible. In many instances we do not consider a proposal complete unless it has elements of the "before" and "after" incorporated in it. Through experimentation with and use of these various modalities we are slowly coming to an understanding of what constitutes "research management", i.e. what the optimal combination of research-related elements is given a certain set of objectives and larger goals to be pursued.

Among the areas in which support is available -- nearly always, however, linked to and/or wrapped within the project format, are the following:

- (a) workshop support (or support for small meetings) towards the formulation of an identified problem in researchable terms;
- (b) training support, whether before, during, or after a research undertaking;
- (c) direct research costs during undertaking of the research project;

- (d) research "programme" support;
- (e) dissemination support, whether through meetings or publication or both;
- (f) on occasion, special institutional or "core" support.

We find that the appropriateness of various combinations of these varies from region to region, and to some extent from institution to institution. Illustrations will be given; the experience and views of mid-Canadian colleagues will be elicited to determine, from their own research experience, what combinations of support seem to be most effective in what kinds of research undertakings.

C. Lessons about research and policy formulation

The Research Review and Advisory Group was an atypical project, and represented to IDRC an unusual linkage between the perceived needs of various countries and the operational needs of the sponsoring institution. By going directly to an international body of researchers and staying with them over time, IDRC gained a greater understanding of issues facing research and researchers in developing countries that went beyond the view of Ministries and some active research institutes, and of the complex relationships of research and policy.

Some of the issues that have been identified as deserving of further study and action include the following:

- (i) How to overcome - or at least compensate for -- the great isolation of researchers, from contemporary work and thought in their own countries and beyond, and from each other.
- (ii) How to inculcate in researchers -- especially those living in areas that still rely heavily on an oral tradition -- the ability and habit of sharing the results of their work in abbreviated written form.
- (iii) How to spread a "research mentality" among potential users of research, whether these be publications, policy-makers, or teachers (or farmers) in rural areas.
- (iv) How to gather, synthesise, and make broadly available results of research already undertaken but rarely disseminated.
- (v) In the relationship between research and policy, how to overcome prevalent thinking that somehow there is a straightforward linear relationship, in which clear research results are placed in the hands of the decision-maker who then acts accordingly.
- (vi) How to present research results in such a way that recognises the many ways in which research can influence policy, even when there is a long time-lag and the relationship cannot be clearly discussed.



At IDRC we tend to become somewhat parochial and to assume that such matters are of primary importance to developing countries and somehow less important, or perceived to be less important, in settings such as Canadian universities. Therefore a comparison will be important, to determine what the partners can learn from each other.

TABLE 1. Summary of rationales for educational expenditure found in 29 national plans.\*

---

**Manpower development rationales**

- Increase the possession of general skills relevant to development
- Increase the possession of skills relevant to the modern sector
- Improve scientific and technological capabilities
- Provide agricultural development knowledge and skills
- Provide rural development knowledge and skills
- Increase the prospects for self employment
- Provide specific vocational training
- Extend literacy to increase productivity and innovation
- Develop nonformal education programmes.

**Social equity rationales**

- Equalize educational opportunities and reduce regional disparities in access
- Reduce income inequalities
- Reduce occupational differences between groups assuming from educational imbalances
- Provide basic education as a human right

**Nation-building rationales**

- Develop and consolidate a national identity
- Promulgate a national language
- Promulgate a national ideology
- Promote self-sufficiency and self-reliance
- Reduce cultural and psychological dependency
- Strengthen local institutions
- Develop individual potentials fully
- Localize expatriate manpower
- Ensure physical well-being and health

**Improving quality of schooling rationales**

- Improve educational quality through curriculum development
- Improve quality through localizing examinations
- Improve teacher training
- Improve in-service professional development
- Improve resources available to teachers
- Enhance planning and research capabilities
- Increase private education standards

**Improving efficiency of schooling rationales**

- Reduce dropouts
- Reduce repetition rates
- Increase enrolments
- Improve cost effectiveness of teacher training
- Improve efficiency of plant utilization

---

\* Taken from "Adjusting to the 1980s: Taking Stock of Educational Expenditure", by Keith Lewin, Angela Little, and Christopher Colclough in Financing Educational development: Proceedings of an International Seminar held in Mont Sainte Marie, Canada. IDRC, 1983.