Presidential Address

Quantity, Quality, and Source

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When I took my first course in comparative education a quarter of a century ago, I was presented with a series of readings that seemed to fall into the following types of materials. First, there were references to some of the nineteenth-century travelers—Horace Mann, Mathew Arnold, Joseph Kay—who brought back impressions of education in foreign lands for domestic consideration. Second, there were references to some who tried to systematize the results of these kinds of impressions—Sir Michael Sadler, I. L. Kandel, Bereday. Third, there were references to great minds drawn from philosophy or from the social sciences generally that were of interest to comparative education but that were of interest as well to many other lines of inquiry—Plato, Leo Tolstoy, Max Weber, Emil Durkheim, Clifford Geertz, Edward Shils, Stuart Eisenstadt, and David Apter. Either they had thought about education, or they were contributors to compelling theories in which education played a role— modernization, tradition, center and periphery, economic development, civic culture, stratification. Fourth, there were references to those who had begun to measure and estimate what it was about education that seemed to make a difference in society—Philip Foster, Torsten Husen, Alex Inkeles, Yuri Bronfenbrenner, Edward Denison, and John McClelland. Their purpose was to study education as though it were like any other social function—religion, law, and medicine, for instance. They were curious about whether education's role and function were similar around the world and why. And last, there were new names on the list. These consisted of individuals who wanted or who were paid by public agencies to go one step further and "plan" education's effects—Fredrick Harbison and Charles Myers, Nevile Postlethwaite, Benjamin Bloom, Charles Havighurst, and my own teachers, James Coleman, C. Arnold Anderson, and Mary Jean Bowman.[1]

These views are mine alone and do not necessarily represent the views of the World Bank or any of its affiliated institutions.

[1] Not included on the reading list presented to me in the late 1960s were any references to the many normative crusades that typify our field. There were, of course, references to the debates over nonformal education, but very little on the liturgy of nonformal education as a means of amelioration. Similar gaps existed for educational technology, peace curriculum, teaching for cross-cultural understanding, rural values, and the like. I learned about these rather strongly held beliefs by attending educational conferences and from listening to the papers being presented from elsewhere. Also

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These constituted "the literature" 25 years ago, at least for me. The field, however, was greater. At the annual or regional meetings of CIES one could meet the representatives of various foundations and public agencies who took a keen interest in the field and the society itself. As far as I am concerned, the society welcomed all who were interested, and this was its strength. It welcomed scholars from anthropology, political science, public administration, comparative literature, sociology, and regional area studies—Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East—whose common interest in education was their link.

Now, a quarter of a century later, the question is, Where are we? What changes have occurred in the interim, and where is our field headed? In considering these questions, I would not claim any more than a personal view. What follows are simply my impressions. These are not the result of a systematic effort or a piece of thorough research. Working at the World Bank prevents me from providing the perspective you might expect from a university scholar. I will leave it to you to judge whether the impressions are worthy of your consideration. But they consist of three parts: the quantity of material in comparative education, its quality, and the sources from which it derives.

Quantity

It is difficult to prove, but I believe there is more being written today having to do with comparative education than there was 25 years ago. The Public Affairs Information System, a reference of articles on public policy issues, shows 34 entries on comparative education in the 1970s, and 155 during the 1980s, a fivefold increase. The Educational Resources Information Center system, which records formal articles and publicly presented papers on education, shows a very substantial level of production—2,478 entries in the 1970s, and 2,125 during the 1980s.[2]

Both of these systems exclude the many and varied internal reports from public agencies, such as my own, that have been increasing their levels of involvement. There were 33 World Bank education-sector reports produced during the 1970s and four times that level (123) during the 1980s, going from one in 1972 and 1975, to 10 in 1977, to 12 in 1978, to 17 in 1981 and 1985, to a high of 24 in 1992. Current average

missing were any references to comparative education as a "methodology" distinct from other social sciences. I suspect that this was not out of disregard for the need to understand methods but, rather, on grounds that good methods and compelling questions could speak for themselves; there was no need to worry whether the methods in our field were sufficiently distinct. On reflection, this was an attitude similar to that of a current advertisement for a popular sports shoe: no need to talk about it, "just do it."

[2] Included in these counts are articles classified both under "comparative education" and under "international education." Excluded are articles under "cross-cultural studies," "educational anthropology," "nonformal education," "international educational exchange," and "foreign culture."

is about 20 per year.[3] These reports, of course, are not included in any public information system, and I suspect there are many other governmental documents, some widely distributed and debated, from Organization for Economic and Cooperative Development (OECD) countries and developing countries as well as regional development banks, UN agencies, and bilateral development assistance agencies. If all of this constitutes "literature," then I believe the quantity has gone up.

Perhaps a personal illustration: my first job in Washington, back in 1974, included the task of "monitoring" the trends in federally sponsored research on children and youth.[4] Included in the task was the opportunity to "interview" 24 different federal agencies, including what was then supposed to be the premier institution sponsoring educational research, the National Institute of Education. The deputy director told me, with embarrassment, that there was only one project having anything to do with international issues. In his view, the lack of attention to international problems had nothing at all to do with what was professionally correct, but, rather, it was a signal that there was no educational idea from another country worthy of American tax dollars. Furthermore, the one project, which was a piece of research on examinations in Ireland, was well buried in something else, was not listed on any publicly available document, and was especially purged from any list of projects that might be scrutinized by a congressional education committee.

Something happened in the 1970s, but I submit that it was not a shift in Washington but, rather, a change at the local level—a change in the attitudes within many of the 16,000 school districts in the United States and in the 50 different state agencies financing and managing complex and increasingly troubled education systems. It stemmed, I believe, from the precipitous oil price rise in 1974. Among many other things, this event helped America to realize that the economy was fragile and subject to external "shock" on a scale previously unrecognized. In terms of education, the economic crisis had the effect of a "second sputnik."

Suddenly the pressure for reform was immense, and like Sputnik in 1957, it was based, rightly or wrongly, on the deeply held belief that the United States was "behind" in some way. I will discuss the content of the

[3] In fiscal year 1991, the cost of World Bank sector work amounted to about U.S.$25 million. The reports covered issues of curriculum development, instructional materials, teacher training, education finance, employment, labor market poverty, internal efficiency, and equity. Each report attempts to analyze the quality and effectiveness of a national education system in the context of neighboring countries, countries at similar levels of economic development, and, with increasing frequency, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries.

[4] The word "monitoring" is one of those many tricky governmental expressions that has no conceptual boundaries—on purpose. There sometimes is rationality to using vague language. See Stephen P. Heyneman, "Toward Inter-Agency Coordination. Annual Report of the Inter-Agency Panel for Research and Development on Adolescence Social Research Group" (Washington, D.C.: George Washington University, 1974).

work that this fear generated under the section below on "quality." But suffice it to say here that this concern motivated numerous local demands for more information. These came from Tennessee (the home of Governor Lamar Alexander), Kentucky (home of Governor Wallace Wilkinson), South Carolina (home of Governor Richard Riley), and from the state of Washington (home of Governor Booth Gardner), not from Washington, D.C. Questions about international information began coming from the National School Boards Association, the National Governors Association, the National Educational Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and the National Association of Manufacturers.

This demand for answers to "what's wrong?" led to the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. As you recall, this was unique among the many different public reports because it advocated neither cure nor solution.[5] Instead, it limited its discussion to a vivid description of the problem, and it was accurate. It characterized U.S. curricular choice as a cafeteria without priority—soup, nuts, dessert, it was considered the same.

Now a second illustration. The year after the publication of *A Nation at Risk,* I visited OECD headquarters. My visit followed a recent and very acrimonious meeting of the board of directors of the Center for Education Research and Innovation (CERI). The U.S. delegate was said to have put a great deal of pressure, and in very direct language, for OECD to engage itself in a project collecting and analyzing statistical education "inputs and outcomes"—information on curricular standards, costs and sources of finance, learning achievements on common subject matter, employment trends, and the like. The reaction among the staff of CERI was one of shock, and deep suspicion. Those whom I interviewed believed it was unprofessional to try and quantify such indicators, that it would oversimplify and misrepresent OECD educational systems, and that it would be rejected by the 24 member states whose common interests they were charged to serve. More important, they believed that the demand for such information would shift as soon as a Democrat could come to the White House.

[5] National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983). Many other reports followed this one. Among them: National Science Board Commission on Pre-College Education in Math, Science and Technology, *Educating Americans for the 21st Century: A Plan of Action for Improving Math, Science and Technology for all American Education and Science Students so That Their Achievement Is the Best in the World by 1995* (Washington, D.C.: National Science Foundation, n.d.); Commission on National Challenges in Higher Education, *Memorandum to the 41st President of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: American Committee on Education, 1988); John I. Goodlad, *A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984); Ernest L. Boyer, *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America* (New York: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1983); Report of the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century,* Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1986); U.S. Department of Education, *What Works? Research about Teaching and Learning* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987).

I told them I felt they were wrong, that no matter how bluntly it might have been expressed by the U.S. delegate, that the demand was not coming exclusively from a single president or a single political party. I told them that the demand was coming from "below," from parts of the society and from parts of the educational system over which Washington had no control, and to which political leaders in any democracy had no choice except to respond. I also told them that the demand was both nonpartisan and permanent and that they would be misjudging the interests of their member states if they believed that the demand for better and more systematic educational information was limited to the United States.

They did not believe me, but for understandable reasons. The organization's mistake 10 years ago was to rely primarily on traditional sources of information about international educational research and statistics. These came primarily from ministries of education and mostly from centralized, not federal, systems.[6] They seemed to travel only sparingly to do their research, and only rarely did they travel personally to non-European countries. Their formal relations with ministries of budget, finance, trade, or agriculture or with local school districts and states were, at best, minimal. And consequently they could not see what was coming; nor were they able to accurately characterize the breadth and depth of the shifts in demands from education officials, when in fact these shifts did come.

Ten years have passed. The new OECD book on educational indicators is now published in French and English.[7] One of its primary authors, and one of the sources who had originally characterized the suggestion for an educational indicator project as a "Reagan plot," told me recently that working on that project had been "the most satisfying" experience in his career. But the question we are discussing is that of quantity of comparative educational material. And therefore the issue is not whether this OECD indicator project is good or bad or whether it should have been more readily accepted by OECD staff. The question is whether it is an isolated example of new initiatives or whether is it symbolic of other efforts and other trends.

Let me illustrate why I believe it is not an isolated example. *Business Week*, September 14, 1992, ran a cover story on comparative education. The *International Herald Tribune* of Wednesday, February 17, 1993, pub-

[6] This process of "feeling demand" is currently mirrored by the lack of pressure on Unesco to improve its Office of Statistics. It is not a priority among the ministers of education, particularly in the many developing countries that make up the majority of the voting bodies. But I predict a turnabout in Unesco similar to what we have seen in OECD, and probably for similar reasons, namely, that the pressures on ministries of education will shift in countries around the world as they have in OECD countries.

[7] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *The OECD International Education Indicators: A Framework for Analysis* (Paris: OECD, 1992).

lished a special report on comparative education. There have been similar major stories appearing in the *New York Times, Newsweek, Time,* and *Le Monde.* High circulation periodicals are not publishing these stories in a vacuum. They are publishing them in a context of increasing public interest and sophistication.

There have been four Nobel prizes dealing with human capital issues.[8] There has been a recent flurry of reports on the status of education by international agencies.[9] There have been two heads of state meetings on international educational issues.[10] There are three new educational boards of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and major new research initiates from the General Accounting Office,[11] the Office of Technology Assessment,[12] various congressional committees,[13] and the Carnegie, Spencer, Ball, and Soros foundations. There is an ongoing cooperative effort among the donors to African education. This is, of course, in addition to the many new efforts in Europe and Asia. The Japanese have a new and

[8] Edward Dennison, Jan Tinbergen, T. W. Schultz, and Gary Becker.

[9] United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report, 1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); International Labor Office (ILO), *International Labour Report, 1989* (Geneva: ILO, 1989); International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Canadian International Development Agency, *Financing Educational Development* (Ottawa: IDRC, 1982); Unesco, *World Education Report, 1991* (Paris: Unesco, 1991); Inter-Agency Commission, World Conference on Education For All (UNDP, UNESCO, World Bank), *Final Report, World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, March 5, 1990,* held at Jomtien, Thailand (New York: Inter-Agency Commission, World Conference on Education For All, 1991); United Nations Children's Fund, Task Force for Child Survival, *Protecting the World's Children: A Call for Action,* WHO, Unicef, World Bank, United Nations Development Program, Rockefeller Foundation Primary Education Policy Papers (New York: Rockefeller Foundation, June, 1990); Hugh Hawes and and Trevor Coombe, eds., with Carol Coombe and Kevin Lillis, *Education Priorities and Aid Responses in Sub-Saharan Africa* (London: Overseas Development Administration, 1986); United Nations Children's Fund, *State of the World's Children, 1992* (New York: Unicef, 1992); Martin Carnoy, *The Case for Investing in Basic Education* (New York: Unicef, 1992); C. D. Thorsby and K. Gannicott, *The Quality of Education in the South Pacific* (Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, 1990); World Bank, *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization and Expansion* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1988); World Bank, *Primary Education Policy Paper* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1990); World Bank, *Vocational and Technical Education and Training Policy Paper* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1991); Singapore, Ministry of Education, *Towards Excellence in Schools* (Singapore: Ministry of Education, 1987). These reports parallel others on population, family planning, poverty, social impact of adjustment, women in development, and environment, all of which have major sections dedicated to comparative education issues.

[10] The "Education For All" meeting in Jomtien, Thailand, March 5–9, 1990, and the "World Summit for Children" in New York, September 29–30, 1990, resulted in the adoption of a World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and a World Declaration on Education For All.

[11] The three National Academy of Sciences' boards include Postsecondary Education and Training for the Workplace, Comparative Studies in Education, and Testing and Assessment. International issues figure prominently in each board. The General Accounting Office initiatives include international studies of educational management and the international experience in making human capital investments at earlier rather than later stages of the life cycle.

[12] U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, *Testing in American Schools: Asking the Right Questions* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992).

[13] At least four pieces of educational legislation are currently under debate, each making references to international education ideas, and there are a variety of new subcommittees studying specialized problems, one of the most active being the subcommittee on "Time and Learning."

important fund for assisting human resources in developing countries. The ministers of education of Asia and North America have decided to pool resources on projects having to do with curriculum requirements and teacher certification.[14] These resources are not classified as foreign aid; instead, they come out of line ministry of education budgets. This is also characteristic of the Dutch CROSS (Coordination Dutch-Russian Cooperation in Education) Program designed to assist Russian education. It is justified on grounds that Dutch educational officials have something significant and unique to offer the Russians in the fields of educational management, publishing, and assessments of learning achievements and examinations and standardized testing and that the Dutch can themselves learn equally from the cooperative effort. The British Council is also assisting Russian educators with studies and analytic resources. The British Know How Fund is assisting Eastern Europeans with studies of the "Textbook Sector"; the Swedish and the American Academies of Sciences are assisting higher education and research capacity in the former Soviet Union, as is the European Community. Perhaps unique though is an effort led by the chancellor of the State University of New York to provide high-quality advice in comparative education to the minister of higher education in Russia.

These efforts, and the many publications that are rapidly appearing from them, are not isolated. From a low point of the National Institute of Education's fear that their one comparative education project would be seen as a boondoggle in 1974 has emerged a new industry of comparative education initiatives and projects in 1993.[15] My conclusion is that the quantity has gone up. But how good is it? Is the quality of information sufficient to answer the kinds of questions being asked?

Quality of Comparative Education Information

Quality of the questions asked.—I believe that the quality of the questions themselves is increasing rapidly. They are more diverse, more interesting, and more insightful. From the *Business Week* cover story mentioned above, there were lessons drawn from France, Germany, Japan, and Britain covering many issues, not simply learning achievements. They included methods of designing curriculum, paying teachers, preschool preparation, corporate consensus, financing mechanisms, and school time. Or consider the breadth of articles included in the special issue of the *Interna-*

[14] The Asia and Pacific Economic Conference has 14 members in their Human Resources Department: the United States, Canada, the Peoples Republic of China, Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Taiwan, Thailand, Brunei, and the Philippines.

[15] Within the National Center for Educational Statistics, annual spending on international studies has risen from U.S. $165,000 in fiscal year 1988 to $10 million in fiscal year 1993.

tional Herald Tribune of Wednesday, February 17, 1993—"Washington: Mopping Up Student Debt," "In Japan: Learning to Break the Mold," "Schools in China: Open for Business," "Single Euromarket for Schools Faces the Mobility Test," "Australian Universities Plan Offshore Campuses," "Freedom and Discipline Clash in Berlin Teacher Exchange," "French Actors Take Lessons in [Bali's] Dramatic Tradition," "Clinton Throws New Ideas at a Problem That Stumped the 'Education President'," "U.S. College Model Takes Root in Spain," "Laissez-Faire Bilingualism in California," "London Boroughs' Battle of the Budgets," "Summerhill's Radical Recipe Survives," "UNESCO Panel to Ponder the Challenge to Education of Creating a New Humanity," and "Prospective Teachers Turn to Dial-a-Job."

We are bearing witness to the emergence of a new sophistication in the comparative education questions coming from public authorities. No longer is it confined to "Why Johnny cannot read as well as Ivan." Ten years of experience have taught public officials to not confine their interests in comparative education to that of an Olympic finish. To be sure, this increasing sophistication is not uniform, but the kind of questions now being asked covers a much wider spectrum of comparative educational endeavors than in any time in my experience. Staff of congressional committees are asking about teaching and organizational techniques, types of salary incentives, methods of teaching children racial and ethnic tolerance. I have heard questions that concern the arts, system finance and management, morals, culture, language, ethnicity. It is now (almost) normal for U.S. political figures to appreciate that political leaders and educators from other countries are not necessarily interested in the exact same questions and problems that interest Americans. Only infrequently does one find the "marble syndrome" of educational politics (if they are not interested in my game and my rules, I go home); rather, there is an appreciation that educational research and the gathering of educational statistics is a natural and normal part of diplomacy. The U.S. remained in an (expensive, publicly financed) international study of computer literacy though it was felt there was not very much to learn from other countries. The reason it remained was because it was appreciated that other countries wanted to learn from us. Similarly, the U.S. lowered its expectations of international research on educational standards with the Asian and Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) in lieu of the Asian need to learn about moral education and the teaching of national consensus building. It is now understood that Japanese may wish to learn about diversified curriculum from us, that Russians wish to learn about the teaching of democracy with a heterogeneous school population, and that all societies want to know more about techniques of local management and local finance—areas where the United States is not "behind."

Is it possible that Americans are showing signs of international tolerance and understanding in the field of education? Is it possible that Americans are coming out of their long-held tradition of localism and educational isolationism?

It is, of course, early to make firm conclusions. But in my experience the diversity and sophistication in the kinds of questions being asked by public authorities has increased so dramatically in the last 10 years that at times I have the sense that most every social science issue on the reading list presented to me 25 years ago seems to be coming of age and into maturity—civic culture and governance, the complexity of human capital theory, stratification and cultural integration, the necessity of tradition as well as economic development. In every sense of the term, I believe we are entering an age of Aquarius for comparative education.

Quality of information provided.—On the other hand, I believe, that as a comparative education community, we are not adequately responding to this cornucopia of questions and interests. While the demand is high, I fear that our ability to reply is weak. And I believe this is true for two reasons: one is that we, as a profession, have not paid sufficient attention to the statistical foundations required for answering these questions. A second is that preoccupations of the university-based comparative education research community seem to have resulted in a gridlock of ideas. We have behaved like the French Fourth Republic—with a purity of contradictory purpose so extreme that the ship may have to sink before compromise can be considered. A word about both.

Inattention to Official Mechanisms

In spite of the diversity of questions and the increasing demand for more information and for better information, the fact is that the mechanisms for collecting and analyzing educational information are weak.[16] There are many reasons for this, but among the most compelling is the unreliability and narrowness of educational statistics.

Data are unreliable.—Statistics in five of the world's largest countries (Nigeria, Pakistan, Egypt, Brazil, and Bangladesh) are judged by experts to have serious deficiencies— missing data, data updated irregularly and sporadically in one province but not another, and data with systematic biases. Unreliable and systematic bias typifies data from many of the former centrally planned economies in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. And last, data from Sub-Saharan Africa suffer

[16] For the next two paragraphs, I have drawn significantly from Jeffrey Puryear, "Status and Problems of International Education Statistics and Research" (paper presented to the Board on International Comparative Studies in Education, Washington, D.C., January 29, 1993).

gaps typical of economies that are undergoing stagnation and decline. In some cases, there are incentives to not accurately report. In one African country, the Ministry of Education claims that there are 60,000 more teachers in the education system than the Ministry of Finance believes. Since salary costs are transferred from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of Education in a block, and since tabulating teachers is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, an accurate count of teachers from an impartial educational body would mean a loss of a major portion of the Ministry of Education's operating budget.

Data are too narrow.—The data are too narrow to answer the kinds of questions now being asked. Governments have concentrated almost entirely on recording the number of pupils, teachers, and buildings in the formal system. There is little effort dedicated to local expenditures, either public or private, and virtually no attention to documenting how schools function or what students learn. There is no attention to student migrants, student health problems, student family environments, availability and quality of reading materials, part-time programs, apprenticeships, the provision of religious education, curricular emphasis in classrooms, or time actually spent concentrating on that curriculum. All this is missing.

What is the reason for this weakness? Why is it that after 4 decades of international statistical efforts, the system remains so fragile and, in the minds of some, is regressing? Governments feel comfortable "head counting" because low figures imply more educational effort may be justified and high figures imply success and competence of the system. More detail may be politically problematic. In the poorest of countries, of course, there are simply too many other priorities. Getting teachers paid takes precedence over knowing the nuances of classroom effectiveness. And measuring costs or learning across countries presents significant challenges that are only now being addressed, and imperfectly. But in my view, the basic reason for the weakness of educational data has less to do with methodological and conceptual problems and more to do with the lack of available resources.

We must remember that, however much on the increase, the quantity of research on education and the statistical underpinnings of education—both domestic and international—remain tiny fractions of the research on other important societal endeavors.

Agriculture.—Global annual public spending on agricultural research targeted directly to non-OECD countries averaged roughly U.S. $8.4 billion in the period 1981–85, with the developing countries themselves responsible for about 43 percent of it (i.e., $3.6 billion). Moreover, the current annual investment in the donor-financed Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (with expenditures of about $250 million per year) is about 7 percent of the annual public agricultural research expenditures on developing countries and 3 percent of annual public expenditures on agricultural research globally.[17]

Health.—Health research and statistical information is better organized yet. Approximately $35 billion is spent on health research globally, with about $1.6 billion targeted annually to non-OECD countries. The annual spending of multilateral agencies alone (World Bank, regional development banks, and the World Health Organization) is roughly $110 million per year. This is more than equaled by the investments of bilateral donors ($130 million per year) and is more than tripled by the investments of the private health industry ($300 million per year).

Perhaps most interesting is the investment in health research targeted to non-OECD countries by public research agencies in OECD countries—particularly the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta and the National Institutes for Health—currently budgeted at about $350 million per year.[18] If the figures for U.S. educational research are correct as I understand them,[19] then the United States federal government appears in the slightly odd position of spending three-and-a-half times more on health research in developing countries than it spends on education research on U.S. citizens.[20] Conclusion: education research and educational statistics are poorly funded all over the world.

I would measure "significant progress" in comparative education by our ability to adequately answer the kinds of questions now being posed by public authorities. And I do not believe that we will be able to answer these questions without more resources devoted to educational statistics and educational research. This consensus must occur domestically and internationally; and within the international community, with more resources within each of the OECD countries and within the development aid community.

I see no means to do this without major and systematic assistance to the institutions most capable of coordinating these efforts professionally. Countries in the OECD must strengthen the educational statistics and research network of OECD itself; they must strengthen nonofficial networks such as APEC and International Association for the Evaluation of

[17] Philip G. Pardey, Johannes Roseboom, and Jock R. Anderson, and International Service for National Agricultural Research, *Agricultural Research Policy: International Quantitative Perspectives,* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

[18] Commission on Health Research for Development, "Funding Research," in *Health Research: Essential Link to Equity in Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[19] Arthur Wise, "Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Sub-Committee on Select Education, on H.R. 4014: The Educational Research, Development and Dissemination Excellence Act," March 17, 1992.

[20] Aklilu Habte and Stephen P. Heyneman, introduction to Puryear.

Educational Achievement (IEA) and International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA); they must strengthen the educational offices within their bilateral development assistance agencies; and most important, they must strengthen the international offices of the United Nations that are charged with the professional responsibility of maintaining and reporting on educational trends. The United States and Britain and Singapore must participate in this effort by supporting Unesco's Office of Statistics. But other countries—France, Sweden, Japan, and Russia—that, although they have not withdrawn from Unesco, have not paid sufficient attention to Unesco's major contributions and functions—these countries too should understand that they will never have their questions answered unless they are willing to support the means for answering them. But last, I believe that UN agencies, including Unesco, should realign their own priorities. They should restructure their offices and their budgets so that the professional function of educational statistics is supported, even if it means reducing resources and budgetary support for less important areas where their comparative advantage is not so strong as it is in educational statistics.

Sources within Comparative Education

There seems to be a "war of paradigms" among us. And what may have started as academic debate has now developed into factions that appear to judge the contributions of others more by their affiliation with one faction or another, rather than by the virtues of their work or their professionalism.

There are basically four sides in this paradigm war. First, there are the "irredentists" who believe that no education solution is viable unless autonomously invented by local cultural authorities. For them, process is paramount, but process itself with an underlying assumption that there are in fact no legitimate common interests and questions across rich and poor countries. In other words, the product of the process, no matter how consultative, is prescribed ahead of time.

Second, there are the "single solution specialists." They, too, have an answer already ready—educational technology, vouchers, modular learning, management information systems, distance teaching, decentralization, and so on. No matter what the problem, the solution to them is already obvious.

Third, there are the "conspiratists." These scholars believe that empirical research with universal standards of excellence violates natural complexity. To them, empirical cross-national research is politically unacceptable because it places educational research institutions on the periphery at a disadvantage. The periphery can be either an out-of-the-way community college or the best university in the Philippines. The result is pernicious.

Since universal standards are unacceptable to this part of the education community, there is little confidence on the part of public agencies to treat research on education as sufficiently serious to warrant public investments, even on a grant basis. As a result, there is no educational equivalent of a World Fertility Survey, no Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research, no Centers for Disease Control for education.

Fourth and last, there are the "modelers." These are scholars, some very famous, who believe in absolute interpretations of social models, who argue that "policy" comes from a smoking regression equation. We have now had 30 years of experience with large cross-sectional samples, and if there is anything we can conclude, it is that the obvious policy conclusions (money makes no difference, all variation can be explained by socioeconomic status, private schools are better, programs have to be targeted to 15 percent below the poverty line, etc.) appear simplistic to the manager of education systems. This does not mean that they are wrong; what it does mean is that all evidence, including all surveys, are circumscribed by the caveats normal to cross-sectional work. And it means that we must relearn an old lesson—that of policy humility. Unless one walks in the shoes of those responsible for the consequences of policy change, how does one really "know" what to do?

Who is right among these four sides? I believe that none is right; I believe that all are right; and I believe that one need not apologize for not taking sides.

I believe in local solutions and local questions. After all, how else can one expect innovation? But I would not reject a solution just because it was not local. And I also have favorite solutions. I believe that textbooks work. After all, how can one learn to read when there is nothing to read? I believe in well-designed examinations. After all, there are a lot worse criteria than academic achievement on which one could select one's future elites. But I would never recommend one of these solutions if teachers were not being paid adequately. I hope I would never recommend a solution that did not fit the problem. And also, I hope I have a little of the "conspiritist" in me. I have seen violations of common sense with the unintelligent use of large data sets; I have seen subjects, sometimes countries, victimized by theories they had no part in inventing and no part in interpreting. And last, I hope too that there is a little of the modeler in me. I have used large data sets to good end on all sides, including the subjects'. I believe in a minimum level of standards and standard information across all countries. After all, how else can education be professional if there is no common information and no common standard for analytic work? So if I could write my own reputation, it would be as one whose sympathies lie on all of these sides, for they all hold truth.

I believe that "source" is an important consideration in comparative education work. But to judge the source, I prefer to know where the scholar works—in a university catering to student interests? In an agency that takes local research initiatives as its purpose? Or in an agency that helps children? Or in an agency that fights for equal opportunity for women? In a textbook firm? A testing firm? In a bank preoccupied by costs of public expenditures? To me, where a person works can explain a great deal about the nature of the emphasis they are required to place in their products.

But source, too, is complicated by time. The fact is we change roles and functions when we change employers. The same individual may work in a government agency, then a consultant firm, then a foundation, then in a school or university, and reverse. And then there is the change over time. Some of us write very differently as we get older, and as we gather more experience. We do not feel as strongly about the certainty of issues as we once did.

I believe that we should not judge a person's ability to contribute by the "paradigm" to which that person supposedly belongs. We should not dismiss work that, by the nature of its source, is required to look at a problem in an institutionally prescribed manner. Designing products to meet the terms of reference of the institution that pays us is normal. Instead we should judge a person's work by how well it can answer the question at hand, not whether in our view it is answering the question we would ask.

Conclusion

Public officials, worried about immediate and important things, are tired of the paradigm wars in the academic world. They are tired of the research community's eternal squabbling. They tend, with justification, to dismiss any profession that cannot effectively agree on basic principles. And they will dismiss us unless we establish a better record of consensus. This is our challenge.

All professions, and all professional societies, experience shock when the world changes. This typifies all fields—health, agriculture, biological sciences, African studies, Islamic studies, and astronomy. Key to whether they can survive and not be replaced by new fields or by more effective societies with new names rests on the ability to adjust. "Adjustment" is a term often used to describe the process by which countries experience external shock. They have basically two choices, and so do professions, and so does comparative education.

First, they can ignore the shock. They can pretend that nothing has changed; that it is business as usual. If they do this they will survive if the source of the shock changes, if it goes away—if debt disappears. If war dissipates. If it rains after a drought. But if it does not go away, if the source of the shock remains, if they ignore it, they are doomed to be controlled by it.

On the other hand, if countries, or professions do not ignore the shock, they stand a chance of managing it. They may or may not be successful. Trying to manage the shock does not mean that they will be able to control it. But ignoring it guarantees that they will not control it.

Comparative Education is undergoing a major shock right now. On the one hand, there is a plethora of interest and demand, both legitimate and educated as well as manipulative and nefarious, about comparative education questions. There is an abundance of new material focused on specific issues—on publishing industries; on examinations, time on task, teaching style, classroom behavior and culture; on cost and accounting, vouchers, and managerial innovations. All this is going on at the "periphery" of comparative education. Among other locations, good comparative education discussions are occurring in parliamentary committees, in bank conference rooms, in foundation board rooms, in company marketing seminars.

The change is not yet evident in the teaching of comparative education, or in the membership of the Comparative and International Education Society—"the center." Research that calls itself "comparative education" seems fixed on issues that seem self-generated and self-justified—North domination and South colonialization; positivist paradigms versus something else, correspondence theory, qualitative versus quantitative wars, dependency theory.

The point here is that in the minds of officials actually in charge of educational systems, there is no obvious way in which research on these issues can help answer the questions pressing on them. The longer comparative education's university-based research remains wedded to testing analytic theories for which there is little demand, the more isolated and irrelevant the field will become. It is my belief that comparative education is alive and well at the periphery but that it is dead in the center where attention is devoted to academic issues with no obvious product.[21]

My point here is not to suggest that there is no place for these issues; nor is it to suggest that universities that teach courses called "Comparative Education" should not have the freedom to design reading lists and to train scholars as they see fit. No great university can remain great if it succumbs to the question of the moment in the minds of public agencies. This is not the point.

[21] The weaknesses observed in the academic community are not limited to comparative education; rather, they are typical of many social sciences.

The point is that there are questions pressing on both the academic and the public policy worlds. Among them: (i) What is an appropriate balance between military and welfare expenditures? (ii) Can the process of schooling encourage patriotism without intolerance? (iii) Is it possible that wealthy societies, such as my own, can find a way to educate their young so that they grow up with a sense of respect for elders, sacrifice for the community, and a desire to learn?

The point is that membership in the Comparative and International Education Society remains a fraction of those who are doing interesting and important work in the field of comparative education. The point is that it is out of balance with the sources of new comparative education interests coming from private industry, from fields of health, agriculture, commerce. It represents imperfectly the interests of comparative education lawyers, anthropologists, economists, and political scientists who are emerging with new questions, interesting responses, and differing points of view. University-based comparative education remains unchanged from the early days in which the Ford Foundation attempted to legitimate the study of education as a social science by creating a new and autonomous field of training in "comparative education." Faculty were separated from the other major educational endeavors and other disciplines in sociology, economics, and the like. It is now time to end that separation.

I believe, as a society, we are at a crossroads. We can bemoan the activity being exhibited on comparative education issues elsewhere and sporadically attempt to make claims on it by arguing our "ownership" of the field. We can act as though we were a union in a closed shop. We can claim that, unless government and nongovernmental agencies involve us or consult us officially as the representative of the field, we would consider the endeavor as flawed. Or we can "adjust." We can build on our strengths and change. Now what, in our case, does "adjustment" imply?

I believe that we should reassert the principles of our profession, created when two interests merged in 1968 to form the Comparative and International Education Society—one oriented to comparative education as a "social science," the other oriented to peace and cultural understanding through international education. The merger was a sign of confidence that all debate and differing interests were welcome. It was a courageous act, and not without problems. After all, those interested in explanations for things and those interested in "doing" something about social problems do not always mix easily. But the interests did merge, and for good end.

The Comparative and International Education Society is faced with a new and similar challenge. It is faced with brand new interests. It is faced with new actors whose main affiliations do not depend at all on our blessing, whose sources of income and support are totally independent from the traditional field. We must ask ourselves what to do about them. I believe, as Philip Foster once instructed me, that we should welcome them into our community, that we should actively seek their memberships, and that we should adjust our programs to incorporate their activities and interests even though they will be very different and very new to us. I believe that the membership in our society should parallel those who are interested in comparative education questions generally, and not just those who are teaching comparative education in universities. Our membership should probably double in the next 5 years. There should be heavy representation from publishing and computer companies, congressional committees, teacher unions, statistical agencies, educational consultant firms, educational testing companies, and research groups with interests in education for all, gender equity, Islamic morals, and political democracy. I believe that we should make a concerted effort to bring our community to their attention. We should not wait for them to discover us. And I believe that we should judge our success on our abilities to successfully make them feel welcome among us.