

Mitter, Wolfgang

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#### **Kontakt:**

**peDOCS**

Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung (DIPF)

Informationszentrum (IZ) Bildung

Schloßstr. 29, D-60486 Frankfurt am Main

eMail: [pedocs@dipf.de](mailto:pedocs@dipf.de)

Internet: [www.pedocs.de](http://www.pedocs.de)

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## Current Trends in Educational Research in Europe

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WOLFGANG MITTER

### 1. Introductory Remarks

In this seminar which deals with the issue of the impact of educational research on educational policy and practice with special regard to teacher education, it is certainly reasonable to ask this overall question: How is educational research to be defined concerning its content, method and objective? In respect of these three features, one has to draw a line from normative foundations of philosophical or religious nature and individual experience, on the one hand, to the modern approaches, both of quantitative and qualitative character, on the other. This complexity is rooted in a centuries old development of educational history in Europe. Therefore a brief retrospect may be helpful, because it turns our minds to the academic descent of educational research.

- (a) Up to the end of the 19th century 'Pedagogics', the historic ancestor and, as we may add, contemporary rival of educational sciences and educational research, were totally embedded in philosophy, whereby their dependence on ethics has played the essential role. This alignment explains a good deal of the normative core of Pedagogics and points, at the same time, to the theological component and heritage of European philosophy which I do not want to deal with here. The linkage of philosophy and history, though far from being harmonious or fully accepted, has laid the ground for that branch of Pedagogics, which, to give an example, in Germany constructed '*Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik*' (i.e. the philosophy- and history-bound Pedagogics, institutionalised in the faculties of humanities and philosophy). The historical and hermeneutic methods provided this approach with an adequate methodology. In T. Husén's stimulating article, published in the 'Jubilee Number' on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the *International Review of Education* (25(1978)2/3, p. 328), we are reminded of the fact that philosophy and history have been the background of many educationists—I should add: up to the present time.
- (b) Individual experience can be identified as the second root of educational sciences and educational research. We have to look back to the 18th century when on the European continent the State began to initiate and found schools—and to discover teacher education as a notable field of policy-making; in England the State only intervened 100 years later. Since that century the responsible agencies of educational policy have tried to gain consultation from the venerable ancestors of 'educational research' and 'empiric evidence', to anticipate these two contemporary notions. In this framework one should turn to Pestalozzi's analyses of his own practical experience in Switzerland which

were taken over, e.g. by the Prussian government, after it had sent teachers to Yverdon (Iferten) to study the pedagogue's work on the spot. Another example is given by Herbart's psychological, though non-statistical, expertise which has influenced educational practice, not only in Germany but also in other countries. For example 'modern' traces of Herbartianism based upon Herbart's concept of the 'educating school' (*erziehende Schule*) could be observed in Soviet education until its collapse together with its sociopolitical and ideological foundations.

- (c) While in Western Germany the "realistic turn in pedagogic research" (Roth, 1963, pp. 109–119) signalled the entry of empiric-analytical methods into the renamed '*Erziehungswissenschaft*' (educational science), this discipline had been under the "undisputable sway" of psychology (Bowen, 1979, p. 316) in the Anglo-Saxon countries for a few decades already. Unlike in Germany, in those countries psychology as an academic discipline had separated or 'liberated' itself from its philosophical roots long before.
- (d) Competing with philosophy and psychology in their roles as 'ancestral disciplines', sociology has gained increasing influence on the theory building and empirical inquiry in the area of educational research. To describe this stream, the development in American and British social sciences would have to be studied again, but in a comparative consideration it is as important to pay explicit attention to the impact of sociologists like emile Durkheim and Aloys Fischer. In France this line has continued until today, as can be demonstrated by the stimulating contributions by Peirre Bourdien, Raymond Boudon and Viviane Isambert-Jamati (Debeauvais, 1991, p. 3). In the recent history of social sciences, sociology seemed to occupy the whole area of educational research and to include it in its own research area, referring among other arguments to the thesis that 'education' has to be subsumed in the superior concept of 'socialisation'. It should not raise any astonishment, however, that this claim has been contradicted and opposed, e.g. in Germany where the proponents of a definable '*Allgemeine Erziehungswissenschaft*' (science of general education) have held the field until today (Paschen, 1981, p. 33).
- (e) Together with sociology other social sciences, such as political science economics, have got access to and continuously broadened their share in educational research. Their contributions, compared to those of psychology and sociology, have been more of an enriching and complementary kind than of a dominating one. In a wider sense educational research has also included stimulating impacts coming from other disciplines, such as physiology, medicine and architecture. It seems that this 'broadened' neighbourhood is often neglected or underestimated among educationists.
- (f) It is comparative education which gives various evidence of how 'lay people', in particular policy-makers and diplomats, have enriched and, in many cases, even awakened educational investigations. The 19th century bears witness to their contributions, such as those by Victor Cousin and Matthew Arnold; another prominent example is given by *Thomas Darlington's Report on Education in Russia* (1909) (Tomiak, 1987). Contemporary examples can be made out in the reports of parliamentary committees and ministries as well as of the global or regional organisations dealing with educational issues, such as UNESCO, OECD and the Council of Europe.
- (g) In this retrospect one must not forget the root which is marked by the academic

disciplines from which the subjects taught at academic secondary schools have been derived from. Although teachers of those schools have been trained in the faculties of arts/humanities or sciences for centuries it has taken a gradual, lasting and conflicting process until the conviction has gained ground that transferring the contents of academic disciplines from university to school needs to be subject to methodological and didactic considerations. The impact of this process on modern educational research, paralleled by the march of primary teacher training to the level of higher education, has been materialised in didactic and curriculum theory, on the one hand, and by 'action research' on the other.

## 2. Diversity and Unity with Regard to National Research Systems

Philosophers teach us that there is one truth, but the ways to strive for it and the errors you commit in going these ways are multifarious. In this context stress may be laid on the issue that diversity is not only a matter of theoretical foundation and methodological approach, but also of the national and cultural background within which research, and in our case educational research, is conducted. This multinational or multicultural diversity is, among various factors, dependent on traditions which become manifest in certain forms of preference, emphasis and bias. Such traditions, and therefore diversity, have a focal home in the training places (universities, colleges, institutes) where students are introduced into the area of sciences. This is not only true of nation- or culture-oriented interpretations of themes in research and teaching methods as such. In this context Nazi Germany and Stalinist Soviet Union provide examples where the whole area of empiric social sciences was excluded from research and academic teaching with many promising approaches laid down in the preceding decades destroyed. Social sciences in Western Germany needed two post-war decades to regain global standards, and in some areas the capital has not been restored at all. It is true that in the former Soviet Union and her 'satellites' in Central and Eastern Europe, though to different extents, there were some successful approaches to (re-)establishing empirical inquiry, but, taken as the whole, the heritage left by 'socialist' research policy and practice indicates patterns similar to those of Germany in 1945.

Beside political and socioeconomic pressures exerted in a direct way, one has to consider the personal component which means that dominating personalities can exercise a tremendous influence on the continuation or change of research strategies. The question 'continuity versus change' in itself is highly dependent on such socioeconomic and sociopolitical background conditions and individual predilections. Dealing with the dichotomy between diversity and unity with regard to its impact on the sociopolitical patterns, the diversity between systems of educational research of West European and former 'socialist' countries will not disappear in the near future, which necessitates the postulate for support and co-operation to be emphasised already in this context.

Leaving the common historical and theoretical basis of Western research systems and approaches for discussion later, a few anticipatory remarks may be made in this context, too, by means of taking the UK, France and Germany as representative examples; the inclusion of the USA is required by the tremendous influence her educational research has exerted on the European scene in this century, in particular during its second half.

Educational research in the USA cannot be conceived without considering John Dewey and his widely influential theory of Progressive Education. Another focus of

American educational research has been set by the psychological school of behaviourism and learning theory. Finally, one has to consider the Calvinist (Puritan) tradition which has survived and become manifest in how economic, social and educational issues are tackled. In the UK educational research is strongly marked by a bias for pragmatism and distrust of rigid philosophies and by the (at least until recently) decentralised structure of the educational system. French educationists prefer logical reflections and systematised patterns, while empiric research is not held in high esteem (Debeauvais, 1991, p. 3). In this context the far-reaching effect of the contributions by Emile Durkheim, Pierre Bourdieu and other sociologists on French and international thinking deserves to be underlined.

When speaking of Germany (until 1989 Western Germany) one is immediately reminded of the heritage left by 'metaphysical' philosophies (above all Hegel) and the manifestations of the hermeneutic method based on the 'understanding' of texts (books and other written documents; nowadays also audiovisual resources). The aforementioned "realistic turn in pedagogic research" (Roth, 1963, pp. 109–119) signalled the entry of 'explaining' (as distinct from 'understanding'), in the form of analytical-empiric methods into educational research. However, the newcomer, from the beginning, had to fight on two fronts, not only against the philosophy-bound 'Pedagogics', but also against its contemporary rivals among those educationists who were, though differently, influenced by the 'critical theory' (Frankfurt School). The 'critical method' which they propagated and applied, while dedicated to social criticism as far as its theoretical foundation was concerned, had to some extent merged 'hermeneutic' and 'empiric' methods. Latterly, since the middle of the 1970s there has been a significant trend towards a certain reconciliation (Klafki, 1971, pp. 371–385) to be resumed later in the European context.

Thus, the international spectrum points to considerable diversity which in the practice of educational research becomes, among others, visible in the differential appreciation of subject matters and methods, not only by the researchers themselves, but also by their 'customers' in politics and practice, in their function as addressees of investigations and as sponsors and commissioners.

### **3. Organisational Patterns and Issues**

The forerunner of organised educational research has been, again, the USA. It is focussed on institutions being part of, or associated with, universities, whereby private foundations, such as the Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, etc., and municipalities have been active as sponsoring agencies. As a result of the National Defence Act, the Federal Government engaged in the promotion of educational research in the 1960s; this was the period when the USA was considered as a model of organised educational research.

The university-based character of educational research is to be found in Sweden also. Contrary to the American pattern, however, educational research had been only directly financed by the governmental National board of Education with 24 regional boards subordinate to it. Recent developments having begun in the middle of the 1980s are aimed at decentralising this highly centralised system towards increasing autonomy to regional agencies and individual universities.

The UK is characterised by a mixed system with university and polytechnic departments, on the one hand, and independent research institutions, on the other (National Foundation of Educational Research of England and Wales, Scottish Re-

search Council in Education). Though sponsoring of private foundations (e.g. Nuffield) must not be underestimated, it is the budgets of the government and Local Education Authorities which, until the middle of the 1980s, provided the greatest part of the financial means, without directly interfering with planning and control. The recent development has been characterised by an ambivalent picture. On the one hand it indicates an increase in governmental responsibility, in particular operating through official agencies, such as the Economic and Social Research Council as well as the Manpower Services Commission (MSC). On the other hand universities and polytechnics are encouraged to raise funds by direct relations to firms and, generally speaking, to the 'market' (King, 1990, p. 36).

In France, educational research is focussed not on universities, but on research institutes under the direct responsibility of governmental agencies. Above all, attention has to be paid to the *Institut National de la Recherche Pédagogique* operating under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. There are two further central institutions to be mentioned: the *Institut National d'Orientation Scolaire et Professionnel* (INETOP) and the *Centre d'Etude et de Recherche sur l'Emploi et les Qualifications* (CEREQ). Universities are only little engaged in educational research in terms of empiric inquiry, but go on to devote their traditional interest to sociology-based theoretical studies.

Germany also has a mixed system with regard both to financing and organisation. As regards finance in this case one has to pay attention to the balance between governmental promotion (offered by the Federal Government and by the governments of the *Laender*) and public or private sponsoring again (German Research Council, Volkswagen Foundation, Robert Bosch Foundation, etc.). The organisational pattern points to the university institutes, on the one hand, and to governmental institutes mostly run by the *Laender* on the other hand (the Federal Institute of Vocational Research in Berlin excepted). Between both wings, non-governmental institutes are placed; although directly or entirely financed by Federal or/and *Laender* budgets, they are autonomous in determining their research programmes. Among this group one has, above all, to mention the Max-Planck Institute for Human Development and Education in Berlin and the German Institute for International Educational Research in Frankfurt am Main (with its recently attached branch in the Eastern part of Berlin).

Finance and organisation in the former Soviet Union and her 'socialist satellites' has been recently involved in radical changes. Up to the end of the 1980s educational research had been monopolised by the State authorities and centred in dominant institutions. The highest degree of centralisation was established in the Soviet Union and the GDR with their Academies of Pedagogic Sciences which, beside being equipped with their own institutes and laboratories, acted as steering and co-ordinating centres of educational research in their countries; the latter function included educational research activities at the universities which, however, were of comparatively minor importance. Besides, there were some institutes directly maintained by ministries, among which the Research Institutes of Higher Educational Research in Moscow, Warsaw and East Berlin gained some international reputation. The recent re-organisation of educational research in the former 'socialist East', mainly aimed at decentralising the monopolising institutions and (re-)allocating research functions to universities, is still entirely open and far from consolidation. This appraisal includes the recently established Russian Academy of Education which has replaced the former Academy of Pedagogic Sciences of the USSR.

This section has been focussed on a few examples which, in a complete survey, would need, of course, to be extended with regard to national educational research

patterns and to organisational clarification. Nevertheless, the rough division into university institutes, governmental establishments and 'independent' institutes outside the universities, indicates the line of orientation to which national patterns can be allocated, to a greater or lesser degree, in each individual case.

#### 4. Typological and Methodological Issues

In traditional classifications one finds the distinction derived from the classical pattern of natural sciences; namely, the distinction between fundamental (basic) and applied research. In the 1960s, this adaptation was refined with regard to the special sociopolitical task of educational research. American educationists (L. J. Cronbach, M. Scriven, R. E. Stake and others) proposed the distinction between 'conclusion-oriented research' and 'decision-oriented research', thereby emphasising the relationship between educational research and educational practice.

In the meantime, doubts have been raised against any rigid differentiation which has not been maintained in the area of natural sciences. In educational research, any rigidity does not give sense, the more so, as experience has shown, how far 'fundamental' theories, such as performance, child-centredness, socialisation, etc., reach far into the area of 'application', whereas approaches explicitly devoted to application end up in fundamental concerns which can be testified by various approaches dealing with the interrelationship between children and their environment.

Another duality is posed by the relation between Research and Development. Looking at the international scene, 'development' has played a significant role as counterpart of 'research' in school-oriented inquiries in the USA since the end of the 1950s. Educational research has been widely occupied by 'R and D' programmes at different levels of decision-making. In Sweden this type of educational research was installed as the dominant means of educational policy over more than 20 years (since 1962). German educationists tend to reserve the term 'development' to the implementation of research outcomes. e.g. constructing syllabi and providing teaching and learning materials. However, the borderline to be drawn between 'applied research' and 'development' in international comparison is more pragmatic than systematic in a rigid sense.

Finally, the classification has a tremendous impact on the relation between research and practice in education, in that the question is posed to which extent practice should be included in research, and vice versa. While in 'classical' patterns there is a strict division of labour between the two areas of human activities, there have been various and continuous efforts to integrate both by means of 'action research' or, as is it sometimes called, 'practice research'. All these efforts have been remarkable and, above all, stimulating in view of their bringing theorists and practitioners together and of offering opportunities of exchanging experiences and ideas and, therefore, encouraging pilot projects at various school stages and in various curricular fields. On the other hand, the breakdown of borderlines has raised a good number of questions concerning the validity and reliability of research findings. It is this very question which makes us return from the typological to the methodological aspect of classifying research, whereby I can make reference to the preceding section of this paper and apply a summarising approach.

Here it seems appropriate to start with the former Soviet Union and the 'socialist' countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In those countries educational research had

been allocated to the official Marxist–Leninist ideology which had always shaped educational research as a normative activity. It should be, however, respected in this context that, though within the ideological framework, there has been a certain increase of empiric research especially in Poland and Hungary. On the other hand Marxist thinking had remarkable impacts on educational research in Western countries, though more through the ‘critical theory’ of the Frankfurt School than through the Marxist–Leninist doctrinairism.

In Western countries there was a distinct predominance of empiric-analytical research during the 1960s and 1970s, based on statistical data and quantitative evidence; needless to emphasise that with regard to the approaches to the data one can distinguish between primary inquiries and secondary analyses. It is not surprising that the climax of quantitative inquiries coincided and was promoted by the policies of the large-scale educational reforms of that period. Empiric-analytical research had its grand era in Sweden and the UK, accompanied by comparable efforts in other countries, particularly in the Northern region of Western Europe. In this context special attention should be paid to the first IEA projects with their inquiries into educational achievement on the base of assessments in mathematics, foreign languages and sciences.

The German ‘special case’, characterised by the aforementioned three-column pattern should be mentioned here, because its third column which was directly influenced by the ‘critical theory’ has expanded its effects far beyond Western Germany, with focal radiations to the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries. Moreover it has made an alignment with ‘action research’, whose other root, however, can be found in the pragmatism of teachers and researchers aiming at strategies of learning by doing.

Surveying the West European scene as a whole and recalling my previous remarks about the German development, one can observe that there has been a significant trend towards a reconciliation and even amalgamation of the three methodological approaches through definitely diversified from country to country. Heinrich Roth, in this context, spoke of an “integrative pluralism” (Roth, 1976, p. 152) to be centred upon a ‘new’ empiricism which coincides with a reveal of historical, hermeneutic and holistic (phenomenological) approaches and procedures and trends to enrich the former exclusively dominating quantifying methods with qualitative activities. In this new approach participatory observations, portfolio techniques, open interviews and ‘ethnographic’ evaluations play an essential role. This new empiricism may also exert innovatory effects on ‘action research’ which has always been in danger of underestimating the need for statistical data and quantifying evaluation in favour of pure action-oriented innovation.

## 5. Impact of Educational Research on Decision-Making

In this section we are confronted with how the historical dimensions are related to ‘impact’. Let me begin by rendering a talk Torsten Husén had with the former German Federal Minister of Education and Science, Hans Leussink, during a flight between Madrid and Bonn in the mid-1970s: “He apparently expected educational research to follow the example of metallurgy with a straight-forward improvement of the production process and bitterly aired his misgivings about the dismal outcomes of all the resources given to educational researchers” (Husén, 1984, pp. 22–23). This episode is worth remembering, all the more so as the ‘*Bildungsbericht 70*’ of the Federal German Government issued under Leussink’s responsibility contains this appraisal: “The causes



behind the failings of the present educational system and the consequences of new structures and contents can be identified and analysed only by scientific research. Thereby educational research becomes an essential prerequisite for educational reform" (Husén, 1984, p. 23).

To reinforce this picture indicating the tension between expectation and disappointment I want to transmit another quotation consisting of a statement made by the former Australian Minister of Education, J. L. Carrick: Carrick quotes (the American evaluation researcher) Gene Glass as saying that there is far more knowledge stored in the nervous system of ten excellent teachers of how to manage and promote classroom learning than an "average teacher can distil from all the educational research journals in existence" (cited from Husén, 1984, pp. 12–13).

At this point we become aware of a research gap, caused in general by the low standard of research dealing with its own effects. It is evident that education inside and outside schools undergoes change, and it seems to be incontestable that educational research plays its part in this process, and that not necessarily for the benefit of those who need advice and support. As a recent example one can refer to how the findings by the British test researcher Cyril Burt have been refuted. He had dominated the 11 + examination for several decades with his intelligence test! This case is more than delicate, insofar as it deals with a research area under comparatively strict control. What can we expect of possibilities to measure the effects of complex educational and learning processes, taken into special education their long-term character?

This issue concerning the core of the interrelationship between educational research, on the one hand, and educational politics and practice, on the other, has attracted the interest of researchers in various social sciences. Let me exemplify this kind of research by calling your attention to the observation presented by Carol H. Weiss. She is one of the prominent American experts working on the 'impact issue' in the decision theory with regard to social sciences in general. According to her judgement her findings are directly applicable to educational research (Weiss, 1982; cf. Husén, 1984, pp. 14–18). She argues that educational research can influence political decision-making only in an indirect way by the researchers getting informal access to policy-makers. Therefore, she adds, educational researchers should not try to make themselves understandable in a popularised form, but, instead, focus on developing and improving their standards. In her model, the 'impact issue' is conceived as a kind of side-effect. It is not surprising that Carol Weiss's observations and, above all, their conclusions have raised counter-arguments in favour of the necessity to discuss the 'direct' equivalent.

It is this 'direct' impact that we may touch on in this context, and that with respect to the relations between politicians and researchers. Generally speaking one can discover fundamental distinctions between countries with centralised and decentralised administrations. In the Anglo-Saxon countries educational research has been, traditionally and at least from a formal point of view, more liberal than in countries with centralised traditions and mechanisms, as was the case in the former socialist countries, but can also be noticed in France, southern Europe and, to a certain extent, in Germany (in whose federal system the *Laender* administrations practice centralisation within their own territories). However, there is, though irrespective of the individual political structure, a Europe-wide ambivalent trend, directed, on the one hand, towards greater influence exercised by governmental agencies (even in the traditionally liberal UK) and, on the other hand, towards growing openness with regard to regional and local access to outcomes of educational inquiries.

At this moment it seems that the first stream is still stronger, having negative impacts on 'free research' taking place in universities and non-governmental research institutions, as regards budgets and access to the 'field' for researchers who are not commissioned by governmental agencies. The state of evaluation research (*Begleitforschung*) and of research into teacher education can be demonstrated as two striking examples to prove this assumption.

## 6. Conclusion

The oil crisis of 1973 and the subsequent first economic recession brought the period of large-scale reforms to an end. The second recession at the end of the 1970s reinforced the retreat from educational reforms and gave way to a predominating search for what conservatives (to be found on all sides of the political spectrum!) have called 'consolidation' and 'stability'. The global and universal crisis determining humankind's march towards the 21st century has up to now rather stabilised this trend than (re-)awakened the need for substantial reform. It goes without saying that the former socialist countries are most heavily affected by the consequences of the socioeconomic, political and cultural turbulences on education and, in particular, on educational research. Compared to their colleagues in that region, educational researchers in the Western half of Europe enjoy many privileges.

Although the picture is, of course, not homogeneous and gives access to regional as well as to sectoral initiatives, the present situation seems to be characterised by the following focal symptoms.

- (1) Money has become scarce, though one has to admit that in a good number of West European countries the picture is not so dark as some pessimistic educationists will paint it.
- (2) Economists themselves have become doubtful of their predictive models, particularly concerning long-term predictions.
- (3) There has been a disillusion concerning the progress of pluridisciplinarity, apart from the belief in 'interdisciplinarity' in educational research which has maintained its value as a goal to be looked for, but is difficult to realise in the research process. Therefore, this reduction in expectation does not mean the death of pluridisciplinarity at all, but only points to its continuation on a 'lower' line.

What may be called a more serious obstacle than those mentioned just now, is the linkage of economic austerity with the widespread disappointment concerning the possibilities of research to support educational policy and to improve educational practice.

Generally speaking, there is some evidence of the assumption that, in recent years, educational research has had considerable impact on the micro-level, represented, e.g. by teaching methods, achievement testing and curriculum development within clearly demarcated boundaries. The scope of influence at this level is, however, inversely proportional to the teacher's decision-making in concrete situations which requires the integration of judgement and spontaneity. The picture becomes even vaguer with regard to the macro-level, characterised by the direct interrelationship between policy-making and educational research.

In this respect, Carol Weiss's inquiries are worth studying thoroughly. This experience is discouraging which may drive the educationist to resignation. Without denying the challenge to look for the areas and situations which foster the transfer of research

findings to decision-making, one should realise the fundamental differences characterising the professional task of politicians and researchers. The researcher's main interest is rooted in the epistemological sphere and necessarily collides with the politician's attitudes which are focussed on the task of managing and improving schools or other educational institutions. But must the collision of interests be accepted as a dilemma there is no way out of? Since there is no need to submit to resignation, the question is posed concerning the conclusions to be drawn from the blurred picture.

First, in view of the relationship between educationists and policy-makers it seems to be clear that both kinds of activities have their own dignities and priorities which trace back to specific functions in modern societies. As in other areas, one has to acknowledge the division of labour which necessitates this specification. The field, therefore, should not be left to utopian ideas of all-round experts; in practice this might quickly lead to a preponderance of all-round dilettantes. Emphasising this thought, let us make a plea for the irreplaceable function of educational research as an advisory agent for decision-making by laying stress on these two functions:

- analysing educational facts, trends and problems of political concern, and
- contributing to the construction of 'middle-scope theories', the position of which is to be fixed between limited-purpose appraisals which is the explicit task of 'development', and philosophical systems of universal range.

Second, acknowledging specific functions does not mean that the fundamental divergency of interests and objectives should not be compensated by a convergent relationship in the realisation of the common task to promote the improvement of the educational practice from the political decision-making level to the everyday teaching and learning process, emphasising that the chances to influence classroom practice are much greater than those to steer educational policy. The history of educational research gives considerable evidence of the service it can offer to educational politics, unless it overestimates its scope of impact. It is up to the policy-makers to use the services offered to them to a greater extent than has been done so far.

Third, any cooperation can only be useful if it is based upon the mutual acknowledgement of the specific value and dignity of the partner's task including the irreconcilable nucleus of the relationship. The politician must respect the researcher's epistemological orientation and be ready to sponsor fundamental studies without which inquiries on the applied level will not progress in scope and quality. On the other hand, the researcher should do his best in presenting his findings in a form which precludes misinterpretations as far as possible. He should not try, however, to interfere with the politicians' business without articulating his crossing the Rubicon from his professional field to an area which it is only legitimate for him to speak and act on as an, admittedly, well-informed citizen. This articulation attracts little attention which leads to the irritating assumption that the researcher speaks as researcher, while he is only giving his comment as an educated citizen which he is, of course, entitled to do.

It seems evident that the state of the arts is far from being promising. On the other hand, it liberates educational research from the 'great' expectations and opens a way for international patterns, methodological approaches and the tension between chance and limit. International cooperation can essentially contribute to this 're-consideration' process.

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