

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240552447>

Paradigms of Socioeducational Research in Latin America

Article in *Comparative Education Review* · November 1987

DOI: 10.1086/446714

CITATIONS

15

READS

90

1 author:



[Juan Carlos Tedesco](#)

National University of General San Martín

106 PUBLICATIONS 1,981 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



Paradigms of Socioeducational Research in Latin America

Juan Carlos Tedesco

Comparative Education Review, Vol. 31, No. 4. (Nov., 1987), pp. 509-532.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0010-4086%28198711%2931%3A4%3C509%3APOSRI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-H>

Comparative Education Review is currently published by The University of Chicago Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ucpress.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Paradigms of Socioeducational Research in Latin America

JUAN CARLOS TEDESCO

Introduction

Before initiating a current analysis of the problems posed by socioeducational research, some general aspects should be considered. On the one hand, it may be affirmed that the theoretical paradigms presented over the past decades are showing clear signs of obsolescence. Should this be the case, educational theory would be faced with a serious crisis, since the most significant or peculiar aspects of contemporary educational reality would be beyond the explicative power of present theories.

Another element (which complements the first) in the starting point of this reflection is the limited capacity of current paradigms to direct and produce actions aimed at changing the situation proposed by theory. In other words, the paradigms of educational theory represent a serious problem of efficacy in devising strategies to guide the decisions of the different participants involved in education (the government, different social sectors, teachers, students, etc.).

There is a consensus in today's literature concerning (i) the need to restate theoretical paradigms, and (ii) the weak influence that research findings exert on systematic educational practice.¹ This situation seems to be particularly evident in global educational theories.

On the other hand, certain paradigms (learning theories, explanation of phenomena such as school failure, and effectiveness of certain methodologies) have shown their consistency at more specific levels. In this respect, one of the most complex aspects of this problem stems from the coexistence of two different levels of analysis that have become significantly dissociated: education as a social phenomenon and a subject of social policies on the one hand and education as an individual phenomenon and a learning activity on the other.

The author is responsible for the selection and presentation of the facts contained in this publication as well as for the opinions expressed in it, which are not necessarily those of Unesco and do not commit the organization. The document was originally prepared for the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada.

¹ Guiomar Namó de Mello, "A pesquisa Educacional no Brasil," *Cadernos de pesquisa* (São Paulo: Fundação Carlos Chagas), no. 46 (August 1983), pp. 67–72; Joseph Novack, *Teoría y práctica de la educación* (Madrid: Alianza, 1982); *Colloque international: Recherche et pratique en éducation: Comment renforcer les liens entre la recherche et la pratique en vue de l'amélioration de l'enseignement général*, ED-81/Conf. 816.2 (Paris: Unesco, 1981).

Comparative Education Review, vol. 31, no. 4.

© 1987 by the Comparative and International Education Society. All rights reserved.
0010-4086/87/3104-0002\$01.00

The dissociation of the social and individual levels of analysis is generally expressed by the fact that paradigms devised to explain education as a social phenomenon have underestimated the problem of the specificity of the learning process (included in categories such as socialization, indoctrination or ideological imposition, and acculturation), while those devised to explain the learning phenomenon have not been able to give a consistent explanation of learning as a social process carried out within a political institutional system.² To a certain extent, each paradigm has tried to overcome this dissociation and even to negate its relevance. Nevertheless, this dissociation is an undeniable fact, and it leads to similarly disconnected analyses.

Theoretical restatement of and skepticism concerning the social significance of educational research obviously do not imply that there are no problems demanding research or that there is a weakening in the capacity of educational researchers. There is a significant and substantial lack of knowledge and research activity even when limited resources, institutional problems, and all the elements commonly found in the diagnosis of the educational research situation are taken into account.

The lack of fruitful paradigms, however, results in a high degree of atomization of effort and in a low capacity for accumulating produced knowledge. Thus, results originating within the framework of known paradigms do not add significant innovative elements to existing knowledge, and the results (or problems) that do not form part of these paradigms become isolated and lack a coherent theoretical structure.³

Obviously, the lack or production of scientific paradigms is not an individual problem, nor is it subject to the will of scientists. Knowledge is generated socially, and educational knowledge is not exempt from the same rule.

The Paradigms of Socioeducational Research and Their Present Relevance in Latin America

There is a relatively wide consensus that the development of socioeducational research was framed in three broad paradigms, each of which dominated different historical stages: the paradigm of liberal educational theory, the economic paradigm (human capital, human resources), and the paradigm of the critical reproductive approaches.

In the context of the liberal paradigm, the basic educational problems were the contribution of formal and systematic educational practice to the consolidation of national government and the establishment of a liberal-democratic political order. That contribution was evidenced through the homogeneity of the population in terms of a basic set of common

² P. Bourdieu and J. C. Passeron, *La reproducción* (Barcelona: Laia, 1971); Novack.

³ T. J. Kuhn, *La estructura de las revoluciones científicas* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1980).

values and codes, with individual variations depending on the place occupied in the social structure (leader or follower, owner of production or producer, etc.). It seems irrelevant to repeat the characteristics of this paradigm since they have been subject to much previous analysis.⁴

What was peculiar, however, was the fact that didactic-pedagogical research was strongly emphasized. The problem of the social function of education and the most appropriate ways to achieve its goals was subject to a political rather than a scientific debate. From a scientific perspective, the problem lay in *how* to achieve these goals, and the educational discussions basically revolved around the pedagogical model and the teaching methods. The more directive versions of this trend generated a series of studies on the learning process and didactic methods, all inspired by positivism, while the nondirective trends produced the "New School" movement with its respective methodological proposals.⁵

By mid-century, and in the framework of postwar reconstruction, the liberal paradigm had run its course. The experiences of European antiliberal authoritarianism produced a serious debate over the enlightened conviction that quantitative expansion in education was the guarantee for a liberal democratic order. From a more pedagogical point of view, the debate between the so-called traditional pedagogy and the so-called new pedagogy had produced a strong separation of theory and reality. The New School proposals had a strong effect on traditional practices, but the alternatives suggested were never more than microexperiences, the majority of which were elitist, and they were unable to change current educational practices.

Moreover, the traditional liberal approach lacked the conceptual elements needed for the development of adequate responses to new requirements and challenges posed by the reconstruction process and economic expansion. Although caused by different factors, this demand was shared by both capitalist developed countries and Latin American countries. It is common knowledge that, in this case, the conditions imposed by the Second World War and later by the postwar period were the framework for the industrialization process by import substitution and later for industrialization through the establishment of multinational enterprises.

Furthermore, the above points should be understood in a context in which the liberal paradigm had a special relevance. Only in a few countries (Argentina, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and, partly, Chile) did this theory actually become incorporated into the educational system. In the rest of the region, the liberal paradigm served only as rhetoric that, at best, was expressed in legal texts never applied in practice. In this respect, educational liberalism

⁴ G. Suyders, *Pedagogia progressiste* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973); Demerval Saviani, *Escola e democracia* (São Paulo: Cortez, 1983); Juan Carlos Tedesco, "Elementos para un diagnóstico del sistema educativo tradicional en América Latina," in *El sistema educativo en América Latina*, ed. R. Nassif, G. Rama, and Juan Carlos Tedesco (Buenos Aires: Kapelusz, 1984).

⁵ Juan Carlos Tedesco, "Directivismo y espontaneismo en los orígenes del sistema educativo argentino," *Punto de vista* (Buenos Aires) 6, no. 19 (December 1983): 17–26.

shared the same characteristics as those of liberalism in general. Francisco Weffort clearly explained this process when asserting that, in the framework of dependent social structures, liberalism was adopted only as a formula to allow a more fluent dialogue with capitalist developed countries (for free commerce, etc.) but not as an internal policy guideline. Social relationships continued to be controlled by authoritarian models typical of precapitalist production.⁶

The liberal paradigm was replaced by a new theoretical paradigm that was in keeping with the main aspects of liberalism but that placed the link between education and society in economic development. The education-of-the-citizen metaphor was replaced by the training-of-human-resources metaphor, and educational action was the object of a planning process with the same resource allocation criteria used in economic and productive activities.⁷

For economic approaches, the human-capital theory offered a solid base to a new research program, the influence and development of which were highly significant. Differences in individual income were the main issue. According to the human-capital interpretation, these differences were the expression of different productivity levels that, in turn, were based on numbers of years of schooling. On the basis of this premise, various studies on education, income distribution, labor markets, and financing were carried out, making economy of education a hegemonic discipline within the group of so-called sciences of education.⁸

In addition to creating its own concepts, this new paradigm produced a criticism of the liberal scheme that basically emphasized the existing separation between social requirements (understood as requirements of the productive apparatus) and the educational response. Among the main elements of the liberal theory criticized by the economic paradigm were the anachronism of its content and the prevalence of traditional values that were inoperative in the process of social modernization.⁹ The criticism

⁶ Francisco Weffort, "Clases populares y desarrollo social," *Revista Paraguaya de sociología* (Asunción, Centro Paraguayo de Estudios Sociológicos), no. 13 (December 1968), pp. 62–150.

⁷ M. Blaug, *An Introduction to the Economics of Education* (London: Penguin, 1970), and "The Empirical States of Human Capital Theory: A Slightly Jaundiced Survey," *Journal of Economic Literature* 14, no. 3 (1976): 827–55; Ricardo Carciofi, "Educación y aparato productivo en la Argentina 1976–1982," in *El proyecto educativo autoritario Argentina 1976–1982*, ed. Juan Carlos Tedesco, Cecilia Braslawsky, and Ricardo Carciofi (Buenos Aires: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, 1983), pp. 175–223.

⁸ M. Carnoy, "Rates or Return to Schooling in Latin America," *Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1967); H. Habegger and M. Selowsky, *Key Factors in the Economic Growth of Chile* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1966); M. Urrutia Montoya, "Distribución de la educación y distribución del ingreso en Colombia," *Revista del centro de estudios educativos* (México), no. 1 (1972), pp. 32–59; J. Lobo, "Educación y distribución del ingreso en Venezuela," *Revista del centro de estudios educativos* (México), no. 1 (1972), pp. 9–31; Ricardo Carciofi, *Acerca del debate sobre educación y empleo en América Latina* (Buenos Aires-Proyecto: Desarrollo y Educación en América Latina y el Caribe, 1980).

⁹ S. Lipset and Aldo Solari, *Elites y desarrollo en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1967). See also, Comisión Económica para América Latina, *Educación, recursos humanos y desarrollo en América Latina* (New York: United Nations, 1968).

received general acceptance inasmuch as its final outcome confirmed the need to foster educational development.¹⁰ On the pedagogical level, the economic paradigm gave place to two different approaches. Research on the educational contribution to economic growth was conducted under the assumption that, since the educational process is mysterious, research need not be concerned with content. Nevertheless, the adoption of planning models, which emphasized higher productivity levels in all social actions starting from the rational use of resources, prevailed in the framework of pedagogical research.

In the 1970s, and concomitantly with the world economic recession, the most important postulates of the paradigm became the target of systematic criticism. On the one hand, empirical research on the contribution of education to development showed no categorical confirmation of the model.¹¹ On the other hand, planning could not prove its effectiveness as a global educational policy-guiding instrument, for social demands and political dynamics altered the logic of supposedly rational plans. In addition, technical pedagogy was questioned by new learning paradigms that emphasized the importance of affective aspects and the participation of the agents of the learning process in the definition of the parameters of educational activity.

This argument gave rise to new paradigms, defined as critical theories, that emphasized the reproductive nature of pedagogical policies. These analyses of the different versions of the reproductive paradigm are more recent and thus less generally accepted. However, there are already some critical elements that could be pointed out as having a certain validity.

a) The emphasis on the reproductive nature of the educational system with regard to the structure of the labor force cannot adequately explain the significant expansion in education over the past decades, nor can it explain the increasing phenomena of underutilization of capacities and of the devaluation of the number of years of study in the labor market. In short, this paradigm loses sight of the fact that the innovation of recent years has been precisely the modification of the traditional role of the educational system as the legitimizing element of labor-force differentiation.

As stated in a previous paper, the differences between dynamism of educational expansion and rigidity in the creation of jobs produces a growing homogenizing phenomenon in labor demand, which, in turn, forces the market itself to develop differentiating mechanisms relatively independent of the educational variable.¹² There are many examples of

¹⁰ Aldo Solari, "Desarrollo y política educacional en América Latina," *Revista de la CEPAL* (Santiago), no. 3 (January–June 1977), pp. 61–94.

¹¹ K. Lewin, A. Little, and C. Colclough, "The Effects of Education on Development Objectives," *Prospects* (Paris) 13, nos. 3–4 (1983): 299–311.

¹² Juan Carlos Tedesco, "El reproductivismo educativo y los sectores populares en América Latina," *Revista colombiana de educación* (Bogotá), no. 11 (January–June 1983): 49–73. See also

this kind, one of the most representative being the growing homogeneity of the educational situation of men and women, blacks and whites, and others, which has not yet been able to eliminate discrimination. However, it occurs at present in the job market without the legitimacy once offered by educational differentiation. On a more specific level, studies of the behavior of employers using education as a recruitment criterion show that, even though schooling is requested as background information, it is not processed by the agencies, for supply highly exceeds this demand.¹³

b) Reproduction theories cannot adequately explain the conflict and the social struggle over educational distribution. In this paradigm, the dynamic social agent is formed by the dominant sectors, and the results of the struggle are always seen as successful from the point of view of the reproduction of the social order. In this sense, the reproductive approach has been considered hyperfunctionalist in spite of its being an alternative to paradigm *a* above.

c) The reproductive approaches tend to submerge pedagogic practice in the framework of the prevailing social relation model. According to this hypothesis, which some call the "correspondence principle," the teacher is associated with the dominant sectors, content is considered as pure ideology, and students are exploited. Because of this, the learning-teaching process loses its specificity, giving rise to a series of acute problems in the extrapolation of theoretical categories from one level of analysis to another.

This brief synthesis of the evolution of educational research paradigms enables us to point out some of the most relevant aspects of its influence on the practice of research in Latin America. In the first place, it is clear that the evolution recorded in Latin America has followed the vicissitudes of theoretical evolution of capitalist developed countries, especially those of the United States and France and, to a lesser degree, those of Britain and Germany. The problem of the transfer of theories from the center to the periphery has been much analyzed in the framework of subordination, colonialism, and transnationalism.¹⁴

In addition to the argument on the concrete ways and means through which this theoretical transfer operates (e.g., scholarships and subsidies), the main issue to note is that, in capitalist developed countries, the evolution

M. Carnoy, "The Political Economy of Education," *International Social Science Journal* 37, no. 2 (1985): 157-73.

¹³ María Ibarrola, "Estructura de Producción, Mercado de Trabajo y Escolaridad en México," *Cuadernos de investigación educativa* (México, Departamento de Investigaciones Educativas) no. 14 (1983); Miguel Brooke, "Actitudes de los empleadores mexicanos respecto a la educación: ¿Un test de la teoría del capital humano?" *Revista del centro de estudios educativos* (México) 8, no. 4 (1978): 109-31.

¹⁴ Carmen García Guadilla, *Production et transfert théorique dans la recherche éducative* (Paris: Université de Paris, 1983).

of these paradigms was associated from the educational point of view with the evolution of the actual problems faced by societies. Thus, for example, the liberal paradigm originated within the framework of the consolidation of the nation-state and was replaced when the population was effectively brought to the minimum educational level at which it could be integrated into the society as citizenry. Likewise, the economic paradigm that originated from postwar reconstruction requirements and the accelerated technological transformation was replaced when the need for a qualified labor force was satisfied at all levels because of educational expansion. At present, to a great extent, reproduction responds to the stagnation process and the strong structural rigidity that characterizes advanced capitalist countries, especially those in Europe. It is exhausting its theoretical possibilities because of the fact that advanced capitalist societies cannot define a relevant social function for a massive social system. What seems to be characteristic of this period is a sort of vacuum in the educational system's capacity to fulfill some of the functions traditionally assigned to it, such as the guarantee of democracy, economic growth, and reproduction of the social order. On the other hand, technical-scientific changes and their effect on work division exhaust the explanatory capacity of reproduction faced with the changes foreseen in advanced capitalist societies.

By contrast, in Latin America, the paradigms have evolved with a high level of dissociation in regard to social reality. The actual problems of education in Latin America are analyzed in greater detail later in this paper, but it should be stressed at this point that, in most of the region, the liberal paradigm arose within the framework of the process of conformation of the nation-state, but it was left behind when the basic planning goals had not yet been fulfilled at the educational or the political level.

Similarly, the economic paradigm originated at the same time as the modernization and substitutional industrialization process. This proposal lost most of its original significance. For independent economies and societies with high levels of social exclusion, qualified human resources are subject to abrupt introductions of foreign technological innovations. In certain sectors, this creates a serious imbalance of supply and demand in satisfying basic needs, compared to a more balanced endogenous development process in other sectors.

Last, notwithstanding, in Latin America the maintenance of the capitalist social order over these last decades has resulted in a period of significant quantitative expansion of education and structural transformation of no less importance. Examples are a growing organization and increasing poverty, tertiarization of the economy, and recurrent political crises because of the impossibility of achieving a new hegemonic order. In this context, the reproductive paradigm, which was a response to issues arising from

situations of strong structural as well as ideological stability, could not adequately respond to all these transformations.

In other words, the evolution of these theoretical paradigms in Latin America has been a truly "theoretical" evolution, unlinked to the real problem. In this respect, it is important to mention that dependency theory was the most important endogenous theoretical attempt carried out in Latin America. However, it is evident that this theoretical paradigm was much less significant in the educational and cultural fields than in the socioeconomic field. The imposition of external educational models was the privileged topic of analysis of this paradigm, and that is where its most important contributions lay. Nevertheless, at more specific analytical levels, dependency theory (or its representatives) has appealed to some of the reproductive hypotheses, especially with regard to the authoritarian character of the pedagogical ties and the ideological character of school contents.

Exclusion and poverty give rise to important segments of labor where salary is no longer a means of payment. In modern sectors, salaries are determined basically by institutional factors, and profit rates are associated with monopolistic structures of productivity.¹⁵ In this respect, it should be borne in mind that dependency theory was current at the same time that the pedagogical ideas of Paulo Freire and the French reproductive proposals fostered by Bourdieu, Passeron, Baudelot, Establet, and others were being diffused. Although the theoretical link between proposals is not direct, the theoretical gap shown by dependency theory from the educational point of view was covered by the proposals of authors such as those mentioned above. This appeal has a certain logic, especially if we consider that dependency theory insisted on the problems of the ties of domination. This emphasis (pointed out at the level of international economic relations) could be easily transferred to social and educational relations. Cultural imposition, symbolic violence, and the ideas that characterized reproductive pedagogical actions were the theoretical equivalent of the ideas by which dependency theory characterized international social relations.

Examples of this theoretical momentum are found in some of the works of Thomas Vasconi, published in the late 1960s to early 1970s. Although, at a later stage, his work underwent some important modifications, Vasconi was one of the most prominent representatives of a theoretical trend that joined elements of dependency theory, Althusserian Marxism, and reproductive proposals of authors such as Bourdieu, Passeron,

¹⁵ Ricardo Carciofi, *Heterogeneidad, técnica, diferenciales de salario y educación* (Buenos Aires: Unesco/ Comisión Económica para América Latina [CEPAL]/Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo [PNUD], 1978).

Baudelot, and Establet in order to explain the links between macrosocial levels and scholastic pedagogical practice.¹⁶

The above analysis shows how the different educational research paradigms worked out diagnoses that gave certain problems priority, while others were underestimated; likewise, research carried out in the framework of each paradigm attempted to solve these problems, at least in theory. However, the truth is that a global overview of today's situation would show a sort of vicious circle, according to which there is consensus in the recognition of the need to integrate all the knowledge and contributions of present research in a new paradigm. However, a new paradigm is needed to perform this task, one that is capable of setting the parameters to effect a balance, selecting the important issues, and pointing out new problems or the most significant shortcomings from the point of view of knowledge. Obviously, the design of a new paradigm is not a problem that can be solved without the conscious effort of the Latin American scientific community. In this respect, it is possible to indicate at least the basic postulates that stand as the foundations of this new paradigm, postulates that should necessarily be discussed.

Latin American Educational Problems and Their Theoretical Challenges

The task of making an exhaustive diagnosis of the educational problems of Latin America exceeds the limits and goals of this paper. However, the main issues that would help to define the challenges that a theoretical paradigm should face and solve should be mentioned.

Quantitative Expansion and the Problem of Marginal Groups

All diagnoses of the Latin American educational situation recognize the significant quantitative expansion of school education in the past 3 decades. Nevertheless, they also coincide in pointing out that this expansion has not solved the basic problems of homogeneity of the populations' educational situation (there are still high rates of illiteracy and school failure in the first grades), and it has failed to foster a more egalitarian distribution of educational services (while the poorer sectors reached an insufficient incorporation level in the first few years of basic education, the middle and high sectors reached a significantly larger incorporation level).

This dynamism in educational expansion has created a situation in which Latin American countries must simultaneously face the problem of fulfilling compulsory school goals and the problem of the expansion of the higher and middle levels. Although the situation is not homogeneous,

¹⁶ Tomás Vasconi, "Contra la escuela," *Revista de ciencias de la educación* (Buenos Aires), no. 9 (1973), pp. 3–22.

in Latin America, the peculiarity lies in a relatively high educational polarization level, which means that a large group is excluded from access to the most elemental cultural codes (e.g., language and mathematics), but there is also a relatively large number of individuals who have managed to be included in a prolonged educational career.

Educational polarization thus places theory (and obviously policy) in a highly complex situation. The debates on universal basic education belong to the nineteenth century and have not recently undergone substantial changes. At the same time, secondary and higher education expansion poses the need to face and solve modern problems such as content anachronism and unemployment.

However, the meaning of this problem is significantly altered when seen in the framework of a situation characterized by a relatively high level of social and educational polarization. Today's basic problem in education is not like that of the nineteenth century because an important sector of the current population is at the summit of the educational system. The condition of illiteracy in a social context in which it is assumed the situation does not exist and in which a high percentage of the population is literate is quite different from the condition of illiteracy in a context in which only a minority is literate and in which society has adjusted to that social characteristic.

Likewise, problems of the expansion of the higher levels of education to those in capitalist countries in which a significant part of the population is not excluded from the knowledge of basic codes. In this respect, Latin America is peculiar in that, although we can find the elements that define the problem (such as content anachronism and working market devaluation), access to secondary and higher levels still plays a strong discriminatory role for those not participating in the system.

The problems that educational theory and research must face are obviously enormous. Recent diagnosis of the educational situation of the region shows that today's access to basic education, although deficient, precarious, and limited, is a reality for the population at large. Accordingly, from the educational point of view, the problem lies in the pedagogical models used to turn the theoretical incorporation into a real incorporation. The problem of the social and educational marginal groups is not only a theoretical challenge but is also a social and political one. However, specifically in education the issue is also stated in pedagogical terms, and the question educational research must answer is how children coming from marginal sectors can be taught.

Thanks to the paradigms currently in force, important advances have been made in the diagnosis of the situation and the analysis of the structural and pedagogical aspects that explain this problem. There are relatively precise diagnoses on the extent of school failure and on the set of variables

and elements that influence definitions of the problem.¹⁷ In the framework of some reproductive approaches, the persistence of school failure and exclusion gave rise to some hypotheses on the limited concern for these problems, and, thus, the possibility of finding productive alternatives outside the field of school education was stressed. The basic reasoning was that, if schooling had failed for over a century as the poor sector's educational alternative, then it was necessary to look for options elsewhere.

The situation has not been sufficiently studied from the educational point of view. There are some partial estimates stressing a series of relevant aspects and problems that deserve a more in-depth study, such as the difference in the pressure each social sector brings to bear in order to have their demands met, the characteristics of educational segmentation in the pedagogical aspects, and the difficulty posed by this situation in the consolidation of a democratic sociopolitical order. Furthermore, special attention should be accorded to the problem arising from the composition of both extremes of educational achievement and the existing links between them. This poses questions, such as, To what extent is the accelerated expansion at the higher pole one of the main factors for the persistence of a wide sector of excluded groups? Is it really necessary to slow down development at the peak in order to make possible grass-roots democratization? What types of bridges are possible between both extremes, and what is happening with the existing ones? In the training of basic education teachers, for example, why is that additional years of study have progressively been demanded without a correlative improvement in quality?

The attraction of nonformal schooling options seems to have lost its initial effect. In fact, it is now possible to note the existence of a very strong critical trend toward these derivations of reproduction together with a reevaluation of the need to recognize the role of the school as an institutional agent into which the poorer sectors have to be incorporated.¹⁸

Future perspectives revolve around two main issues. (1) The phase of "easy" school expansion has passed, and an increase of the tension and struggle for access to education is foreseeable, and (2) access has become one of the most critical areas of social integration. To be left out can mean an unmodifiable exclusion, since possession of knowledge—as expressed by legitimation theorists of present-day capitalism—will be the most important instrument for domination and social control in modern societies. In this respect, the proposals preaching nonformal schooling modalities as a political alternative for society, and especially for marginal

¹⁷ Juan Carlos Tedesco, "Modelo Pedagógico y Fracaso Escolar," *Revista de la CEPAL* (Santiago), no. 21 (December 1983), pp. 131–44.

¹⁸ Unesco/Cepal/PNUD, *Proyecto desarrollo y educación en América Latina y el Caribe: Informes finales* (Buenos Aires: Unesco/CEPAL/PNUD, 1981).

sectors, reflect the behavior of certain sectors that, at the beginning of the industrialization period, destroyed machinery in order to avoid its effects on employment.

However, as previously noted, the complexity of the Latin American situation derives from the coexistence of the problems of basic integration and those of middle- and higher-level expansion. To state that the critical aspects of educational action lie solely in the marginal poles of society would only erroneously simplify the present situation. It could be stressed that, while the fulfillment of basic schooling is a historical debt and a political goal, the development of secondary and higher education combines in a different way the political, social, and economic variables, emphasizing the challenges and contradictions the countries of the region must face because of the demands of the social development process.

This issue will be analyzed later. What should be added at this moment is that, in the context of a polarized structure, the terms as well as the forms of expression of the debate on educational democratization are modified. At present, the struggle for access is exercised through expansion both at the elementary school level and at the secondary and higher levels. The traditional situation in which expansion occurred at the base of the system, while a small number of elites moved at the peak, is no longer present. Today there are millions of higher education students, and in some countries one young person out of every four is part of this situation.

The problem of the motivations for the struggle for access is another aspect to consider. Educational paradigms have always included an answer to the question of the social value of education as one of their basic components. Whether as a guarantee of democracy, as a means for increasing economic growth, or as a means for the reproduction of the social order, educational expansion has always been an important motivation. For this reason, the paradigms have tended to explain expansion as a product of the initiatives of the dominant sectors or as a natural product of the market's logic.

To a certain extent, however, the current situation breaks from this theoretical and political tradition. The economic illusion that assured that educational expenditure was a good investment and that financial crisis gives rise to situations in which social expenditure tends to be reduced as far as possible has faded away. In this framework, present discussion of educational paradigms revolves around the crisis that generates a lack of response to the questions on the social value of education and the purpose of expanding it further.

Up to the present, educational paradigms have tended to give responses that ignored the conflict of educational expansion. Although this response does not explain why the past dynamics of expansion have exceeded structural expectations and possibilities, it seems to indicate that it will be

even less appropriate in the future. The perspectives in this regard are based on a sustained increase in the struggle for access to the different educational levels in which each social sector will devise specific strategies that educational theory and research will have to elucidate.

The Technical-Scientific Development Problem

The role of education in the process of economic growth was emphasized by the economic paradigm in its different versions. At present, many of its propositions are not in keeping with reality, especially those establishing direct links between number of years of study, grades, productivity, and income, both at the personal and at the social level.

However, there is an undeniable fact: knowledge, and technical scientific knowledge in particular, is a conclusive means for economic growth as well as for new ways of legitimizing social power. Dependency theory, in turn, showed how this unequal distribution of knowledge grants legitimacy to power relations at the international level.

From this point of view, the importance of technical scientific power for Latin America should not be underestimated. When discussing the types of development that could define the future of the region, the most important issues are the possible alternatives and the most appropriate options. Accordingly, the key question is to define the role of education vis-à-vis social production and distribution of knowledge.

The reply of the economic approach leaned toward a sort of technocratic vision of the problem, according to which knowledge and its distribution were determined by existing requirements of the division of labor. The market rewarded the most valuable knowledge with high salaries, and distribution had to adjust itself to the structures of market demands.

Reproduction made clear the ideological meaning of these statements, but its criticism tended to submerge the content of learning and knowledge in general categories such as "ideology" and "cultural arbitrage." In this respect, it allowed the elucidation of a series of important problems, but, from a contemporary perspective, it blurred the comprehension of equally important problems.

On the basis of a general analysis, it could be noted that quantitative expansion of schooling has been accompanied by a growing deterioration of the capacity to distribute socially important knowledge, a phenomenon in which most diagnoses coincide. On the other hand, deterioration is not homogeneous to the whole system but is basically limited to the schooling circuits of the marginal sectors. From this point of view, internal differentiation is one of the most significant phenomena of the present educational system.

This process is not accidental. Once it is admitted that the legitimacy of knowledge appropriation is one of the most important modern means

of social differentiation, it becomes obvious that a system aimed at distributing knowledge in society will be the object of struggle and transformation in the course of which each social sector will try to obtain as much as possible.

Faced with these dilemmas, the problem of the educational theory in Latin America is to explain the role of education in generating and distributing important social knowledge. In advanced capitalist countries, it is possible to talk about distribution and struggle, or in other words, of problems arising from the ways to translate pedagogically the elements of a basic scientific-technical cultural training, endogenously generated from the evolution of its productive system. However, in Latin America there is need to decide first whether the endogenous promotion of this knowledge or the uncritical acceptance of foreign models will be adopted. Even though we are simplifying the terms of the problem, in Latin America educational policy must satisfy the distribution of knowledge on the one hand and the insufficiency of social agents to generate knowledge on the other.

The revaluation of so-called popular knowledge has been one of the most diffused responses of late. Whether inspired by theoretical lines of Marxist tendencies or by culturalist approaches, one interpretation emphasizes the importance of popular responses to specific vital problems (such as housing, health, and production) and stresses the need to reinstate the legitimate character of this knowledge and its value as appropriate for the conditions of the region.

Undoubtedly, there is popular knowledge generated in the context of the recent social situation that allows for a more global and optimum utilization of certain abundant local resources. Nevertheless, there are clear theoretical and political risks involved. The risk of waiving the appropriation of the present technical-scientific development, thus consolidating the cultural exclusion that characterizes dependence and power links, is an example. In this respect, it is undeniable that the present social and cultural conditions of Latin America are characterized by an important penetration of capitalist norms and products. In this context, the problem can be solved neither by an uncritical adoption nor by traditional isolation. Behind this superficial overview lie all the problems of autonomy and cultural heterogeneity—issues that, from the perspective of the educational research paradigms, rest on the establishment of conceptual categories that will permit the definition of the nature of the contents of learning.

Behavior of the Different Social Actors

One of the most remarkable aspects of the previously described paradigms has been the emphasis given to the analysis of the final products

of educational policy and not to the process used. The trend of both the economic and the reproductive approaches was to design hypotheses that would take into account the effects and the products of education in relation to the social structures as a whole. The current reasoning scheme for these paradigms is to maintain that a social phenomenon is of a specific type because it fulfills this or that social function, hiding the role of the social forces that act on the production of this effect.

This criticism, common to the economic as well as the reproductive approach, was clearly stated recently by J. M. Berthelot. In both cases, the production method of the educational products is unknown. To express it in his own words:

Au discours réformiste proclamant que l'école vise, par la sélection des aptitudes, à offrir à chacun des chances égales de scolarisation, le discours critique répondra que l'école vise en fait, sous couvert d'une sélection des aptitudes, à réaliser une sélection sociale contribuant ainsi à la reproduction de rapports sociaux de domination et d'exploitation. À une finalité apparente sera opposée une finalité réelle, la première n'étant que le masque de la seconde. *Ces deux positions, contradictoires sur le plan politique aussi bien que sur le plan théorique, manifestent une réelle parenté logique. Un schéma de pensée identique les fonde, que cela soit ou non reconnu, que l'on pourrait présenter ainsi: la société globale, à un moment donné, manifeste un certain nombre d'exigences structurelles (besoins de compétences diversifiées pour la thèse réformiste, nécessité de maintenir des rapports sociaux de domination et d'exploitation pour la thèse critique). Ces exigences structurelles, dégagées, interprétées et théorisées par l'instance sociale ayant le pouvoir de décision (Etat, classe dirigeante), engendrent par l'intermédiaire de la politique scolaire l'instrument institutionnel capable d'y répondre. Celui-ci sera donc fondamentalement connu lorsque sa fonction réelle sera ainsi mise en évidence. C'est ce schéma, de pensée qui a recu, dans la tradition sociologique, le nom de fonctionnalisme.*¹⁹

From this perspective, a theoretical alternative to functionalism would imply the recognition of the importance of processes or the role of social forces acting in the definition of the results and products of educational policy. At present, this epistemological turn gains importance precisely because the results of educational actions do not adjust to the predictions of common paradigms. For example, if we relate quantitative expansion

¹⁹ Jean Michel Berthelot, *Le piège scolaire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983). (Emphasis added.) Or, in translation, "In the reformist statement that proclaims that the school should ensure, through the selection of aptitudes, equal educational possibilities for all, the critical response is that, in effect, the school tends, through the selection of aptitudes, to carry out a social selection that contributes to social relations of domination and exploitation. An apparent aim is opposed by a real aim, the former being only a mask of the latter. Both these positions, contradictory in the political and theoretical spheres, are interrelated in a logical manner. They stem from an identical line of thought, although this is not recognized. The society as a whole, at a given moment, demands a certain number of structural needs (diversified competencies for the reformist thesis and the need to maintain social domination and exploitation relations for the critical thesis). These structural demands, which originate from and are interpreted and theorized by the decision-making society (the state and leading class), generate, through school policy, the institutional instrument capable of meeting them."

to the predictions of planned policies on the basis of the adjustment between educational flow and the requirements of the productive apparatus, we will find that the most striking thing is the fact that both quantitative and qualitative expansion has exceeded all predictions. In this same respect, the reproductive hypothesis of the congruity between school level and labor posts totally disregards the growing reality of the devaluation of the number of years of study in the labor market and the transfer of the differentiating mechanisms from education to the market itself.

These final products of educational dynamics cannot be totally explained either by economic logic (grade requirements on behalf of the productive apparatus) or by political logic (ideologic legitimacy of social power). Naturally these determinants have been present and are an important component for explaining the present situation. This, however, is also the result of current tension between the logic of the aforementioned structural determinant factors and the logic of the social factors involved in the process of educational expansion. The poorer sectors as well as the middle and higher sectors brought demands and developed educational strategies (bound to occupy the educational scene in a specific manner) that adapted themselves neither faithfully nor solely to economic or political requirements. At any rate, the issue here is that, although the product is known (and research is basically devoted to the elucidation of the characteristics of this product), there is limited information on the process used to reach that product.

In this respect, some recent contributions have emphasized the importance of the capacity of the different social sectors to exert pressure on the state and the differing capacity of the latter to meet educational as well as other social demands.²⁰ Nevertheless, little is known about the educational strategies of the poorer sectors, the place they occupy in their global strategies of social action, and how they are internally articulated.

In synthesis, it would seem evident that, at the base of a new paradigm of educational theory, there is a need to revalidate the role of the social actor and to consider the educational scene as a form of social conflict and struggle, where each sector behaves in accordance to known strategies. This epistemological turn has direct consequences for research techniques and methods. A good part of the recent debates on alternative educational research paradigms has been devoted to the discussion of techniques. The action-research technique and the qualitative and ethnographic technique were, for example, attempted responses to this problem. Similarly, historic research has offered a significant contribution in this line. In conclusion, to ignore the role of social force processes necessarily implies ignorance

²⁰ Germán Rama, *Introducción a educación y sociedad en América Latina* (Santiago: Unicef, 1980).

of history. This problem shall be taken up at a later stage, when reference is made to the dissociation between theory and practice.

Conditions for Learning

As a whole, the preceding items are geared toward the reappraisal of the importance of learning policies for the educational system, these being understood as a basic component of knowledge appropriation strategies. From this point of view, the most serious challenge faced by educational paradigms is the conquest of the level of the micro- and macropedagogic analysis (with no reductionism or differentiation). The contributions of some culturalist paradigms are very important in this task. Among them we find the verification of the importance of linguistic capital, the difference between the cultural capital of the students and the cultural capital required for school accomplishment as a factor for school failure, the contribution of the "hidden curriculum" and the ethnographic verifications on existing relationships in the classroom, and the considerations originating from the hypothesis of "institutional" pedagogy on factors such as school organization and bureaucratic role should all be taken into consideration and integrated in a coherent manner. On the other hand, learning theories (represented by Piaget and Ausubel) have developed various sets of verifications that should be reexamined.

This is not the time for a detailed analysis of current pedagogical paradigms in Latin America, and other authors have covered the topic exhaustively.²¹ However, to complement the aforementioned analysis, certain important topics for the present discussion should be pointed out.

a) As with the socioeducational paradigms, the evolution of the pedagogical paradigm followed the theoretical development in capitalist countries, especially France and the United States; this transfer also affected theory and its social significance. For example, the traditional paradigm, according to which learning consisted in the development of reason (defined as the capacity common to all) through a process that applied a uniform pattern in which content was given priority and teachers had the central role, had only a partial development in Latin America. The traditional school, which allowed the entire population in capitalistic societies to gain control of basic cultural codes, was only partially effective in the southern part of Latin America and in Costa Rica in contrast to the rest of the region, where primary school was a massive social phenomenon only by mid-century. What was peculiar at that time was the fact that school expansion occurred when, according to the pedagogical theory, the tra-

²¹ Ricardo Nassif, *Las tendencias pedagógicas en América Latina: 1960–1980* (Buenos Aires: Unesco/CEPAL/PNUD, 1980); Saviani (n. 4 above); J. Boutand, *Querelle d'écoles ou Alain Piaget et les autres* (Paris: Scarabee CEMEA, 1981).

ditional paradigm had been surpassed and the postulates of the new pedagogy, which valued spontaneity, creativity, individual respect, and a refusal to adopt precise and rigid didactic methods, were predominant.

The truth is that, beyond the internal debate about the scientific relevance to the learning process of the postulates of each one of these paradigms, meaning varies considerably when there is no existing theoretical and political tradition to act on. A pedagogical tradition based on the real existence of a school, a teacher, and a specific pedagogic practice makes the postulates set forth by the New School movement meaningful. In Latin America, on the contrary, the incorporation of the new postulates had quite a high level of dissociation with regard to the existing reality, and empirical studies on the matter show that the effect of the incorporation of these paradigms can be defined as basically destructive with regard to the concrete pedagogic practice.²²

b) Likewise, some of the organizational consequences of the new pedagogical paradigm can be pointed out. For example, one of the most remarkable aspects of modern theories of learning is the adaptation of learning to the evolutionary patterns of intellectual development. The stages of the development of intelligence are defined in order to allow the adaptation of the school curriculum to its "stages." These adjustments between evolutionary development and school curriculum, however, are made under the assumption that the entire population will remain in school for a period of 10 or 12 years. But what happens when it is applied in regions where large sectors of the population remain in school for only 3 or 4 years? The social effect of diluting learning in a larger number of years means excluding those who can remain in school only for a short period from having access to the most important part of education.

From the learning point of view, in Latin America, the pedagogical paradigms must originate from the recognition of existing cultural diversity. In other words, the initial problem in pedagogical practice lies in the recognition of the significant differences existing at the starting point of any learning situation, from linguistic diversity to social, material, and cultural conditions among different sectors of the population.

Thus, one of the most difficult problems educational theory must solve in Latin America is that of the link between the starting and the final points and the conceptualization of the existing process between both. That is to say, the issue is to define what the pedagogical process is and to determine how its effectiveness and efficiency can be defined. The trend of technocratic pedagogy was to define uniform pedagogical strategies, disregarding the heterogeneity of the starting points, both

²² Juan Carlos Tedesco and R. Parra, "Marginalidad urbana y educación formal," *Revista colombiana de educación* (Bogotá), no. 7 (January–June 1981).

individual and cultural, as well as devaluing autochthonous cultural parameters. Reproduction, on the other hand, revolved around the hypothesis of the nondifferentiation of the pedagogical and social processes. And finally, in some culturist trends, the respect for the starting point was so absolute that it denied any educational possibility (considering it as a violation involving the imposition of foreign cultural values).

If we accept the existence of socially important knowledge, the appropriation of which is surrounded by an important social struggle, we will find that the problem is to define the pedagogical strategies that permit the effective appropriation of this information through a system of democratic distribution. At this point, it is important to stress that the peculiarity of Latin America's existing pedagogical process is not its effectiveness but its failure. A high percentage of students do not achieve a command of basic cultural codes, and the learning level attained by those who remain in the system is increasingly less representative of the most dynamic aspects of today's culture.

The acknowledgment of the importance of the starting point of the educational process has been the traditional heritage of the psychological trends. From this perspective, the risk is that the problem can be treated from the purely individual and clinical point of view, through universal ideas on the development of the capacities of the human being. The challenge arising from the situation is precisely to overcome the dissociation between the macrosocial and psychopedagogical approaches, building more appropriate learning alternatives for the marginal sectors.

In this regard, educational methodologies, curricular designs, and school organizational models should be the main aspects in the design of an educational paradigm. But in order for it to have a theoretically consistent place, it should be articulated with the contributions of the macrosocial and cultural hypothesis, from which arise the key questions a pedagogical design must solve.

In this context, one of the most important components (and problems) is the role of the teacher. Further on, reference to the problem of the teachers will be made from the viewpoint of their relation to the legitimacy of the postulates of the educational theories. However, at this point, there is need to stress the point that the trend of the paradigms in force during these past years has been to devalue, in one way or another, the function of the teacher in the pedagogical process. In some cases, the teacher's role was reduced to mere executor of technocratically designed policies; in others it resembled that of an exploiter, an authoritarian, or a repressor. The fact is that, as the teaching sector significantly increased its quantitative importance, it started to lose its social and technical relevance. In this respect, a restatement of the problem of the roles of the teacher (and, accordingly, of the strategies governing training and participation) is fore-

seeable in which the technical and attitudinal aspects are coherently integrated to the ideological and political components involved.²³

Educational Research and Real Changes

One of the most generally recognized characteristics of educational research—no matter what paradigm is taken—is its limited capacity for producing real changes in pedagogical or political practices. There is abundant literature on the matter, stressing the disconnection of research with the actual needs of both the teachers and the educational policy-makers as the main problem. A global overview of the problem would show that the lack of effectiveness of educational research is not a problem of the present, nor is it unique to Latin America. This type of diagnosis can be found universally and has been repeating itself for many decades.²⁴

This demonstrates that these are structural problems that are linked to the fact that educational research responds to a logic in which the elements at play are basically scientific (not implying by this a valuation or an exclusion of the sociopolitical elements linked to scientific practice), while educational activity—since it develops in an institutional system—responds to political logic. To transfer the results of educational research to an institutional system is a sociopolitical (and not merely “scientific”) fact.

There are some details, however, from the point of view of the current situation as well as from that of the Latin American context that emphasize this disconnection.

a) In the first place, the dissociation between educational theory and concrete practice is linked to the problem of the evolution of paradigms. As previously stated, in Latin America, paradigms evolved quite independently from real problems, since there had been little endogenous capacity to create theories. Thus, the problem of universal basic education as a means to homogenize culturally the population was no longer a problem in theory, but continued being a problem in reality. Similarly, the problems regarding the criticism of traditional pedagogic practices, such as authoritarian methods, make sense only when these practices really exist in the educational system.

b) In the second place, dissociation is also linked to the structure of the theory itself and to the ways in which it conceives its practice and the basic participants involved in that practice. In the case of economics, the

²³ Guiomar Namó de Mello, *Magisterio de 1º grau; da competência técnica ao compromisso político* (São Paulo: Cortez, 1982).

²⁴ Unesco/CEPAL/PNUD; Ana María Corvalán, *El uso de la información en la toma de decisiones* (Santiago: Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de Educación, 1986); Bernardo Toro, *La información y el mejoramiento cualitativo de la educación* (Bogotá: Centro Internacional de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo, 1981); E. Schiefelbein, *Educational Networks in Latin America: Their Role in the Production, Diffusion and Use of Educational Knowledge* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1982).

state and the productive sectors in power are the main participants for whom alternatives and decisions are made, while the instrument to establish the link is that of planning in its different versions. In the case of reproduction, the definition of alternatives is theoretically excluded, as any attempt to this end is taken as reformism or technocracy.

In one way or another, educational theory has always stressed the role of the dominating sectors as the main agents of educational activity. Each paradigm includes an important motivation that justifies the educational dynamism of the dominant sectors such as ideological homogeneity or increase in productivity. In this context, the role of the popular sectors always had a clearly passive connotation; this characteristic can be generalized to include even the reproductive approaches.²⁵

Accordingly, attempts to overcome dissociation can be grouped in two categories. The first is that of pedagogic-technocratic approaches. In these cases, the low level of effectiveness can be attributed either to the fact that proposals were directed to irrelevant problems or to the fact that scientific practice produced an ineffective political practice because the main participants were not committed to the goals.

The second category corresponds to proposals originating from theories focusing on the subject of learning. Here it is possible to elicit some Piagetian learning theories, some proposals inspired by Freire, and critical proposals to the authoritarian notion of learning. In all of these cases, the problems are different, but it seems important to emphasize the fact that the issue around which most of the difficulties revolve is basically that the pedagogical and political-educational alternatives inspired by these proposals were based on the search for options outside the formal educational system. The justification of this strategy is well known, and it is based on a diagnosis of the formal educational system that emphasizes its bureaucratic rigidity and authoritarian characteristics. It is evident, however, that the alternatives presented in this context did not attain the level of sociopolitical importance held by formal education, which, because of the lack of alternative proposals capable of adjusting to its particular way of functioning, remained unaltered.

Accordingly, in the presence of the dynamics of theory and research itself, dissociation is not neutral. One of its more important effects has been to provoke some impunity in ideas, for its legitimacy is reduced to the area of the researchers and theorists themselves. In other words, in Latin America, the market of educational ideas suffers a high degree of isolation. Teachers, parents, and students ignore the social validity of pedagogical proposals. The reasons for this process differ with every social agent. In the case of teachers, for example, it is evident that the problem

²⁵ Tedesco, "El reproductivismo educativo y los Sectores Populares en América Latina" (n. 12 above).

is linked both to the deterioration of the training process as well as to a political organization that does not include the teacher in the decision-making process. In the case of parents, the elements are basically the same—training and participation in the decision-making process—even though the alternatives and strategies to solve the problem differ substantially.

Consequently, a new educational paradigm enhancing the role of the set of social agents should include proposals in which everyone is involved in educational decision making: politicians, teachers, parents, students, and administrators. Here, the answer to the question, Who benefits from the results of educational research findings? to a large extent defines the problem of the link between theoretical and sociopolitical practice. To carry out research for decision making does not necessarily mean to search for decisions of the state or the dominant sectors, and the step to decision making is not a step toward something outside the theory. On the contrary, it is in that area in which theoretical proposals acquire their social legitimacy.

This is the point at which the main contributions of the postulates on participatory research or action-research can be included. The main aspect that justified this methodological proposal was precisely the criticism of certain traditional ways of researching, which were characterized by a separation from the problem and transformations in the fundamental situation of the poorer sectors, both theoretical and operative. Certain aspects of this debate have been discussed, as it evidenced by some recent contributions on this matter. Among researchers engaged in these proposals, there are symptoms of mere maturity vis-à-vis the initial proposals, according to which participatory research was seen as an alternative to traditional research, which sought to make methodological strategy itself guarantee the solution to all the problems.

Some recent studies have contributed significantly to overcoming these false dilemmas. Nelly Stromquist, for example, showed that, in epistemological terms, the issues raised on the qualitative approaches are not consistently sustained. Her discussion tends to show that each of these approaches is the specific response to requirements such as reliability and validity. The problems of artificiality, limited relevance, possibility of generalization, and the static nature of the interpretations are not the heritage of a definite methodological strategy but on the contrary can be applied to any of the approaches under consideration.²⁶

²⁶ Nelly Stromquist, "La relación entre los enfoques cualitativos y cuantitativos" (paper presented at the International Seminar on the Processes of Interpretation in the Qualitative Investigation of Academic Reality), Bogotá, April 1983, and "Algunas consideraciones metodológicas sobre la investigación-acción" (paper presented at the Regional Technical Seminar on Women and Families of the Urban Lower-class Population in Latin America, Chile, 1983); Marcela Gajardo, *Investigación participativa en América Latina* (Santiago: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (Santiago: 1985).

The problem, therefore, does not seem to be in the defense of a research technique, as if this by itself could guarantee adequate results. The challenge is to select the most appropriate strategy for the explanation of the problem that the researcher considers to be of major importance. In this respect, the appraisal of the qualitative approaches arises from the requirements of the topic of study itself (social processes), and its productivity is precisely the outcome of its capacity to emphasize how specific results are produced.

Other studies, instead, point out the mistakes incurred in some postulates when they refer to participation in research processes. It is evident that, in the study of processes, analyzing the most important aspects of the sectors involved is unavoidable within the subject under study. However, this does not mean that the researcher should participate as a subject in the process studied. In fact, some authors have stressed the need to separate the problem of the people's participation from that of the researcher's participation in a project for the grass-roots sectors.²⁷ The former is an epistemological problem, while the latter is a political one. It is important to remember that the application of a specific technique (systematic observation, participant observation, etc.) cannot, by itself, generate theory. This was put quite clearly by Justa Ezpeleta, who stated that there is no automatic derivation from field level information to theory.

The articulation between both is the result of a categorial construction which depends on the initial questions raised, on the theory being used and on the historic position from which the theorist—whether consciously or unconsciously—regards society. However, neither could it be stated that theories *determine* techniques mechanically, and through them, the ways to interpret research activity and the subject of research. These are initial questions about a dark sector, obscure from the reality, which guide the selection of the techniques. It is from the questions raised that the decision to use surveys, a census, ethnographic techniques or the need to create new techniques is adopted.²⁸

Final Synthesis

The analysis carried out in this paper attempts an overview of the paradigms that guided educational research in Latin America and to present the basis of a new conceptual scheme capable of taking into account the present situation and future perspectives.

Together, the elements presented tend to emphasize the importance of the social agents of the processes through which specific results are produced and of the complex reality of the region in which situations of

²⁷ Carlos Rodríguez Brandao and Pedro Demo, Working document of the Seminar on Participative Research, Brazil: Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos, 1984.

²⁸ Justa Ezpeleta, "Notas sobre investigación participativa y construcción teórica" (paper presented at the Seminar on Participative Research, Brazil, March 1984).

the past along with future challenges coexist, specifically interrelated and historically determined, which is important to elucidate correctly.

To conclude this analysis, reference should be made to the institutional aspects that characterize educational research and the training of researchers. Even though in past years the capacity of the field has significantly increased in terms of the number of research centers, researchers, and publications, it is important to emphasize the vulnerability of that capacity vis-à-vis sociopolitical and economic changes. Those changes are an additional factor in the lack of accumulation of knowledge discussed above. The continuity of working teams is something difficult to guarantee in Latin America, whether because of political factors (clear examples of which can be seen in countries in the extreme south of Latin America that are subject to authoritarian rule) or because of economic or budgetary factors. Nevertheless, the alternatives to this type of problem do not depend mainly on theory. Definitely, this instability is the peculiar way by which, in the area of educational research, the difficulties in constructing a stable democratic order in Latin America are expressed.

LINKED CITATIONS

- Page 1 of 1 -



You have printed the following article:

Paradigms of Socioeducational Research in Latin America

Juan Carlos Tedesco

Comparative Education Review, Vol. 31, No. 4. (Nov., 1987), pp. 509-532.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0010-4086%28198711%2931%3A4%3C509%3APOSRL%3E2.0.CO%3B2-H>

This article references the following linked citations:

[Footnotes]

⁷ **The Empirical Status of Human Capital Theory: A Slightly Jaundiced Survey**

Mark Blaug

Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 14, No. 3. (Sep., 1976), pp. 827-855.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-0515%28197609%2914%3A3%3C827%3ATESOHC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-6>

⁸ **Rates of Return to Schooling in Latin America**

Martin Carnoy

The Journal of Human Resources, Vol. 2, No. 3. (Summer, 1967), pp. 359-374.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-166X%28196722%292%3A3%3C359%3ARORTSI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-8>

NOTE: The reference numbering from the original has been maintained in this citation list.