

**Choices in Improving Educational
Quality in “Developing” Countries:
Conceptual Issues, the Ideal IEQ
Approach, and the IEQ I Experience¹**

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CHOICES IN IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY IN “DEVELOPING” COUNTRIES: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Multilateral and bilateral agency officials, international nongovernmental organization representatives, national ministry personnel, educational researchers, regional and local school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and other community members confront explicitly or implicitly a number of choices² as they pursue the goal of improving educational quality. These choices are signaled by the following questions:

- a) How should one **define educational quality**?
- b) What **sources of knowledge** should one draw on to assess the quality of education and to make decisions about policy and practice?
- c) If empirical **research** is to be one such source, what **paradigm(s)** should be adopted and what data collection and analysis **approaches** should be used?
- d) On what **level(s)** should the **research focus**?
- e) **Who** should be **involved** in designing and conducting the **research and evaluation studies**?
- f) **Who** should be **involved** in deliberations concerning research and/or other sources of knowledge toward analyzing existing educational **policies and practices** and identifying changes and non-changes with respect to future educational policies and practices?
- g) Should efforts to **implement** and **sustain** changes in educational policies and practices be pursued via **centralized** and/or **decentralized** strategies? and
- h) What kinds of **capacities** need to be **developed among which groups** of participants in order to facilitate the research, policy, and practice initiatives identified above and **how** should this capacity development be undertaken?

In this paper, organized into sections focused on the sets of questions identified above, we first review the literature to conceptualize the range of theoretically available choices. Then, to elaborate this conceptualization we examine the principles and practices associated with the Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) project.³ More specifically, we a) describe the choices highlighted in the “ideal approach” of the IEQ project and b) illustrate the choices made – and the constraining/enabling factors that affected such choices – in the activities in three core countries involved in the first phase of IEQ (1991-1996): Ghana, Guatemala, Mali.

² To clarify, the notion of *choice* as used here refers to the nature of relationships developed and activity pursued in comparison with alternative relationships and activities, without presuming that, in fact, individuals or groups explicitly considered all or any of the alternatives as they constructed their course of action.

³ The Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) project was initially funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for a five-year period (1991-96) and was undertaken by the Institute for International Research (now incorporated within the American Institutes for Research – AIR); Juárez and Associates, Inc.; and the University of Pittsburgh’s Institute for International Studies in Education (IISE). Five countries in addition to the United States were involved in the first five years of the IEQ project: Ghana, Guatemala, Mali, South Africa, and Uganda. The second, five-year phase of IEQ (1997-2002), again funded USAID, is being undertaken by AIR in collaboration with the Academy for Educational Development (AED); Educational Development Center (EDC), Inc.; Juárez and Associates, Inc.; and IISE. To date the following countries besides the US have participated in this project: Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, and Uganda.. IEQ has also worked at the regional level on task orders in Africa and Central and Eastern Europe.

Definitions of Educational Quality

One can distinguish definitions of quality that focus on one or more of the following aspects:

- *inputs* (fiscal and other resources as well as characteristics of students, teachers, administrators, instructional materials, and facilities);
- *processes* (nature of interaction in educational activities involving students, teachers, administrators, materials, and technologies);
- *content* (knowledge, skills, and attitudes being transmitted through the curriculum);
- *outputs* (relatively short-term consequences, such as students' cognitive achievement, completion rates, certification, skills, attitudes, and values); and/or
- *outcomes* (longer term consequences, such as school leavers' employment, earnings, civic participation, and other attitudes, values, and behaviors).⁴

And within each aspect, clearly, there is a range of choices. For example, with respect to content, one can emphasize different curricular subject areas, different perspectives, and different depths of knowledge. Moreover, the following terms sometimes have been equated with quality in relation to education: a) *effectiveness* (degree to which goals or objectives are achieved), b) *internal efficiency* (the relation between inputs and outputs), c) *external efficiency* (the relation between inputs and outcomes), and d) *equity* (fairness across social and cultural groups in the distribution of access to schooling, exposure to different types of content and processes, and outputs and outcomes).⁵

The ideal IEQ approach addresses the issue of defining educational quality at times by stating that the project's activities "are designed to promote dialogue about [the meaning of] educational quality in different social and economic contexts;" This is in line with the way that the overall IEQ approach is characterized as not being "carved in stone" but rather evolving with the work in a particular country.⁶ At other times a range of definitions of educational quality are suggested or implied:

Inputs: teacher preparation, "school environment[,] ...learning abilities and knowledge ... [children] bring to school," "health and well being of the child and family," and "parental involvement in the management of the school;"⁷

Processes: "the conditions and relationships within the classroom," "what ... teachers do in class," and "teaching and classroom management techniques;"⁸

⁴ Don Adams, "Defining Educational Quality." *Educational Planning* 9 (3) (1993): 3-18. See also B. Fuller, "Defining School Quality." In J. Hannenay and M. Lockheed (eds.) *The Contribution of the Social Sciences to Educational Policy and Practice, 1965-85* (Berkeley, CA: McCutchan, 1986), pp. 23-27; H. Hawes and D. Stephens, *Questions of Quality: Primary Education and Development* (London: Longman, 1990); M. Lockheed, and A. Verspoor, *Improving Primary Education in Developing Countries: A Review of Policy Options* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1990); K. Ross and L. Mahlck (eds.), *Planning the Quality of Education: The Collection and Use of Data for Informed Decision-Making* (Paris: IIEP/UNESCO and Pergamon, 1990).

⁵ M. Lockheed and E. Hannushek, "Improving Educational Efficiency in Developing Countries: What Do We Know." *Compare* 18, no. 1 (1988), pp. 21-37.

⁶ American Institutes for Research (in collaboration with the Academy for Educational Development, Education Development Center, Juarez and Associates, and the University of Pittsburgh), "Conceptual Framework for the Improving Educational Quality [IEQ II]," project paper prepared for USAID under Contract # HNE-I-00-7-00029-00) (Washington, DC: Author, October 1997), p. 1.

⁷ Ash Hartwell and Emily Vargas-Baron, "Learning for All: Policy Dialogue for Achieving Educational Quality," paper prepared for International Working Group on Education, Munich, Germany (23-26 June 1998), p.6.

Content: “the nature of the curricula and how they are implemented in schools” and “the connection between curriculum objectives and the learner’s own experiences within their communities”⁹

Outputs: “how much learning actually takes place,” “degree of mastery achieved by those in the educational system,” and “how well all succeed ... in learning according to their learning styles;”¹⁰ and

Outcomes: the degree to which “children are learning and developing their abilities both for their own good and for the community and nation” and “what is learned contributes to society ... to social well being as well as economic progress.”¹¹

During its first five years (1991-1996), the IEQ project in Ghana, Guatemala, and Mali was organized around different definitions of educational quality, though outputs (especially cognitive measures of achievement) tended to be given more weight. For instance, in Guatemala the research activity was initially designed as a longitudinal evaluation study of the *Nueva Escuela Unitaria* (NEU) component of the USAID project, Basic Education Strengthening. A range of variables were studied, indicating the measures of educational quality that were considered: parental involvement, child’s health status, child’s cognitive ability, child’s socio-emotional development, teacher’s implementation of the program strategies in the classroom, child’s language proficiency, and child’s orientation and capacity for participating in civic affairs. The first two variable functioned as an input measures, the next two variables were treated as both input and outcome measures, the implementation of the program variable constituted a process measure, and the last variable can be seen as an output measure of educational quality.

Sources of Knowledge

Part of researchers’ critique or lament about policymakers and practitioners is that the latter two groups obtain information from sources other than researchers (e.g., administrators, practitioners, politicians, planners, journalists, clients, interest groups, aides, friends) and make use of other sources of knowledge besides scientific research and evaluation studies (e.g., professional experience, personal experience, political insight, intuition, and judgments).¹² Most

⁸ Ash Hartwell, Joseph De Stefano, and Jane Schubert, “Learning and Educational Quality.” Draft copy of paper prepared for USAID in conjunction with the Improving Educational Quality (IEQ II) Project (Contract No: # HNE-I-00-7-00029-00. (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, August 1998), pp. 15-16

⁹ Hartwell, DeStefano, and Schubert, p. 18.

¹⁰ Hartwell, DeStefano, and Schubert, p. 20.

¹¹ Hartwell, DeStefano, and Schubert, p. 22.

¹² Weiss, “Perspectives on Knowledge Use,” pp. 410-11; see also Wanda Rokicka, “Introduction.” In Wanda Rokicka (ed.) *Educational Documentation, Research and Decision-Making: National Case Studies* (Paris: International Bureau of Education, 1999). Dunn [“Studying Knowledge Use: A Profile of Procedures and Issues,” in *Knowledge Generation, Exchange and Utilization*, eds. George Beal, Wimal Dissanayake, and Sumiye Konoshima (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), p. 390] also reports that distinctions are made between social science research knowledge from “common sense,” “casual empiricism,” and “thoughtful speculation and analysis,” but cautions us that categorical distinctions, such as “‘science-based’ and ‘ordinary’ knowledge [as well as]

scholars (and many educational policymakers and practitioners) would agree that vital decisions within educational systems “are taken without sufficient knowledge and information of the array of possibilities open to meet specific needs”¹³ and that countries “should dramatically increase utilization of research in education,”¹⁴ in part based on the belief that research knowledge will be helpful in “promoting useful change.”¹⁵

Researchers’ severest critique of policymakers and practitioners focuses on subjective and ideological bias. Research cannot influence policy to great extent, so the argument goes, because policies are decided on ideological rather than technical, objective grounds.¹⁶ However, this critique should be considered in relation to whether or not one views the scientific research enterprise as a purely technical and objective endeavor. While “the oldest and still the most common storyline about research portrays researchers as heroes and [objective] research as the source of solutions to our problems,” a contrasting narrative about scholars’ activity derives from the claims that “no knowledge is objective; ... all knowledge is a cultural and historical artifact; and ... all knowledge serves the interests of certain individuals and groups and is counter to the interests of others and consequently knowledge is inevitably political.”¹⁷ Since research can be seen as political in the determination of “the directions and topics of research” and the interpretation of “the results of research,”¹⁸ it seems inappropriate for researchers to focus on criticizing the sources of knowledge that policymakers’ and practitioners’ use. Rather the nature and potential contribution of these various sources of knowledge – including commissioned¹⁹ and non-commissioned or previously published – should be understood and appreciated.

‘professional social inquiry’ and ‘casual empiricism’ [are] a product of the meanings and subjective judgments of researchers, and not of those whom such categories are applied.”

¹³ Rokicka, p. 7.

¹⁴ Fernando Reimers and Noel McGinn, *Informed Dialogue: Using Research to Shape Education Policy Around the World* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1997), p. 5.

¹⁵ Bruce Biddle and Don Anderson [“Social Research and Educational Change,” in *Knowledge for Policy: Improving Education through Research*, eds. Don Anderson and Bruce Biddle (London: Falmer, 1991), p. 17] also note that, in contrast, some view the utilization of research by policymakers and practitioners as having negative consequences, for example: “supporting the status quo [presumably with negative features] or facilitating actions that are questionable.”

¹⁶ T. Husén, “Educational Research at the Crossroads? An Exercise in Self-criticism,” *Prospects* 19 (3) (1989): 351-360; Marshall; Steven Miller and Marcel Fredericks, “Social Science Findings and Educational Policy Dilemmas: Some Additional Distinctions,” *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 8 (3) (2000), <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v8n3>; Rokicka, p. 17.

¹⁷ Robert Donnmoeyer, “Empirical Research as Solution and Problem: Two Narratives of Knowledge Use,” *International Journal of Educational Research* 23 (2) (1995), pp. 152 and 157. see also William Reese, “What History Teaches about the Impact of Educational Research on Practice,” *Review of Research in Education* 24 (1999), p. 8.

¹⁸ D. Pan, “Ivory Tower and Red Tape: Reply to Adler,” *Telos* 86 (1990), p. 12, p. 12; see also Peter Cookson, Joseph Conaty, and Harold Himmelfarb, “Introduction,” *Sociology of Education* 10 (1996): 1-4; Miller and Fredericks; Thomas Popkewitz, *A Political Sociology of Educational Reform: Power/Knowledge in Teaching, Teacher Education and Research* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1991), p. 225; E. Vance Randall, Bruce Cooper, and Steven Hite, “Understanding the Politics of Research in Education,” *Educational Policy* 13 (1) (1999), p. 8.

¹⁹ Thus, we also need to consider the role played by funding agencies – local, provincial, and national governments; bilateral and multilateral organizations; and local, national, and global philanthropic foundations – in shaping the research questions, research approach, and dissemination of findings. See Biddle and Anderson; Robert Burgess, “Biting the Hand that Feeds You? Educational Research for Policy and Practice,” in R. Burgess (ed.) *Educational Research and Evaluation: For Policy and Practice?* (London: Falmer, 1993).

The ideal IEQ approach places a clear emphasis on empirical research as a source of knowledge in policy and practice decisions, though it does not rule out the contribution of other knowledge sources. The emphasis on research-based knowledge is signaled first of all in statements that indicate that policies and practices proposed within the project are grounded in previously undertaken and published research. For example, informal and active teaching and student-directed learning, which are promoted within the IEQ project, “reflect the increasing body of [research] knowledge about the conditions that enhance learning.”²⁰ The emphasis on research-based knowledge is also embedded in statements about how research conducted within the IEQ project in a given country should be designed and used to inform the policy and practice reform initiatives. For instance, it is said that “[m]eaningful discussion and action to improve the quality of education must include concrete information about ... instructional practice, pupil performance and the classroom environment”²¹ and that “[t]he results of tests of children and of observations and interviews provide a concrete base from which teachers, parents and education system officials can look critically at the quality of education.”²²

During the first five years of the IEQ project in Ghana, Guatemala, and Mali, a range of sources of knowledge were drawn upon by school, local, provincial, national, and international policymakers and practitioners. Research-based knowledge available in the literature and knowledge derived from research undertaken by host country research teams constituted key sources as decisions about policy and practice were made. So did political and professional knowledge that derived from the lived experience of policy makers and practitioners. Two developments in Mali are illustrative.²³

First, it appears that experienced-based knowledge about the political context rather than research-based knowledge about teaching and learning was influential in determining the IEQ project’s language-of-instruction focus. Initially, IEQ project research and anticipated interventions were focused on French language learning. This focus was encouraged by an official in USAID/Mali, based in part on research conducted under the auspices of a related USAID development project (Basic Education Expansion Project) which evidenced limited French language literacy among Malian children. However, this USAID/Mali official also discouraged a focus on bilingual approaches, involving French and one of the maternal languages, despite the facts that a) there were approximately 100 schools implementing bilingual programs and b) an evaluation (conducted in the context of the USAID-funded Advancing Basic Education and Literacy project in the late 1980s) provided favorable results from a national experiment in the use of maternal languages as part of a transition bilingual program. The USAID/Mali official discouraged a focus on bilingual education because, he argued, U.S.-funded projects should avoid actions that might be interpreted by the French government as interfering with French-Malian relations, particularly in the area of language policy.

Thus, the first phase of IEQ project research in Mali examined teaching and learning in French immersion program schools. However, a new Minister of Basic Education took office in January 1994 and launched an educational reform initiative, *Nouvelle Ecole Fondamentale* (New Fundamental School or NEF), designed to promote the teaching of maternal languages as part of

²⁰ Hartwell, DeStefano, and Schubert, p. 19.

²¹ Hartwell, DeStefano, and Schubert, p. 20.

²² Hartwell, DeStefano, and Schubert, p. 21.

²³ The following discussion is adopted from Mark Ginsburg, Don Adams, Thomas Clayton, Martha Mantilla, Judy Sylvester, and Yidan Wang, “The Politics of Linking Educational Research, Policy and Practice: The Case of Improving Educational Quality in Ghana, Guatemala, Mali,” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 41 (2000): 27-47.

a convergent method to promote bilingualism. The new Minister announced that all educational projects in Mali, including IEQ, would need to be cohesive with NEF. Because IEQ's continued operation in Mali was threatened and because some Malian and U.S.-consultant researchers were in favor of a focus on the use of maternal languages, the sample for the second phase of the research was changed to include schools with bilingual programs – to the satisfaction of the new Minister.

Second, the first phase of IEQ research suggested that a variety of factors had an influence on students' success in learning French. These factors included students' attendance in preschools and Koranic schools, the use of French in students' homes, the distance from home to school for students, the level of education of students' parents, the availability of study areas with lighting in students' homes, community-school relations, the children's opportunity to take books home, and the use of creative, nonofficial teaching strategies by teachers. Other factors were found not to discriminate between "good" and "poor" students and/or "performing" and "nonperforming" schools, although these were separated into "nondiscriminating" and "qualified nondiscriminating" factors. The latter factors, while not related to student or school performance in the IEQ Phase I research, were considered worthy of further consideration because either other research or professional insights indicated that they should be discriminating factors. These included the child's liking folk tales, ability to recite legends in her/his maternal language, physical and nutritional health, use of maternal language in the classroom, as well as the teacher's use of student groups, gestures, concretizing lessons, and didactic materials.

Initially, the following intervention ideas were decided upon for piloting in Phase II:

- teacher training to facilitate the better use of teacher manuals and guides and to promote the use of didactic materials, folk tales, and small group instruction in large classes;
- improving pupil transportation between home and school;
- creating school canteens to improve pupils' health and nutrition; and
- establishing community centers to provide supervised settings with good conditions for studying.

Eventually, however, only the first and fourth interventions listed above were pursued – in order to make the project more manageable. What is noteworthy with regard to sources of knowledge is that only the second and fourth proposed interventions were derived from findings from IEQ research, while the first and third proposed interventions were promoted based on knowledge derived from professional experience and/or other research.

Methodological Paradigms and Research Approaches

Table 1 summarizes key differences between three major methodological paradigms within which educational researchers may situate their inquiry: positivist, interpretivist, and critical science. Although there is an on-going debate regarding the theoretical and practical possibilities of combining approaches and techniques from the different traditions,²⁴ we concur

²⁴ For example, see Earl Babbie, *Survey Research Methods* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1990); Robert Bogdan and Sari Biklen, *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Method*, second edition (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1992); R. Tony Eichelberger, *Disciplined Inquiry: Understanding and Doing Educational Research* (New York: Longman, 1989); Elliot Eisner and Alan Peshkin *Qualitative Inquiry in Education: The Continuing Debate* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990); Jonas Soltis, "On the Nature of Educational Research," *Educational Researcher* 13 (10) (1984): 5-10; Graham Vulliamy, Keith Lewin, and David Stephens, *Doing Educational Research in Developing Countries* (London: Falmer Press, 1990).

with Hammersley²⁵ that there is a need to keep an "open mind."²⁶ Whether one sides with the compatibility or the incompatibility of the traditions, one needs to make informed choices -- by being aware of the alternatives within and among scientific traditions -- on how to conduct research.

Table 2 summarizes the methodological choices between and within the positivist and interpretivist scientific traditions.²⁷ We do not discuss separately methodological choices within the critical science tradition because, as indicated in Table 1, this tradition incorporates assumptions about the nature of theoretical knowledge and the social world reflective of the other two traditions.²⁸

²⁵ Martyn Hammersley, "Introduction." in *Controversies in Classroom Research*, ed. M. Hammersley (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. xix.

²⁶ Keeping an open mind is good advice, for as Alfred North Whitehead cautions: "Some of the major disasters of [hu]mankind have been produced by the narrowness of men [or women] with a good methodology ... to set limits to speculation is treason to the future" (quoted in Lee Shulman, "Disciplines of Inquiry in Education: An Overview," *Educational Researcher* 10 (6) (1981), p. 11.

²⁷ For a fuller discussion of the methodological choices within each paradigm, Mark Ginsburg and Leopold Klopfer with Thomas Clayton, Michel Rakotomanana, Judy Sylvester, and Katherine Yasin, "Choices in Conducting Classroom-Anchored Research to Improve Educational Quality in 'Developing' Countries." Project paper prepared for the Improving Educational Quality (IEQ I) project under contract (No. DPE-5836-C-00-1042-00) with the U.S. Agency for International Development (Pittsburgh, PA: Institute for International Studies in Education, December 1994).

²⁸ In her book focusing on research approaches within a (feminist) critical science tradition, Shulamit Reinharz [*Feminist Methods in Social Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992)] includes chapters on experimental research, survey research, ethnography, interview research, and content analysis. Additionally, many aspects of the approaches and techniques employed by those engaged in critical ethnography [see Gary Anderson, "Critical Ethnography in Education: Origins, Current Status, and New Directions." *Review of Educational Research* 59 (3) (1989): 249-70; Patti Lather, *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Methodology With/in the Postmodern* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Vandra Masemann, "Critical Ethnography in the Study of Comparative Education," in *New Approaches to Comparative Education*, eds. P. Altbach and G. Kelly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 11-26; Roger Simon and Donald Dippo, "On Critical Ethnographic Work." *Anthropology of Education Quarterly* 17 (4) (1986): 195-202; J. Thomas, "Toward a Critical Ethnography: A Reexamination of the Chicago School Legacy." *Urban Life* 11 (4) (1983): 477-490] are dealt with in the section on the interpretivist science tradition, where ethnography is discussed.

TABLE 1: KEY ELEMENTS OF THREE SCIENTIFIC TRADITIONS

<u>ELEMENTS</u>	<u>Conception of Theoretical Knowledge</u>	<u>Conception of the Social World</u>	<u>Scientist's Role in the Social World</u>
<u>Positivist Science</u>	universal, context free, "objective"	causal relations among variables (social facts)	neutral, detached, objective inquirer
<u>Interpretivist Science</u>	Context-dependent; orientation to "grounded theory" ²⁹	web of meaning and action, continually being socially constructed	"empathetic neutrality," ³⁰ involved subjectively to collect and interpret data
<u>Critical Science</u>	Either	either	committed and engaged; seeks understanding to foment progressive social change

²⁹ Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine, 1976).

³⁰ M. Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990).

TABLE 2: APPROACHES TO INQUIRY IN THE POSITIVIST AND INTERPRETIVIST SCIENTIFIC TRADITIONS

<u>APPROACH COMPONENT</u>	<u>Positivist Science</u>	<u>Interpretivist Science</u>
<u>Research Design</u>	"true experimental" designs or designs labeled causal-comparative, "quasi-experimental," "ex post facto," "correlational," or "survey research." ³¹	participant observation, nonparticipant observation, and interviewing only ³² in single- or multi-site investigations ³³ undertaken by an individual or a team of researchers. ³⁴
<u>Sampling</u>	Simple random, systematic, quota, or convenience sampling approaches (stratified or not) to enable generalization to populations of people and settings ³⁵	"theoretical sampling" ³⁶ or "criterion-based selection." ³⁷ to generalize or extrapolate from the findings in one setting, but also "case-to-case transfer" or "analytic generalization."
<u>Data Gathering</u>	Giving tests, ³⁸ administering questionnaires, ³⁹ conducting interviews, ⁴⁰ or using observation schedules. ⁴¹	Observations (recorded in field notes), interviews, documents and other artifacts, still photography, and audio and video recordings. ⁴²
<u>Data Analysis</u>	Descriptive statistics on individual variables and strength and/or significance of relationships among variables using	on-going process employing a variety of inductive and deductive reasoning process to break-down, synthesize, and search for

³¹ See Babbie; Eichelberger; R. Jaeger, "Survey Methods in Educational Research," in *Complementary Methods for Research in Education*, ed. R. Jaeger (Washington, D. C.: American Educational Research Association, 1988), pp. 301-38; Andrew Porter, "Comparative Experiments in Educational Research," in *Complementary Methods for Research in Education*, ed. R. Jaeger (Washington, D. C.: American Educational Research Association, 1988), pp. 391-414.

³² See Bogdan and Biklen; Eisner and Peskin; Judith Goetz and Margaret LeCompte, *Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research*. (New York: Academic Press, 1993); James Spradley, *Participant Observation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1980).

³³ Bogdan and Biklen, pp. 69-75.

³⁴ See Jack Douglas, *Investigative Social Research: Individual and Team Research* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1976), especially pp. 189-226.

³⁵ See Babbie, pp. 65-101; C. Moser and G. Kalton, *Survey Methods in Social Investigation* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), pp. 61-187.

³⁶ See Glaser and Strauss.

³⁷ See Goetz and LeCompte, pp. 77-78.

³⁸ See Walter Borg and Meredith Gall, *Educational Research: An Introduction*, 5th edition (New York: Longman, 1989), especially pp. 245-320.

³⁹ See Babbie; A. N. Oppenheim, *Questionnaire Design and Attitude Measurement* (New York: Basic Books, 1966); S. Sudman, *Asking Questions: A Practical Guide to Questionnaire Design* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982).

⁴⁰ See Raymond Gorden, *Interviewing: Strategy, Techniques, and Tactics*, 3rd edition (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1980); Yarrow, M. (1960) "Interviewing Children" in *Handbook of Research on Child Development*, ed. P. Mussen (New York: Wiley, 1960), pp. 561-602.

⁴¹ See Sara Delamont, *Interaction in the Classroom* (London: Methuen, 1976); Maurice Galton, *British Mirrors: A Collection of Classroom Observation Systems* (Leicester, England: University of Leicester, 1978).

⁴² Michael Agar, *Speaking of Ethnography* (Beverly Hill: Sage, 1986); Marion Dobbert, *Ethnographic Research: Theory and Applications for Modern Schools and Societies* (New York: Praeger, 1982); Fred Erickson, "Qualitative Methods in Research on Teaching," in *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, ed. M. Wittrock (New York: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 119-161; Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles and Practice* (London: Tavistock, 1983); Roy Nash, *Classrooms Observed: The Teacher's Perception and the Pupil's Performance* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973); Lou Smith, "An Evolving Logic of Participant Observation," in *Pages 316-377 in Review of Research in Education*, ed. Lee Shulman (Itasca, IL: Peacock, 1979), pp. 316-77; Peter Woods, *Inside Schools: Ethnography in Educational Research* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).

	nonparametric statistics or parametric statistics ⁴³	patterns within data ⁴⁴
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In the ideal IEQ approach researchers draw on a variety of different research approaches within different methodological paradigms. This multiple paradigm approach was signaled in the original project proposal, in part by stressing that in addition to the use of more typical “[positivist] scientific” approach, the consortium would make “extensive use of anthropological methods ... [which] allow us to understand the intervention process from the perspective of the actors in the schools and communities.”⁴⁵ At other times this approach was communicated simply by statements such as “IEQ ... [uses] a variety of qualitative and quantitative instruments.”⁴⁶ Moreover, the issues were addressed in considerable detail in one project paper.⁴⁷

During the first five years of the IEQ project in Ghana, Guatemala, and Mali, a variety of research approaches within different methodological paradigms were employed in terms of design, sampling, data collection, and data analysis. While the variety of approaches was valued by host-country researchers and U.S.-consultant researchers, the findings from positivist tradition research appeared to have more credibility with policymakers. These general points can be illustrated by the experience in Ghana.⁴⁸

During Phase I the host country research team collected data from eighteen P1-P6 classrooms in 6 primary schools through classroom and pupil observations and interviews with teachers, pupils, parents, and community and school leaders. The observations included the use of structured schedules to produce variables (in the positivist tradition) as well as field note recording (in the interpretivist tradition). Overall, the latter tradition dominated as the researchers sought to understand what was happening (or not occurring) in particular classrooms, rather than to discover generalizable “laws” that could determine practices to be employed in all classrooms. Based on input from policymakers, particularly a USAID/Ghana official, however, the paradigmatic emphasis shifted during the second phase of the research. After considerable deliberation, and with some reluctance, the host country research team adopted the following recommendations made by this USAID/Ghana official:

- expand the sample of schools from 6 to 14 schools (7 experimental and 7 control schools) and include schools from two rather than one region of the country;
- focus on identifying “new instructional strategies which might be used nationwide;” and

⁴³ See Eichelberger, pp. 201-214.

⁴⁴ See Howard Becker, "The Problems of Inference and Proof in Participant Observation." *American Sociological Review* 23 (6) (1958): 652- 60; Bogdan and Biklen, pp. 153-83; Goetz and LeCompte, pp. 165-245; Miles, M. and Huberman, A. (1984) "Drawing Valid Meaning from Qualitative Data: Toward a Shared Craft." *Educational Researcher* 13 (May 1984): 10-20; R. Tesch, *Qualitative Research: Analysis Types and Software Tools* (New York: Falmer, 1990).

⁴⁵ Paul Spector (with Stephen Anzalone, Ray Chesterfield, Julianne Gilmore, and Jane Schubert), *Improving Educational Quality: Technical Proposal Submitted to USAID in Response to RFP Number W/HP/91008* (Washington, DC: Institute for International Research, 9 August 1991), p. 4.

⁴⁶ Jane Schubert, "Strengthening Skills to Produce and Use Information to Improve Educational Quality," IEQ project paper distributed at the annual meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society, San Antonio, Texas, USA (March 2000), p. 2.

⁴⁷ Ginsburg et al., "Choices in Conducting." Since Tables 1 and 2 provide a summary of the issues delineated in this project paper, the range of choices will not be presented in detail here.

⁴⁸ The following discussion is adopted from Ginsburg et al., "The Politics of Linking."

- limit the study to the investigation of teaching and learning of English (and not math and science).

Also, at least in part because of views expressed by Ghanaian and U.S. policymakers, it was decided to develop and use systematic measures of pupil proficiency, quantitative, curriculum-based assessments approach, in an effort to document (in a positivist manner) whether the instructional strategies employed in the “experimental” schools led to higher student performance than occurred in the “control” schools, where no new instructional strategies were introduced. The host country research team continued to collect qualitative data (in line with an interpretivist paradigm), though even some of the data collected during unstructured observations and semi-structured interviews was transformed into variables so they could be analyzed in relation to the pupil performance measures. Thus, a more positivist approach came to dominate the research in Ghana, at least with respect to the findings that were reported and discussed in national gatherings of policymakers, practitioners, and citizens.

Level(s) of Research Focus

A critical choice in designing educational research regards what might be termed the level of research focus. One can identify the following levels: individual student or teacher, small group of students or teachers, classroom, school, local, provincial, and national schools system or community. Hammersley⁴⁹ argues that: “if we are to understand the work of schools, and to improve or change their role, then above all we have to understand what occurs in classrooms ... where the real business of education is supposed to take place.” However, Adams et al.⁵⁰ suggest that one can only effectively undertake and adequately understand efforts to improve educational quality if one considers the proximate and remote environments of classroom activity. As Delamont⁵¹ explains: “The classroom has to be seen against the background of an on-going educational system operating at the school, local and national level” and “against large scale social and economic processes.”

In the ideal IEQ approach research conducted in and about classrooms is stressed, though research related to other levels, particularly the school level, is also acknowledged as being potentially valuable. To illustrate, it is said that IEQ project research “[I]earns about school and classroom experiences of educators and pupils”⁵² and that “meaningful discussion and action to improve the quality of education must include concrete information about pupils in the classroom.”⁵³

During the five years of the IEQ project in Ghana, Guatemala, and Mali, research was primarily focused on classrooms but also on school and local community levels.⁵⁴ The press for

⁴⁹ Martyn Hammersley, “Introduction,” in *Case Studies in Classroom Research*, ed. M. Hammersley (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. ix.

⁵⁰ Don Adams, Tom Clayton, Michel Rakotomanana, and Yidan Wang, “Implementing and Sustaining Changes in Educational Quality,” *Educational Planning* 1 (3) (1997): 3-20.

⁵¹ Delamont, pp. 38 and 20.

⁵² Schubert, “Strengthening Skills,” p. 1.

⁵³ Hartwell et al., p. 8.

⁵⁴ If we consider the documentation research, then provincial, national, and international levels can also be included [see Mark Ginsburg and Don Adams, *Policy-Practice-Research-Dissemination/Dialogue Spirals in Improving Educational Quality*. Monograph developed as part of the Improving Educational Quality (IEQ I) project for the United States Agency for International Development under contracts DPE-5836-C-001042 and DEP-5836-Q-00-1043-00. (Pittsburgh, PA: Institute for International Studies in Education, University of Pittsburgh, June 1997); see Don Adams, Mark Ginsburg, Thomas Clayton, Martha Mantilla, Judy Sylvester, and Yidan Wang, “Linking Research to Policy and Practice to Improve Educational Quality,” in *New Approaches to Studying Educational Policy Formation*

studying extra-classroom factors came from the researchers, who were interested either in understanding the effects of these factors (e.g., family nutrition, home lighting, and community sanitation in Mali) on student cognitive achievement or in controlling for the effects of such factors (e.g., language spoken by parents in Guatemala) when examining the relationship between classroom-based instructional interventions and on student cognitive achievement.

Participants in the Research Process⁵⁵

Those most likely to be involved in research processes are individuals who are identified by themselves and by others as “researchers.” Researchers chosen to participate in any project may vary with respect to their institutional bases (local, provincial, and national government units; bilateral and multilateral agencies; nongovernmental organizations, including think tanks, consulting firms, and foundations; and universities);⁵⁶ citizenship (“native” to the country in which the activity is being undertaken and those who are “foreigners”); cultural context of their training (indigenous domestic, foreign influenced domestic, or foreign institutions);⁵⁷ and their status and power (in terms of university faculty ranks and tenure status, formal

and Appropriation, eds. Bradley Levinson and Margaret Sutton (New York: Ablex, 2000); Ginsburg et al., “The Politics of Linking.”]

⁵⁵ This and the next section discuss the issues “as if” there were two separate, homogeneous, and culturally distinct communities within the field of education: theorists/researchers and policymakers/practitioners [see William N. Dunn, “Conceptualizing Knowledge Use,” in *Knowledge Generation, Exchange and Utilization*, eds. George M. Beal, Wimal Dissanayake and Sumiye Konoshima (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 329-30; Henry Levin, “Why Isn’t Educational Research More Useful?,” in Don Anderson and Bruce Biddle (eds.) *Knowledge for Policy: Improving Education through Research* (London: Falmer, 1991), p. 72]. The discussion is in line, for example, with the prevailing view that characterizes knowledge in theorist/researcher culture as “objective, factual, dispassionate truth” and knowledge in the policy maker/practitioner culture is portrayed as “partial, biased, incomplete, self-serving, and politically compromised” [Carol Weiss, “Perspectives on Knowledge Use in National Policy Making,” in *Knowledge Generation, Exchange and Utilization*, eds. George Beal, Wimal Dissanayake, and Sumiye Konoshima (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), p. 415]. Nevertheless, it is important to note that there are other representations of these two communities (which provide indications of similarity between communities); that each community is, in fact, quite heterogeneous (in terms of roles, worldviews, values, and formal power); and that a significant number of people can be considered members of both communities (over the course of their lives or even at any one point in time) [Philip Altbach, “Professors and Politics: An International Perspective,” in *The Politics of Educators’ Work and Lives*, ed. Mark Ginsburg (New York: Garland, 1995); LaVerne Ludden and George Wood, “Practice Driven Research: A Model for Bridging the Gap between Research and Practice.” *Lifelong Learning* 10, no. 5 (1987), p. 25; Jon Wagner, “Administrators as Ethnographers: School as Context for Inquiry and Action.” *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 21 (3) (1990), pp. 211-12]. For a fuller discussion, see Mark Ginsburg and Jorge Gorostiaga, “Introduction to Special Issue: Dialogue Among Researchers, Policymakers, and Practitioners,” *Comparative Education Review* 45 (May 2001, in press).

⁵⁶ Edmund King [“Observations from Outside and Decisions Inside.” *Comparative Education Review* 34 (3) (1990), pp. 392-93] notes, however, that “[e]ven practically oriented scholars as those observing educational decision making from the World Bank, the Organizational for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), or other international organizations may be just as remote from reality and just as arrogant as those looking down from the ‘dreaming spires’ of academe. Moreover, they are the slaves of fashion.”

⁵⁷ For example, Vulliamy, Lewin, and Stephens [p.4] argue that “while some issues of research design, execution and analysis may be generalizable, others are more specific to the cultural and political context of the research setting ... [and] that different circumstances lead to different constraints and possibilities concerning the process of research” and Miala Diambomba [“Research and External Aid: A View from the Recipient Side,” *Prospects* 11 (3) (1981), p. 355] warns that there are a real problems when projects are reduced to “mere exercise[s] in the re-creation of ‘Western research environments’ in the Third World. ... [Such a] drive to recreate Western research appears to be one of the reasons why potential African [etc.] researchers may not do research; fear of non-acceptance of their work by peers overseas or by their local representatives reduces them to almost total inaction.” See also Birgit Brock-Utne, *Whose Education for All: The Recolonization of the African Mind* (New York: Falmer Press, 2000).

organizational/administrative positions, editors and manuscript reviewers of journals, books, and professional organization conference program, and grant applications).⁵⁸

Many scholars, policymakers, and practitioners, however, have lamented that too often research is done by researchers (in isolation from policy makers and practitioners) and then the knowledge obtained is disseminated via conference presentations, research reports, articles, or books (targeted primarily to an audience of other researchers).⁵⁹ In recent years, perhaps more so in "developed" countries, educational researchers in conjunction with policy makers, administrators, and teachers have sought to employ (and write about) strategies for strengthening the links between theory/research and educational policy/practice.⁶⁰ The following strategies reflect choices in how theorists/researchers and policymakers/practitioners participate in the research process:⁶¹

- *liaison*, which involves creating a new role⁶² – variously referred to as “knowledge brokers,”⁶³ “linkers,”⁶⁴ “research brokers,”⁶⁵ and “translators,”⁶⁶ – responsible for facilitating at least the one-way transmission of knowledge from theorists and researcher to policymakers and practitioners.⁶⁷
- *policy/practice-oriented research*, which has been termed “applied research,”⁶⁸ “case study,”⁶⁹ decision-oriented educational research,⁷⁰ “evaluation research,”⁷¹ “interest” (versus

⁵⁸ Ginsburg and Gorostiaga.

⁵⁹ Like many social scientists, many educational researchers seem to assume that “good science” must eventually lead to improved practice; see Thomas Barone, “Introduction,” *International Journal of Educational Research* [Special Issue on “The Uses of Educational Research] 23 (2) (1995), p. 109; William Foote Whyte, “Introduction,” in *Participatory Action Research*, ed. W. F. Whyte (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991), p. 8. A. Gitlin, K. Bringurst, M. Burns, V. Cooley, B. Meyers, K. Price, R. Russell, and P. Tiess [*Teachers’ Voices for School Change: An Introduction to Educative Research* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992), p. 125], for instance, note that traditional research activities “aim to shed light on or capture the essence of a particular event or intervention. This understanding, it is assumed, will then trickle down to the level of practice and inform practitioners on what to do and what not to do.”

⁶⁰ Jon Wagner [“The Unavoidable Intervention of Educational Research: A Framework for Reconsidering Researcher-Practitioner Cooperation.” *Educational Researcher* 26 (7) (1997), p. 13] reminds us that “all educational research in schools involves [communication and] cooperation of one form or another between researchers and practitioners.” Here we want to discuss recommendations for going beyond what Wagner (“The Unavoidable Intervention,” p. 15) describes as “data-extraction agreements” (negotiated so researchers can do research).

⁶¹ The approaches discussed in this section do not meet Paulo Freire’s [*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1970), pp. 76-77] standard for dialogue: “the united reflection and action of dialoguers,” with the purpose of “naming” and “transforming” the world.

⁶² Note that the creation of this new role does not require that theorists/researchers or policymakers/practitioners need to alter their roles (see Maureen Hallinan, “Bridging the Gap between Research and Practice,” *Sociology of Education* 69 (extra) (1996), pp. 133-34.

⁶³ Biddle and Anderson, p. 12.

⁶⁴ R. G. Havelock, *Planning for Innovation Through Dissemination and Utilization of Knowledge*. (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Research on Utilization and Scientific Knowledge, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1969).

⁶⁵ J. Sunquist, “Research Brokerage: The Weak,” in *Knowledge and Policy: The Uncertain Connection*, ed. L. Lynn (Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences).

⁶⁶ P. Lazarsfeld and J. Reitz, *An Introduction to Applied Sociology* (New York: Elsevier, 1975).

⁶⁷ Dunn, “Conceptualizing Knowledge Use,” p. 328.

⁶⁸ Dunn, “Studying Knowledge Use,” p. 370.

⁶⁹ Michael Crossley and Robin Burns [“Case Study in Comparative and International Education: An Approach to Bridging the Theory-Practice Gap,” in Barry Sheehan (ed.) *Comparative and International Studies and the Theory and Practice of Education*. Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Conference of the Australian Comparative and International Education Society, Hamilton, New Zealand, 1983] describe case study in comparative and

“curiosity”) driven research,⁷² “policy-relevant research,”⁷³ “policy research,”⁷⁴ and “practice driven research,”⁷⁵ requires that researchers develop a “client orientation” and “work hard at trying to understand the information needs of the client and to meet those needs;”⁷⁶

- *policy maker/practitioner research*, referred to as “practitioner research,”⁷⁷ “administrators as ethnographers”⁷⁸ and “teacher research,”⁷⁹ involves teachers and administrators (and, by logical extension, policymakers) pursuing theory/research activities as part of their responsibilities;⁸⁰ and
- *collaborative action research* involves policymakers and practitioners in conceptualizing and designing studies; selecting samples; and collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data in

international education as a way to address “an apparent polarization between theorists and practitioners” (p. 1), since it provides “a way to interrelate the theory and ‘reality’ of education ... [focusing on] the actual day-to-day activities of educational practitioners and their clients ... can lead to ... greater cross-fertilization ... between theory and practice”(p. 13).

⁷⁰ William Cooley and William Bickel, *Decision-Oriented Educational Research* (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1986).

⁷¹ J. Bradley Cousins and Kenneth Leithwood, “Current Empirical Research on Evaluation Utilization,” *Review of Evaluation Research* 56 (3) (1986): 331-64.

⁷² Nadia Auriat [“Social Policy and Social Enquiry: Reopening Debate,” *International Social Science Journal* 50 (2) (1998), p. 275.

⁷³ Peter Coleman and Linda LaRoque, “Linking Educational Research and Educational Policy via Policy-Relevant Research,” *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 29 (3), (1983), p. 243.

⁷⁴ Reimers and McGinn [p. 23] explain that policy research “is designed to anticipate the consequences of action ... as opposed to research designed to explain why the world is the way it is without describing how it could be made different.”

⁷⁵ Ludden and Wood, pp. 21-25.

⁷⁶ Cooley and Bickel, pp. 36-37. Researchers are in dialogue with the (policy-maker or practitioner) clients, and in that sense both groups’ roles change, but each group retains its own specified and fairly distinct role. The researchers are not involved directly in policy making or practice, and the policy makers and practitioners do not participate intimately in the research process, except in helping to define the focus of the research and perhaps in negotiating the interpretations of the findings. This is akin to what Wagner [“The Unavoidable Intervention,” p. 16] terms “clinical partnerships”(in which theorists/researchers and policymakers/practitioners maintain their separate roles, but they do communicate about research problems and issues). Proponents of this approach argue that such influence on scholarly activity improves the policy/practice relevance of research and theory. Those who balk at the notion worry that scholars would be co-opted and lose their “objectivity” [Cousins and Leithwood], become “cheap consultants” [Robert Burgess, “Contractors and Customers: A Research Relationship?,” in R. Burgess (ed.) *Educational Research and Evaluation: For Policy and Practice?* (Washington, DC: Falmer, 1993), p. 25] rather than independent researchers “examining basic theoretical, conceptual, and methodological issues,” [Dunn, “Studying Knowledge Use,” p. 394], eschew feminist and other critical perspectives [Catherine Marshall, “Researching the Margins: Feminist Critical Policy Analysis.” *Educational Policy* 13 (1) (1999), p. 60], and tend to serve the interests of dominant groups [Michael F. D. Young, “Introduction in M. F. D. Young (ed.) *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education* (New York: Collier-Macmillan)].

⁷⁷ Gary Anderson and Kathryn Herr [“The New Paradigm Wars: Is There Room for Rigorous Practitioner Knowledge in Schools and Universities?” *Educational Researcher* 28 (5) (1999), p. 16] explain that “practitioner research” has its own forms of validity (outcome, process, democratic or local, catalytic, dialogic).

⁷⁸ Wagner, “Administrators as Ethnographers.”

⁷⁹ Dixie Goswami and Peter Stillman, *Reclaiming the Classroom: Teacher Research as an Agency for Change*. (Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cooke, 1987).

⁸⁰ R. Brause and J. Mayher (eds.), *Search and Research: What the Inquiring Teacher Needs to Know* (Bristol, England: Falmer Press, 1991); Joe Kincheloe, *Teachers as Researchers: Qualitative Inquiry as a Path to Empowerment* (Bristol, England: Falmer Press, 1991). Note, however, that in this approach the specialist researcher is not involved as an active participant in the research process (or in decisions and actions in the policymaking and practice arenas).

collaboration with (rather than separate from) those whose primary roles and identities are that of theorist/researcher.⁸¹

The ideal IEQ approach describes a research/policy/practice process in which a range of stakeholders (foreign and host country researchers, policymakers, practitioners, parents, and other citizens) are to be involved. This involvement is seen as occurring within a framework that we described above as policy/practice-oriented research. That is, non-researcher stakeholders are viewed as involved primarily in the interpretation of research findings and less stress is put on non-researcher stakeholders designing and conducting investigations. To illustrate, after researchers conduct the *assessment*, members of “the community and education system are then helped to *assimilate* the findings from the assessment phase through meetings, dialogue, seminars and conferences. Assessment data are presented to generate a discussion of their implications for the quality of the educational system.”⁸² However, some attention is also given to teachers, head teachers and supervisors] as researchers. For instance, “teachers as researchers should focus on identifying those who are not in school or in community learning centers, and why.”⁸³

During the first five years of the IEQ project in Ghana, Guatemala, and Mali, the activities of theorists/researchers and policymakers/practitioners involved with the project were most often in line with a “policy/practice-oriented” approach. It should be noted, however, that a number of activities were organized to promote the discussion about (and perhaps interpretation of) research findings by host-country policymakers, educators, parents, and other citizens as well as bilateral and multilateral agency representatives. Moreover, there were some notable cross-national and across-time variations in the degree to which non-researchers participated more actively in the research process. The model that characterized the relationships between theorist/researchers and policymakers/practitioners also seemed to differ depending on whether the relations were examined at the school, local education authority, provincial, national, or international level. The cases of Guatemala and Ghana are illustrative.⁸⁴

The Guatemalan case seems to best fit the “policy/practice-oriented research” model. Researchers consulted with policy-makers and practitioners – including those working at international, national, regional, and local levels; collected and analyzed data viewed to be relevant to key decisions; and then reported on the findings. Particularly during the first phase of the project in Guatemala, it was the government authorities and educators who took charge of training for and implementing changes designed to improve educational quality. Although the IEQ research coordinator increasingly played a role in training activities, this primarily consisted

⁸¹ Cousins and Leithwood, p. 361; Paul Goodman, “Critical Issues in Doing Research that Contributes to Theory and Practice,” in Edward Lawler, Allan Mohrman, Susan Mohrman, Gerald Leoford, and Thomas Cummings (eds.) *Doing Research that is Useful for Theory and Practice* (Washington, DC: Jossey-Bass, 1985), pp. 324-42; Reimer and McGinn, p. 25. Karen Seashore Louis [“Making Meaning of the Relationship between Research and Policy: An Epilogue.” *Educational Policy* 13 (1) (1999), p. 211] provides the important insight that unless one assumes that research generates generalizable conclusions (as is the case in the positivist paradigm), “[i]nvolving the users in research will not necessarily make the research more useable—except at that particular site.” Although Lawrence Stenhouse [*Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development* (London: Heinemann, 1975)] and his colleagues at the University of East Anglia in England popularized and legitimized collaborative action research in education, Stephen Corey [*Action Research to Improve School Practices* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1953)] – drawing on ideas of Kurt Lewin [“Action Research and Minority Problems,” *Journal of Social Issues* 2, no. 1 (1946), pp. 34-46], who coined the term, action research – may have been the first to promote this approach in education.

⁸² Hartwell et al., p. 5.

⁸³ Hartwell et al., p.21.

⁸⁴ The discussion below is abstracted from Adams et al., “Linking Research”.

of reporting on the research findings and illustrating the differences between the *Nueva Escuela Unitaria* (NEU) and non-NEU classroom activities using transcribed excerpts of videos filmed during the research. In two cases, however, the relationships differed from that associated with the policy/practice-oriented model. The first was that the Colombian consultant, who was heading up the NEU project – having been hired for the job by a U. S. consulting firm, was an active participant in designing the research and interpreting the findings. Through the role he played in the research activities, he stretched beyond what might be seen as the typical role for a policy maker or practitioner. The second case involved the teachers/*multiplicadores*, who became involved in disseminating the IEQ research findings in their efforts to promote the expansion of the NEU approach to instruction. While not involved in data collection and analysis, these teachers took on interpretation and dissemination roles traditionally associated primarily with researchers.

In Ghana, particularly at the beginning of the project, researchers' relationships with national ministry officials (and USAID and international organization representatives) generally resembled those that are associated with the policy/practice-oriented model. Researchers conducted research while ministry officials and agency personnel determined policies. One notable exception to this characterization at the national/international, however, was observed hinting toward collaborative action research model. This involved, as noted above, a USAID/Ghana official, who had a major influence on the research design in the second phase of data collection. At the local and regional levels in Ghana the relationships between researchers and educational practitioners (especially head teachers and circuit supervisors) developed in ways to make them even more in line with a "collaborative action research" model. Over the course of the project, head teachers and circuit supervisors increasingly participated in the research efforts to document the activities of teachers and students, and they assumed full responsibility for conducting the research in the third phase after fiscal and time constraints prevented host-country research team members from participating.

Participants in Policymaking and Practice Arena⁸⁵

Those most likely to be involved in policymaking and practice arenas are people who are identified by themselves and by others as educational “policymakers” or “practitioners.” However, even if only policymakers and/or practitioners participate, they vary with respect to: status and power. For example, although policymakers (and practitioners) in “developing” countries are not passive in the development assistance interaction, differences in symbolic and material resources make it difficult for a real dialogue to occur between “donors” and “recipients.” Fears of loss of funding if “developed” country ideas are not accepted is coupled with recognition that “developed” countries’ ideas can be used as status symbols within national and international contexts, whether or not one agrees with them. Thus, even sincere efforts at dialogue may yield a more uni-directional (sometimes viewed as a top-down) flow of information between policymakers and experts/consultants associated with multilateral organizations and bilateral agencies in “developed” countries, on one side, and policymakers and practitioners from “developing” countries on the other.

As with the case of participation in the research process, there have been some calls for researchers to become more directly and actively involved in the educational policymaking and practice arenas.⁸⁶ However, none of the approaches discussed in the previous section promote

⁸⁵ This and the previous section discuss the issues “as if” the terms – theory, research, policy, and practice – are distinct and unrelated, a conclusion that can be reached by reviewing common definitions. For example, *Theory* may be defined as a “set of interrelated principles and definitions that serves conceptually to organize selected aspects of the empirical world in a systematic way” [George Theodorson and Achilles Theodorson, *Modern Dictionary of Sociology* (New York: Thomas H. Crowell, 1969), p. 436.] In defining *research*, a “systematic and objective attempt to study a problem,” there is a need to differentiate between “basic research” (“conducted for the purpose of scientific theories or the basic principles of a discipline”) and “applied research” (“that can be used to solve some practical problems ... of business, government, labor unions, etc.”) [Ibid., p. 347]. *Policy* can be defined as “a definite course of action adopted for the sake of expediency, facility, etc.” by a business, government, labor union, other collectivity or individual [*Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1994), p. 1113]. And a definition of *practice* could include “the action or process of performing or doing something” or “the exercise or pursuit of a profession or occupation” [Ibid., p. 1128]. While the above cited definitions highlight the distinctions among the concepts, note that the reference to basic versus applied research signals relationships between research and theory, on the one hand, research and policy and practice, on the other. Similarly, J. Kenneth Benson [“The Underdevelopment of Theory and the Problem of Practice,” *Comparative Education Review* 34 (3) (1990), p. 386] states that at least implicitly “[t]heoretical arguments have practical, built-in concerns, and practical interventions usually have theoretical presupposition” – indicating a relationship between theory and practice, a notion captured by the term *praxis*. Additionally, Bradley Levinson and Margaret Sutton [“Policy as Practice: A Sociocultural Approach to the Study of Educational Policy,” in Bradley Levinson and Margaret Sutton (eds.) *New Approaches to Studying Educational Policy Formation and Appropriation* (New York: Ablex, 2000), p. 1/manuscript] have sought to reduce the division between policy and practice by reconceptualizing “the notion of policy itself as a complex social practice, an ongoing process of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse social and institutional contexts.” Similarly, Robert Donmoyer [“Empirical Research as Solution and Problem: Two Narratives of Knowledge Use,” *International Journal of Educational Research* 23 (2) (1995), p. 152] posits that “classrooms are important policy making arenas and ... teachers are significant policy-makers” and Joyce Epstein [“New Connections for Sociology and Education: Contributing to School Reform,” *Sociology of Education* 69 (extra) (1996), p. 12] suggests that “in the end, educational policies are expressed by teachers and administrators in their daily activities with children, families, and other educators.”

⁸⁶ Gene Hall and David Carter [“Epilogue: Implementing Change in the 1990s: Paradigms, Practices and Possibilities,” in *International Perspectives on Educational Reform and Policy Implementation*, eds. David Carter and Marnie O’Neill (London: Falmer Press, 1995), p. 172] argue, perhaps too optimistically, that the “creation of information-rich environments[,] allowing all stakeholders in the change process to have equal access to information which is both empowering and power-equalizing[,] can help us break the lock of inertia and tradition when

such a role change for theorists/researchers.⁸⁷ Another approach for linking theorists/researchers and policymakers/practitioners, what we call *research as collective praxis*, implicates members of both theorist/researcher and policymaker/practitioner communities in substantial role changes.⁸⁸ Key assumptions of the “research as collective praxis” model are that a) researchers acknowledge and act upon their political commitments and b) they do so in the context of theorizing and practice (i.e., praxis) with both professionals and non-professionals, such as students and community members.⁸⁹ In this way, the line between “researcher” and “policy maker” or “practitioner” becomes blurred as those who identify (or are typified) primarily as playing one of these roles, in fact, play both. Not only do policy makers, administrators, teachers, students, and community members participate in research, but “researchers” become active participants in various settings, working with others to understand and change schools and society.⁹⁰

Choices of who participates in decision making about policy and practice in education would also include: parents, students, and other citizens. Such participation in school affairs is generally valued because it enables “democratic” influence on educational policies and practice.⁹¹ However, we should remember that there are different forms and levels of participation, not all of which are related to significant influence on or authority in the decision-making process⁹² and that efforts to promote participation, particularly token forms, may reflect an “underlying crisis in democratic institutions,” which creates a need to legitimize the status quo by defining certain areas within which ‘democratic participation’ can occur.”⁹³

The ideal IEQ approach gives preference to participation by a variety of groups in the processes of making decisions about policy and practice.⁹⁴ This preference is in line with the

implementing change.” While seemingly ignoring the possibility that more information can also accentuate disagreements and conflicts among the stakeholders, they do recognize that differences could arise because some participants in the change process may (re)create information as well as receive it, while others may only be on the receiving end (p. 77).

⁸⁷ Whyte. For example, within the “collaborative action research,” although the “practitioner” assumes rights and responsibilities in the research process, the “researcher” is involved primarily as a collaborator in research process and remains somewhat detached from the “professional” and “political” activity of educational policy making and practice.

⁸⁸ See Lather; Y. Bodemann, “The Problem of Sociological Praxis,” *Theory and Society* 5 (1978), pp. 387-420; W. Carr and S. Kemmis, *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research* (London: Falmer Press, 1986); Gitlin et al.; James Ludwig and Jennifer Gore, “Extending Power and Specifying Method within the Discourse of Activist Research,” in Andrew Gitlin (ed.) *Power and Method: Political Activism and Educational Research* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 227-38; Robert McTaggart, “Principles for Participatory Action Research.” *Adult Education Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (1991), p. 176... This approach is in line with what Wagner (“The Unavoidable Intervention,” p. 16) terms “co-learning agreements” (in which the “division of labor ... [is] more ambiguous, as both researchers and practitioners are regarded as agents of inquiry and as objects of inquiry ... [and] both are engaged in action and reflection”).

⁸⁹ Michelle Fine, “The Politics of Research and Activism,” *Gender and Society* 3 (4) (1989), pp. 549-58; Gitlin et al.; Shulamit Reinharz, “Dimensions of Experiential Method,” in *On Becoming a Social Scientist* (Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1984), pp. 308-68; G. Vio Brossi and R. de Wit (eds.), *Investigación Participativa y Praxis Rural* (Lima, Peru: Mosca Azul, 1981).

⁹⁰ Adams et al., “Linking Research,” pp. 1-3/manuscript.

⁹¹ Paulo Viera da Cunha and Maria Valeira Junho Peña, “The Limits and Merits of Participation.” Policy Research Working Paper No. 1938 (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 1997).

⁹² See Sherry Arnstein, “Eight Rings on the Ladder of Citizen Participation,” in *Citizen Participation: Effecting Community Change*, eds. Edgar Cahn and Barry Passett (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971).

⁹³ Nicholas Beattie, “Formalized Parent Participation in Education: A Comparative Perspective (France, German Federal Republic, England and Wales).” *Comparative Education* 14 (1) (1978), p. 42.

⁹⁴ Reimers and McGinn [p. 110] make a critical point that a “major difficulty with participatory approaches in education policy dialogue is that many organizational and political cultures are not supportive of participation and

general IEQ philosophy of working in “collaborat[ion] with developing countries undertaking educational reform.”⁹⁵ The statements below are illustrative:

- The IEQ project is designed to develop a “country by country focus ... and to involve people throughout the educational system, such as those responsible for setting policy, developing tests, training teachers, writing textbooks, teaching pupils, and supervising teachers.”⁹⁶
- “[S]tudents, parents, teachers and community leaders [should] become involved in determining school contents and in assessing their validity for their lives ... [and] share these experiences between communities and with District Education Offices and Ministries of Education.”⁹⁷

During the first five years of the IEQ project in Ghana, Guatemala, and Mali, the following groups participated in discussions about, and perhaps had some input in, decisions about educational policy and practice: host country policymakers, administrators, supervisors, teachers, students, parents, other community members as well as nongovernmental organization, bilateral agency, and multilateral agency officials. Such opportunities for participation were organized through international, national, regional, and local gatherings (e.g., an international conference in Guatemala, a national *Colloque* in Mali, and regional and school level meetings convened in Ghana). Interestingly, however, (host country and U.S.-consultant) researchers generally played a limited role with respect to policy and practice planning and implementation.⁹⁸

As noted above in Ghana and Guatemala, the relationships between researchers and educational policymakers and practitioners were in many ways similar to those associated the policy/practice-oriented model. The host country research team, representing research units in the two ministries of education, consulted primarily with national- and international-level educational policymakers and practitioners prior to conducting research that they (and U.S. consultants) perceived to be relevant to improving educational quality. The research team then reported their findings to local as well as national and international audiences of policy makers and practitioners. Two exceptions were observed in Ghana. First, during the final year of the IEQ project the coordinator of the research team was appointed to be a member of the Ministry of Education’s Executive Committee for Teacher Training, thus incorporating her more formally into a national policy-making role. Second, during the latter phases of the project host country researchers assumed a fairly active role in promoting educational change, not only through participating in the organization and implementation of training workshops but also in assuming quasi-supervisory roles in relation to teachers and, thus, quasi-collegial roles in relation to head teachers and circuit supervisors.

Moreover, while in general a policy/practice-oriented model fit the case in Mali. Malian researchers (who worked within research units of government ministries) took a more active role in the policy and practice arenas, e.g., training and supervising teachers to implement the instructional strategies and other interventions developed within the IEQ project. Thus, in Mali the researchers’ role was more in line with that implied by the “research as collective practice”

democracy. Public administration in some countries is highly hierarchical and participatory approaches represent a major cultural change.”

⁹⁵ American Institutes for Research, “Conceptual Framework,” p. 1)

⁹⁶ Hartwell et al., p. 5.

⁹⁷ (Hartwell et al., p. 25.

⁹⁸ The following discussion is adopted from Adams et al., “Linking Research.”

model, in that they became more directly and actively involved in the process of (educational) change.⁹⁹ The same can be said for at least one of the U.S.-consultant researchers, who drew on his general theory/research knowledge and professional experience to recommend various interventions to be implemented, despite their not being found to be factors affecting language achievement during the first phase of the research.

Implementing and Sustaining Policies/Practices in (De)centralized Systems

Implementation can be conceived as “the process of putting into practice an idea, program, or set of activities and structures new to the people attempting or expected to change.”¹⁰⁰ Fullan goes on to explain that the idea (etc.) “may be externally imposed or voluntarily sought; explicitly defined in detail in advance or developed and adapted incrementally through use; designed to be used uniformly or deliberately planned so that the users can make modifications according to the perceptions of the needs of the situation.”¹⁰¹ The last contrast, of course, is related to a frequently debated choice in approach to implementing and sustaining educational changes, that of centralization versus decentralization as an approach for organizing educational systems.¹⁰² Moreover, even when pursuing decentralization, there are

⁹⁹ However, the complementary stretching of policy-maker and practitioner roles was not as apparent. Policy-makers and practitioners at various levels of the system mainly related to the project as sources of data or audiences for reports of research findings. The interesting exceptions to this conclusion, though, involved the significant involvement in designing the research – albeit in contradictory ways – by two policy makers: a) the USAID/Mali official at the beginning of the project and b) the Minister of Education who was appointed just before the start of Phase II of the project. As noted above, the former discouraged any research focus on schools using the transitional bilingual program, and the latter mandated such a focus.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Fullan with Suzanne Stiegelbauer, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 2nd edition (New York: Teachers College Press, 1991), p. 65. See also Guy Peters, “Implementation of Policy,” in *The Encyclopedia of Democracy*, Volume III, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1995).

¹⁰¹ Fullan, *The New Meaning*. Thus, unlike some conceptions of implementation, Fullan’s approach is consonant with that of Levinson and Sutton [p. 1], who propose an alternative concept of appropriation, which “denotes the way that social actors interpret existing policy and draw it into their own schemes of sociocultural practice, thereby creating in effect their own localized policy variants.” See also Milbrey McLaughlin [“Learning from Experience: Lessons from Policy Implementation,” in Allan Odden (ed.) *Educational Policy Implementation* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991)] for discussion of “bargaining” and “negotiation,” as key elements of implementation: “At each point in the policy process, a policy is transformed as individuals interpret and respond to it” (p. 189).

¹⁰² Arguments for decentralization range from it being the only way to promote relevant change to it being a necessary, but not sufficient conditions for promoting change. Critics counter, arguing that decentralization initiatives tend to enhance centralized social and political control, pass the burden of educational reform to the local level without insuring equal access to resources. Others have focused on the irony of national-local decentralization in the context of globalization, suggesting that the key issues are who can and does participate in decisions about research, policy, and practice; who exercises more or less power in such decisions; and in whose interests power is exercised. For a range of viewpoints, see Per Dalin, *School Development: Theories and Strategies*. An International Handbook (London: Kessell, 1998); R. Elmore [“School Decentralization: Who Gains? Who Loses?,” in *Decentralization and School Improvement*, eds. Jane Hannaway and Martin Carnoy (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1993); E. Fiske, *Decentralization of Education: Politics and Consensus* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1996); Michael Fullan, *Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform* (Philadelphia: Falmer Press, 1993); Mark Ginsburg (ed.) *Understanding Educational Reform in Global Context* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991); W. Hoopers, “Teachers’ resource centres in southern African education: an investigation into decentralization and educational change,” in Lene Buchert (ed.), *Education Reform in the South in the 1990s, Education on the move* (Geneva: UNESCO, 1998); Rita Kelly and K. Palumbo, “Theories of Policy-Making,” in Mary Hawkesworth and Maurice Kogan, *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 652; Moses Kiggundu, *Managing Organizations in Developing Countries. An Operational and Strategic Approach* (New York: Kumarian Press, 1989); Jon Lauglo, “Forms of Decentralization and their Implications for Education,” *Comparative Education*, vol. 31, no.1 (1995),

different approaches to decentralization, including deconcentration, delegation, devolution, and privatization.¹⁰³

Issues of participation and ownership are particularly important if one considers not only the initial phase of implementing educational change but also subsequent phase of activity associated with sustaining efforts to improve educational quality. Adams et al. distinguish between the process of *initiating* change, which may include:

anticipating the available supports and obstacles; mobilizing supports; creating necessary organizational adaptations; identifying and involving stakeholders; and developing a process of communication and understanding among key actors in order to achieve a working consensus about the new intervention or practice,¹⁰⁴

and the process of *sustaining* change,¹⁰⁵ which depends upon:

the ability to generate, understand, and utilize information on evolving intervention, performance, and contextual conditions. ... A few influential and committed

pp.5-29; Jon Lauglo and F. McLean (eds.), *The Control of Education. International Perspectives on the Centralized-Decentralized Debate* (London, Institute of Education, 1985); Henry Levin and Marlaine Lockheed, *Effective Schools in Developing Countries* (Washington, D.C.: Falmer Press, 1993); Sylvain Lourie, "Does education need strategic piloting?," in Jacques Hallak and Françoise Caillods (eds.) *Educational Planning: The International Dimension* (London: Garland Publishing, 1995); C. J. Martin, "More for Less: The Mexican cult of educational efficiency and its consequences at school level," in Lene Buchert (ed.), *Education Reform in the South in the 1990s, Education on the move* (Geneva: UNESCO, 1998); Cheng Kay Ming, "Commonality among diversity: a review of planning and administration of education in Asia," in Jacques Hallak and Françoise Caillods (eds.) *Educational Planning: The International Dimension* (London: Garland Publishing, 1995); Noel McGinn, "Reforming educational governance: Centralization/ Decentralization," in R. Arnove, P. Althbach, and G. Kelly (eds.) *Emergent Issues in Education: Comparative Perspectives* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992); Anders Narman, "Education in the Framework of Structural Adjustment: Some Critical Aspects," in Lene Buchert (ed.), *Education Reform in the South in the 1990s, Education on the move* (Geneva: UNESCO, 1998); Fernando Reimers, "The Role of the Community in Expanding Educational Opportunities: The EDUCO Schools in El Salvador, in *Education and Development: Tradition and Innovation*, eds. J. Lynch, C. Modgil, and S. Modgil (London: Cassell, 1997); D. A. Rondinelli, J. Middleton, & A. M. Verspoor, *Planning Education Reforms in Developing Countries: The Contingency Approach*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990); D. Rondinelli and G. Nellis, "Assessing Decentralization Policies in Developing Countries: The Case for Cautious Optimism," *Development Policy Review*, 4 (1984): 3- 23; Benno Sander, "Management and administration of education systems: major trends and issues", in Jacques Hallak and Françoise Caillods (eds.), *Educational Planning: The International Dimension* (London: Garland Publishing, 1995); John Smyth (ed.) *A Socially Critical View of the Self-Managing School* (London: Falmer, 1993); Hans Weiler, "Control Versus Legitimation: The Politics of Ambivalence," in Jane Hannaway and Martin Carnoy (eds.) *Decentralization and School Improvement: Can We Fill the Promise?* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1993); Hans Weiler, *Education and Power: The Politics of Educational Decentralization in Comparative Perspective* (Stanford, CA: CERAS, 1989).

¹⁰³ *Deconcentration* does not involve transfer of authority or responsibility from central government to local government, but rather the setting up of local offices of the central government. *Delegation* involves central authorities giving to local governments or semi-autonomous organizations, which are not wholly controlled by the central government, responsibilities for implementing policies that were determined centrally. *Devolution* refers to a situation in which central government transfers some authority for decision-making, finance and management to quasi-autonomous units of local government. While *privatization* can occur in centralized or decentralized arrangements, when central government contracts out responsibilities and/or authority for organizing schools to small/local private organizations or when central government gives responsibility and/or authority for financing schooling to individuals or families, we can view such privatization as a form of decentralization.

¹⁰⁴ Don Adams with Judy Sylvester and Yidan Wang, "Translating Research Findings into Practice: Initiating and Sustaining Improvements in Educational Quality, draft document for the Improving Educational Quality project, 12 November 1993, p. 2. See also Adams et al., "Implementing and Sustaining Changes."

¹⁰⁵ Gene Hall ["The Local Educational Change Process," in *International Perspectives on Educational Reform and Policy Implementation*, eds. David Carter and Marnie O'Neille (Washington, DC: Falmer Press, 1995), p. 120] discusses sustaining educational change in terms of "institutionalization ... a phase where use of the innovation has become part of the regular routine in terms of practice, organizational rules and procedures, and system support."

individuals may have been sufficient to introduce the new practices; however, sufficient resources, sound planning and [organizational] development activities, efficient information networks, strong individual commitment, and continually improving technical skills are likely to be necessary during the continuation phase.¹⁰⁶

The ideal IEQ approach focuses on linking educational policy and practice at various levels of the system regardless of the degree of (de)centralization. The quotes below are illustrative:

- The IEQ project conducts classroom-anchored research to improve “the day-to-day practice of teaching ... and “to inform [national education] sectoral policy.”
- Following the *assessment* and *assimilation* of the IEQ cycle of activity, *action* is planned and implemented to improve “learning throughout the system;”

During the first five years of the IEQ project in Ghana, Guatemala, and Mali efforts to implement and sustain educational quality took place in the context of systems that had strong centralized traditions that were opening up to some degrees of decentralization. One aspect of the strategy, as noted above, was to encourage and facilitate the participation of a variety of groups at the local, regional, national, and international level. It also entailed drawing on classroom-anchored research to shape policies and practices at the various levels of the system.¹⁰⁷

To begin with, in each of three countries IEQ research was focused generally on a major *national* educational reform initiative, which both predated IEQ and was (at least in part) funded – and, therefore, shaped – by an extra-national organization (USAID).¹⁰⁸ And in the case of Mali, the *Nouvelle Ecole Fondamentale* reform, introduced by a new Minister of Education just prior to the beginning of the second cycle of the IEQ research, was also a centrally – in this case, nationally – determined policy, on which IEQ researchers were required to focus. Moreover, in all three countries, many of the initial research design decisions were made based on the advice of – or at least with the approval of – officials at the “center,” whether nationally (i.e., representatives of ministries) or internationally (i.e., representatives of USAID missions and international organizations). Additionally, prominent dialogue efforts were undertaken in a centralized context in which many participants were representatives of national and international agencies.

A somewhat decentralized structure for IEQ efforts to link research to educational policy and practice in each country, however, is indicated by the fact that these national events – the conferences, colloques, seminars, and advisory committee meetings – often included administrators, supervisors, teachers, and parents from the local areas in which the IEQ research and other activities were being conducted. Furthermore, many dialogue activities were organized on a regional or local school level, thus creating opportunities for a more decentralized approach to developing and refining classroom teaching practices stemming from ideas generated by IEQ research or based on professional insights of host country or U.S.-consultant

¹⁰⁶ Adams et al., “Translating Research Findings,” p. 8. Similarly, D. Rondinelli, J. Middleton, and A. Verspoor [*Planning Educational Reforms in Developing Countries: The Contingency Approach* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 10] argue that sustaining educational reforms in developing countries requires assessing and reducing lacks in “the physical infrastructure, experienced and skilled professionals ... [and] strong institutions and organizations.”

¹⁰⁷ The following discussion is adopted from Adams et al., “Linking Research.”

¹⁰⁸ While the influence of USAID officials – both in Washington and in the mission of each core country – cannot be discounted, it should be noted that ministry of education officials and IEQ personnel helped shape the decisions to focus on USAID-funded projects: PREP in Ghana, BEST in Guatemala, and BEEP in Mali.

researchers. In the context of IEQ-related activities in all three countries there was certainly an increase in the level of local participation in discussing and shaping educational practice.

With respect to educational policy, though, the IEQ project inserted itself into, and functioned for the most part as a part of, a centralized process of planning and implementation. In a sense the IEQ activity at the regional and local level served to disseminate and promote the policy (and practice) reforms that had been determined centrally – whether at the national or international level. Generally, local input was sought mainly for identifying problems with and solutions for implementation of the nationally and internationally determined reforms in educational policy and practice.

One notable exception to this conclusion is worth mentioning, in that while it provides an example of “bottom-up” policy change, it clarifies how those at the top or center of the system retains considerable control over at least the timing of policy reforms. The case in point occurred in Ghana. In 1993, the host country researchers reported at the “Conference on Improving the Educational Quality of Primary Schools” on the finding from the first phase of their research that Ghanaian pupils’ English language learning was hampered because textbooks were not available in some schools and, when available, the texts were not being used by pupils. Moreover, the researchers found that: a) textbook availability was limited because head teachers did not have funds to travel to district distribution centers to obtain the PREP-sponsored books for their schools and b) even when the books were available, teachers did not distribute the texts to pupils to avoid having to pay for any damage the books might suffer in the hands of pupils. The dialogue stimulated by these findings eventuated in two changes in national-level policy, although not until 1995 – approximately one and one-half years later and after the findings had been replicated in the second phase of the research. First, a new policy was adopted authorizing payment to head teachers’ for the cost of traveling to district offices to collect textbooks for their schools. Second, the policy, which held teachers fiscally responsible for textbooks that were soiled or damaged by student use in class or at home, was rescinded.

The fact that teachers’ and head teachers’ views about the negative effects that national policies had on educational quality led to changes in these policies suggests that the IEQ project facilitated more local participation in policy making and, in this case, a bottom-up reform. We should note, however, that it took a centrally organized team of university-based researchers, who were collaborating with U. S. consultants in the context of a USAID-funded project, to communicate the message to national policy makers. And, indeed, even their message did not result in policy changes until after they reported the same conclusions based on findings from a second phase of the research.

Approaches to Capacity Development

According to Levinger, human capacity is “an individual's ability [including skills, attitudes, and behaviors] to perform tasks which are necessary to survive and prosper” and is “the byproduct of participation opportunities that are both available and accessed.”¹⁰⁹ In designing programs to develop human capacity¹¹⁰ to participate effectively in research activities and educational policy/practice decision-making, one

¹⁰⁹ See Beryl Levinger, *Critical Transitions: Human Capacity Development Across the Lifespan* (Newton, MA: Education Development Center, 1996), pp. 3 and 5.

¹¹⁰ Moses Kiggundu [*Managing Organizations in Developing Countries: An Operational and Strategic Approach* (New York: Kumarian Press, 1989), p. 187] distinguishes between human resource/capacity development and human resource/capacity utilization, noting that too often more attention is paid to the former and not to the latter.

might adopt Levinger's social constructivist theory of learning¹¹¹ or operate within a behaviorist,¹¹² social learning,¹¹³ or humanist¹¹⁴ framework. That is because, in this conception of human capacity, participation is both a desired consequence and a necessary antecedent. Moreover, there is a choice between individual human capacity development and/or institutional capacity development, with some conceiving the former as necessary but not sufficient for the latter.¹¹⁵

The ideal IEQ approach places capacity development at the center of the process, especially in relation to developing host-country researchers' and other stakeholders' knowledge and skill in conducting and/or interpreting research. For instance, in the project proposal it was acknowledged that:

[W]e may find that our host country partners are less interested in the innovations themselves than in developing their capacity to design, implement, and evaluate innovations generally. ... Technical assistance contractors will be increasingly judged not as architects and installers of turnkey systems but rather as facilitators for developing countries to be able to access the wide range of experience and expertise that the United States and other countries have to offer.¹¹⁶

And in a project paper devoted specifically to "Strengthening Skills, it is stated that "[b]oth institutional and individual capacity to apply multi-methodological research skills are strengthened through IEQ. Local institutions host IEQ teams who lead the research efforts. New

¹¹¹ Levinger (p. 7) examines three levels of the environment – national, community and household – in identifying the *inhibitors* and *enablers* of participation opportunities in a given environment: "At the macro- or national level, the focus is on policy choices and investment priorities. At the micro- or community level, the focus is how these policy choices and investment priorities get translated into services and programs. At the household level, attention is given to those factors that mitigate toward or against individual decisions to access participation opportunities as well as the consequences of these choices." These levels as well as the international level should be considered in an examination of the factors that constrain or enable capacity development for educational researchers, policymakers, practitioners in the context of efforts to improve educational quality.

¹¹² B. F. Skinner, *The Behavior of Organisms* (New York: Appleton, 1938).

¹¹³ Albert Bandura and Richard Walters, *Social Learning and Personality Development* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963).

¹¹⁴ Carl Rogers, *Freedom to Learn* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing, 1969).

¹¹⁵ For instance, in his discussion of "learning organizations," Peter Senge [*The Fifth Discipline* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), p. 287] explains that "[w]hile traditional organizations require management systems that control people's behavior, learning organizations invest in improving the quality of thinking, the capacity for reflection and team learning, and the ability to develop shared visions and shared understandings of complex ... issues." See also Biddle and Anderson; Brause and Mayher; John Meyer and David Baker, "Forming American Educational Policy with International Data: Lessons from the Sociology of Education." *Sociology of Education* 69 (extra) (1996), pp. 123; Epstein; Michael Fullan, *Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform* (London: Falmer Press, 1993); Mark Ginsburg and Leopold Klopfer (with Thomas Clayton, Michel Rakotomanana, Judy Sylvester, and Katherine Yasin, "Choices in Conceptualizing Classroom-Anchored Research and Linking it to Policy/Practice to Improve Educational Quality in 'Developing' Countries," *Research Papers in Education* 11 (3) (1996), pp. 239-54; Andrew Pettigrew, "Contextualist Research: A Natural Way to Link Theory and Practice," in Edward Lawler, Allan Mohrman, Susan Mohrman, Gerald Leoford, and Thomas Cummings (eds.) *Doing Research that is Useful for Theory and Practice* (Washington, DC: Jossey-Bass, 1985), pp. 225-26; George Psacharopoulos, "Comparative Education: From Theory to Practice, or Are You A:/neo.* or B:/*.ist?," *Comparative Education Review* 34 (3) (1990), p. 380; Reimers and McGinn; Lawrence Saha, Bruce Biddle, and Don Anderson. "Attitudes Towards Education Research Knowledge and Policymaking among American and Australian School Principals." *International Journal of Educational Research* 23 (2) (1995); Carol Weiss, "The Many Meanings of Research Utilization," in Don Anderson and Bruce Biddle (eds.) *Knowledge for Policy: Improving Education through Research* (London: Falmer, 1991).

¹¹⁶ Spector et al., pp. 5-6

skills, such as the use of qualitative research methods, are added to their professional repertoire.”¹¹⁷

During the first five years of the IEQ project in Ghana, Guatemala, and Mali, capacity development was focused primarily on methodological knowledge and skills for host country researchers (and sometimes other members of the countries) and secondarily on policy, practice, and participation knowledge and skills for a range of individuals. For instance, a variety of workshops were organized to develop the data collection and analysis capability of host country researcher. Some policymakers, administrators, and teachers sometimes also attended such workshops. In addition, in each country other programs were designed to enhance various groups knowledge about research-based knowledge, policy issues, alternative pedagogical practices, and approaches to participation.¹¹⁸ These programs or events were organized on a national, regional, local, and school level and were attended by host country researchers, policymakers, administrators, supervisors, teachers, parents, students, and other citizens as well as nongovernmental organization, bilateral agency, and multinational agency representatives. While these activities were not normally defined as “trainings,” it seems that knowledge and skills were transmitted at least in an implicit manner through modeling a process of who was invited to various national, regional, and local gatherings and allowing those in attendance to observe (and participate in) the dynamics of discussion and decision-making.

Conclusion

In this paper we have identified a set of choices confronted by those involved in efforts to improve educational quality in “developing” countries. These choices include: a) definitions of educational quality, b) sources of knowledge to use, c) paradigms and approaches to employ in undertaking research, d) levels of the system should the research focus, e) participants in designing and conducting research/evaluation studies, f) participants in deliberations about educational policies and practices, g) centralized or decentralized strategies to implement or sustain educational change, and h) capacities which need to be developed among the participants in such efforts. Our point is not that all those who participate in improving educational quality explicitly and consciously, let alone freely, make all of these choices. Rather our concern is to draw attention to the choices as an aid to analyzing specific projects and contexts.

We have seen that those involved in the Improving Educational Quality project have identified the preferences associated with IEQ’s “ideal approach” – an approach that suggests that some of the choices cannot be identified in advance and in a decontextualized fashion. Moreover, we have documented how the choices made during the first five years of the IEQ project did not always match the “ideal approach.” In part, this was because: a) choices had to be identified and made in contexts where ideologies and resource distributions sometimes rendered certain alternatives either invisible or seemingly not feasible and b) choices had to be negotiated among different individual and group actors, some of whom had greater power and resources upon which to draw. For example, certain definitions of quality, research approaches, and capacity development activities require more time, energy, and financial resources to pursue than others. Not all individual and group actors were involved in all phases of the decision-making about research approaches or policy/practice implementation strategies. And even when

¹¹⁷ Schubert, “Strengthening Skills,” p. 4.

¹¹⁸ This latter knowledge/skill area was transmitted more so in an implicit manner through modeling a process of who was invited to various national, regional, and local gatherings and demonstrating the dynamics of discussion and decision-making.

various actors were involved in deliberation and decisions, their ability to influence decisions sometimes depended on their varying degrees of control over financial resources (e.g., teachers or researchers versus Ministry of Education officials or USAID Mission representatives) or on their perceived differences in knowledge and expertise (e.g., US-based versus non-US-based researchers as well as researchers or educational experts versus teachers and parents).

Some readers may have begun reading this paper with the following question: What are the “best” choices to make. By this point, however, it should be clear that there is not a single or simple answer to this question. The answers depend among other things on one’s perspective, one’s role, and one’s context. However, if this paper stimulates reflection and dialogue about the complex processes of improving educational quality, then our mission has been accomplished. To the extent that such reflection and dialogue takes place, the various “choices” that are made will more likely be explicit rather than implicit ones. And hopefully such reflection and dialogue – as well as the decision-making processes – will involve a range of individuals and groups from both “developed” and “developing” countries.