INSIDE A CASE OF NORTH-SOUTH COLLABORATION IN POLICY RESEARCH ABOUT TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Yves Benett[i]
Formerly of the University of Huddersfield,
England

Abstract:
This article gives an insider account of the author's involvement in a protracted educational research partnership with The Gambia, in the context of North-South Collaboration and with the policy-research interface in education at issue. The article ends with the author reflecting on the future for North-South Collaborative educational research in Developing Countries in the light of global trends in the formulation of educational policy.

Keywords: North-South, policy research, collaboration, education, developing countries

1. Introduction

Over many years now, there has been a growing awareness that educational research in and with developing countries presents a number of "problems" (Miron and Sorensen, 1991; Mayhew *et al*, 2008; NCCR, *2013;* Atkins *et al*, 2016; Johnson, 2016); for example, seemingly, the North-South collaboration (in educational research) is "not between equals" always, and such collaboration is often "a process initiated in the North". Significantly, too, although a "great deal" of the educational research "on developing countries" was policy-oriented (King, 1990), yet, in Africa:

a) policy research remained "scant"
b) "many African researchers" still remained "isolated .... from the arenas of policy-making"
c) policy formulation remained a "top-down rather than bottom-up process which does not allow for the involvement of researchers and other stakeholders" (ADEA, 1998)

And when, some years ago, as a researcher in education in the North (though originally from the South), I began to reflect on the nature of the policy process in education, I found myself questioning whether the published descriptive accounts of

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[i] Correspondence: email benett@btinternet.com

the North South collaborative research scene (in education) were always sufficiently explicit about the different types of research undertaken, about the specific tiers of the policy process which such research was expected to influence, and about the genesis and outcomes of such collaboration. It was therefore with these questions in mind that I worked on the present article.

1.1 Aim

In broad terms, the aim of this article is two-fold:

a) to give an insider account of my involvement, at the sharp end, in a distinctive approach to collaborative educational research projects in one developing country (The Gambia), with due attention to some salient operational aspects of the projects

b) to reflect on the future for North-South collaboration in TEVT policy research.

Achieving this aim has entailed, necessarily, first bringing into relief the policy-research interface within the policy process in education, including Technical Education and Vocational Training (TEVT) given the importance of this education sector in the light of the United Nations (2015) *Sustainable Development Goals* and of the need for "rethinking education" (UNESCO, 2015). Hence, the next section is about the policy process and draws largely on the relevant literature.

2. Revisiting the policy process in education (including TEVT)

2.1 The Policy Trajectory in education (including TEVT)

There has been a growing body of evidence (Ball, 1990, 1994; Bowe, 1992) that the processes by which education policies are formulated and implemented are not straightforward and transparent, and that there is no "one right way" of going about policy formulation and implementation. (Sack, 1995). The policy process is instead a multi-faceted, non-linear, diffuse process driven by political negotiations and compromise, rather than by a cool appraisal of research data. Competing groups, interests and ideologies fight over the shape of educational policy. The whole process may be viewed as a "policy trajectory" a term which encapsulates the notion that policy-making proceeds in different phases.

Furthermore, as Figure 1 shows, the policy process is, in general, multi-tiered too (Ritchie, 1996); that is, there is a whole complex of policy layers with interconnections between them so that, on the one hand, the Primary Policy (such as the policy of "Basic Education For All") operates through the other tiers of the policy process and, on the other hand, what takes place at the lower levels can lead to the re-assessment and modification of the policies at the higher levels.

Figure 1: Tiers of the policy process
(for example, possible tiers for the Primary policy of "*Basic Education For All*")

Central policies	Those policies which stem from the Primary policy, such as a policy about lowering the school entry age
Strategic policies	Those policies designed to implement the Central policies, such as a policy to build more classrooms
Operational policies	Those policies which represent the practical workings of the policies formulated at the higher levels, such as a policy for the planning and designing of more classrooms

To sharpen the point being made, a Central policy is never a precise document, "a frozen text" (Crump, 1992); there are spaces and contradictions which can be exploited at various levels (regional, local, institutional). Policies thus become "refracted" (Trowler, 1998), as they are decoded and implemented during their respective trajectories through the various phases of the policy process. In addition to the "top-down" process implied in Figure 1 above, and in contrast to the ADEA (1998) statement quoted above, there is ordinarily a "bottom-up" process during which policy executors may have some freedom to interpret policies in the context of their own experiences, resources, and cultures.

2.1.1 Policy trends in TEVT

To return to TEVT, the evidence is that, in recent years, the primary policies in TEVT have been engendered by a wide array of influential and interrelated economic, social, political and educational factors (see, for example, ADB, 1991; World Bank, 1991; DESA, 1998; Lauglo, 1993; Williams and Raggatt, 1998; Wilson, 1993; Psacharopoulos, 1996, 1989; Skinningsrud, 1995). Thus, the many influences on established TEVT policies can be traced back to, for example:

 a) structural adjustment;
 b) market theory;
 c) globalisation;
 d) information technology;
 e) skills shortages;
 f) educational ideologies (such as competence-based curricula).

2.2 Policy Research
2.2.1 The purpose of research in the policy process

What then is the purpose of research in the policy process? Psacharopoulos (1989) asserts that "the substance of a policy should be based on *research- proven* cause-effect relationships" and "not on goodwill or intuition"; and Middleton (1993) claims that vocational training and technical education have been the subject of considerable research, albeit in industrial countries. The point is that policy-makers need relevant information that can guide them in taking difficult decisions even if, as reported by Puryear (1995), the mentality of some government officials in developing countries is that "you do not need statistics or research for policy". Planners too need information because Educational Planning can only be "a limited exercise" without an effective link

with research (Morales-Gomez, 1989), and in the absence of such a link, planning simply responds to immediate political pressures. And as for Aid agencies, information plays a role in confirming and reinforcing their investment strategies (King, 1990).

From a global perspective, the future points increasingly to the continuous growth in the production of knowledge (Ruberti, 1995) and to the demand for such knowledge so that countries can compete on the global stage. Specifically, the demand for information about educational systems is increasing and users of educational services (such as, parents, employers and students) will probably be less willing than in the past to accept the lack of information (Puryear, 1995). Consequently, if national TEVT policies are to be rooted in the reality of Development (economic, social, and political) in developing countries, and decisions are to be governed by information and knowledge, relevant issues need to be researched and relevant findings disseminated.

2.2.2 The interface of policy with research

The two well-known models of the interface of policy with research are both vulnerable to much criticism (Trowler, 1998); they are:

a) the Engineering model
b) the Enlightenment model

The Engineering model with its "scientific" stance, conveys a view of social "reality" as static and external to the researcher. The model rather assumes that it is possible for rigorous, educational research to access this social "reality", and to inform policy-makers about it, by providing them with reliable, statistical, "hard data" about such matters as enrolment ratios on courses. In stark contrast, the Enlightenment model is predicated on the assumption that social "reality" is to some extent socially constructed. In this model, the research aim is to enlighten policy-makers by providing insights, informed judgements, and challenges to the accepted definitions of educational problems.

The strengths and weaknesses of these respective philosophical positions have been well rehearsed (see, for example, Popkewitz, 1984; Halpin and Troyna, 1994; Bryman, 1995). However, it seems that the influence of the quantitative paradigm "remains paramount" in "many policy circles" and in "many of the major international development assistance agencies" (Crossley and Vulliamy, 1996); and, particularly with regard to evaluation research, not only do planners consider quantitatively oriented assessments (which can provide "hard" data to support policy decisions) to be more reliable than qualitative approaches to assessments, but often their planners discard ethnographic approaches (Morales-Gomez, 1989)

Concerns about the research process in education at the operational level have abounded in the past (see, for example, ADEA, 1998; Benett, 1994; Vorbeck, 1995). According to Puryear (1995), some countries would produce information based on data collection procedures that were flawed and others would focus almost exclusively on educational inputs, to the detriment of processes (such as what happens within classrooms) and of some output measures; and "many of the world's poorest countries" had made "little progress in producing reliable data on their educational systems".

Also, much TEVT research was viewed primarily as macro-analysis (because the TEVT discourse is linked to macro-economic policy). This analysis focused on forecasting educational development within a framework of economic indicators, and on the efficiency and effectiveness of large-scale, national, innovatory training programmes.

2.2.3 Research Capacity in developing countries

Another major concern was that "very few developing countries" had "the critical mass of expertise available to pursue the range of research tasks necessary in Education" (King, 1991). Indeed, even if, as in some developing countries, the indigenous research capacity had been developed over decades, it remained largely under-utilized, in spite of the fact that the information produced by local researchers might be better tuned to the problems that erode the effectiveness and efficiency of education (Morales-Gomez, 1989). It seems that government officials in developing countries might "suffer from a sort of inferiority complex which leads them to favour the help of an outsider rather than the expertise of local specialists" (Salmi, 1985).

3. North-South Collaboration in Educational Research (in general)

King (1985, 1990, 1991) has identified several variants of North-South collaborative research in the past. Such research has been predominantly a form of Evaluation Research tied to and shaped by projects which are funded by external Aid agencies, and implemented by consultancy firms or by university research units. The collaboration is on a contractor-customer basis (see Burgess, 1993) and the research findings are the property of the Aid agencies.

Among the other modes of collaboration, two well-known ones are those organized through:

a) institutional links (between academic departments of Northern and Southern Higher Education institutions) with research as a component of the linkage.

b) formal research networks, such as the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA) which attempts, with financial support from countries in the North, to bring researchers into contact with decision-makers (Tapsoba, 1998).

But how does such North-South collaboration operate in practice? It is at this juncture, that I draw on my "hands on "experience of researching in developing countries (namely, in India, Turkey, Ghana, Mali and The Gambia), and choose to focus on my collaborative research projects in The Gambia, and, for that matter, only on those research projects which relate to technical education and vocational training (thus leaving out my other collaborative research projects).

4. My experience of collaborative TEVT policy research in The Gambia

For the sake of clarity, I have disaggregated the information about the policy research projects in which I have collaborated with Gambian nationals by identifying, for each such project, the "Type of policy research" and the "Policy tier" targeted (see Table 1).

The "Policy Tiers" in the table are those mentioned in Figure 1 (Section 2.1) above. The typology of policy research is taken from the work of Hedges and Ritchie (1987) who, taking a broad view of policy research, have described the types of policy research as follows:

a) *Contextual research* (that is, research concerned with describing what exists: its form, nature and so on)

b) *Diagnostic research* (that is, research concerned with the reasons for what exists)

c) *Evaluative research* (that is, research concerned with the appraisal of operations or actions)

d) *Strategic research* (that is, research concerned with the development or formulation of plans for future actions).

At the risk of over-emphasizing the limitations of the present account of my collaborative research, I should stress that the account represents only my perspective on the collaboration, and that it is about the collaboration of only one University School of Education in the North, with one developing country, in one sector of education (the TEVT sector), over a period of some twelve years only.

A few points may be highlighted about the information displayed in Table 1. Thus, the table suggests that, although few researchers in Universities took an interest in research and development work in vocational training (Lauglo, 1993), there were possibilities for North-South Collaboration in locally-initiated, policy research within the TEVT sector, and that such research can be:

a) of different types (granted that the "contextual" and "diagnostic" types predominate)

b) of varying duration

c) about the management of public TEVT institutions

d) in connection with all the tiers of the policy process, except the "Primary" tier

e) about a range of issues

To give some indication of the background to and achievements of such a collaboration, three of its aspects are highlighted below, namely:

a) its Timeliness

b) its Funding

c) its Outcomes

Table 1: Particulars of the Collaborative policy research projects in The Gambia

Project				Type of policy research ***			
Title	Duration ****	Sponsor	Policy Tier *	Con textual	Diag Nostic	Evalua tive	Strat egic
1. The assessment of GTTI trainees on attachment	1988 (one year)	GTTI & UoH	Operational	√	√	√	--
2. A tracer study of the graduates of GTTI	1992-96 (6 years)	UNESCO & GTTI	Operational	√	√	√	--
3. Manpower needs and Labour Market Analysis for Engineering technicians in The Gambia	1993-99 (6 years)	UNESCO/ ODA/ DfID **	Strategic	√	√	√	√
4. Training and learning in the informal sector in The Gambia	1994-2000 (6 years)	UoH & ODA/DfID **	Operational	√	√	--	--
5. A study of high-level workforce needs in The Gambia	1997 (one month)	Government of The Gambia	Central Government	√	√	--	--
6. A survey of Skills Training Centres in The Gambia	1998 (three months)	UNESCO	Central Government	√	√	√	√
7. A study of the delivery system for GTTI technical training programmes	1999 (one month)	GTTI	Operational	√	√	√	√

[Key]:

* =	*See Section 2.1*		
** =	*Through a scholarship for a Gambian national*	*DfID =*	*Department for International Development (formerly the ODA)*
*** =	*See section 4*	*GTTI =*	*Gambia Technical Training Institute*
****=	*Approximate duration*	*ODA =*	*Overseas Development Administration*
☛ =	*Not applicable*	*UoH =*	*University of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire.*
√ =	*This type of policy research was used for this particular research*		

4.1 Timeliness

To take timeliness first, this particular North-South collaboration started at a propitious moment for both countries (The Gambia and England). The research projects listed in Table 1 reflect the heightened concern of The Gambian Government with the economic environment (and hence with TEVT) in the early 1980s when it had to confront the decline of its economy; and subsequently, in 1985 (EIU, 1994) when it had to embark on an IMF and World Bank backed Economic Recovery Programme (ERP). This ERP was followed by a Programme of Sustained Development (PSD) in 1990 which aimed to build on the achievements of the ERP and to create a policy environment conducive to private enterprise development.

On the education front, the "First National Conference on Education" in The Gambia was organised by the Ministry of Education in 1987 (MoE, 1996). There was concern at the conference that standards in vocational education and training were said

to be falling and that the blame for this was being put on the rather weak link between education and industry/commerce (Cole, 1992). Later, after the Gambia Technical Training Institute was set up and had started to offer training programmes (in 1983), questions were asked about the effectiveness of the Institute in terms of meeting the training needs of the economy (Bittaye, 1996) and, in particular, about the assessment of its trainees at the workplace (Cole, 1992). Indeed, the technical competence of the country's labour force came under close scrutiny. The World Bank (1990) commented that there were "great variations in terms of occupational capability within the existing workforce" and that at the lower levels "older workers frequently had little formal education" and could "often be functionally illiterate" (although they had "some degree of practical capability"). Employers in the engineering industry were experiencing considerable skills shortages amongst the low-level labour force; in particular, there was a shortage of general electricians, panel beaters, welders, agricultural mechanics, automotive maintenance technicians, and marine engineers (N'Jie, 1999).

The Commonwealth report on Tertiary Education in The Gambia (Williams *et al*, 1992) took the view that in order for the country "to compete in the modem world", it would have to "master modem technologies and to raise skill levels in the population at large", and "a programme of sustained development in secondary, technical and higher education" was essential to the future of the Gambian economy.

Later on, the Government of The Gambia (GG, 1996) set out guidelines for the transformation of The Gambia into a nation "thriving on free market policies and a vibrant private sector, sustained by a well-educated, trained, skilled, healthy, self-reliant and enterprising population". As a result, there was a rapid growth in the number of private Skills Training Centres. However, questions were raised about the quality of the training provided in the Skills Training Centres. Consequently, given the crucial importance of TEVT for economic development and competitiveness, there emerged a need for empirically-grounded information to underpin the development of a national policy for technical education and vocational training, and to support the applications for grants (or loans) from the donor community in order to undertake the necessary policy research such is the dependency of the least developed countries on external aid!

But important as the economic and educational imperatives in The Gambia were, there are also two concomitant reasons for saying that the particular collaboration which ensued between the University of Huddersfield and The Gambia was timely. Firstly, towards the end of the 1980s, the School of Education of the University of Huddersfield (then the Huddersfield Polytechnic) was planning to launch an MEd degree course for academic staff who worked in the TEVT sector in developing countries; and, not unreasonably, staff teaching to Master's degree level were expected to be "actively engaged in research or other appropriate professional activity" (CNAA, 1987). It was therefore incumbent on the proposed MEd course staff to explore possibilities for a close involvement in empirical research projects in developing countries and, conveniently, in those developing countries whose TEVT staff had

previously attended the Polytechnic's Certificate Course in Further Education and/or the Advanced Diploma Course in Further Education.

The second reason was that around that same period, the British Government was to decide that it was "no longer appropriate" for British Polytechnics and Colleges offering predominantly Higher Education to be controlled by individual Local Education Authorities (DES, 1987), and that the Polytechnics had developed "sufficient self-critical academic maturity to be offered the full range of degree awarding powers" (DES, 1991). Subsequently, the CNAA was wound up, and the Polytechnics became corporate bodies with university status (under the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act). The pressure on the "New Universities" to undertake research of high quality (as judged largely by the publications of their academic staff) then began to build up, and opportunities for such research were eagerly seized upon. For, a few years earlier (in 1986), the University Funding Council had mounted its first "Research Assessment Exercise" (RAE) in an attempt to rate the research activities of the established "Old Universities" and to distribute research funding to these universities on the basis of their rankings in this peer review assessment; but, subsequently, in 1992, the Research Assessment Exercise (and the research funding linked to it), unlike the earlier ones, was opened to the former Polytechnics and Colleges of Higher Education. The latter institutions welcomed this initiative because, until then, the state's support for their tradition of "applied research" was "inevitably parsimonious" (Salter and Tapper, 1994).

4.2 Funding

Turning next to the second aspect of this particular North-South collaboration, namely, its funding, Table 1 shows that the following were willing to sponsor the listed collaborative research projects in TEVT:

a) the Government of the country in the South (The Gambia);
b) the Technical Training Institute in the country in the South;
c) a Higher Education institution (Polytechnic/University) in the North;
d) an International agency (UNESCO).

Projects 3 and 4 (in Table 1) shed light on how such collaborative policy research can sometimes be funded on a relatively long-term basis. For, initially these two projects were sponsored by, respectively, UNESCO and the University of Huddersfield, but the early outputs from both projects were so full of promise, about their impact on the economy of The Gambia, that applications were made to the British Government to support the projects financially (through the award of scholarships) to enable the researchers to pursue their research further ◉◉to research degree level. The applications were successful, probably because the projects were linked to employment and economic development ◉◉and, hence, were timely.

Project 7 too is worth a comment. The project provides an example of a technical training institution in the South which, being entrepreneurial and continuously alert to the needs of the training market place, was keen to monitor its own training programmes. Hence, it decided to fund an independent study of its programme

delivery and to use the findings of the study as a basis for implementing its operational policy through its three-year Development Plan.

4.3 Outcomes

But what has this particular, small-scale, North-South collaboration actually achieved, one might well ask!

One way to answer this very pertinent question is to say that it is possible to claim that, in broad terms, the collaborative research projects undertaken have indeed:

a) contributed to shaping how the identified problems in education in The Gambia are now likely to be well understood and well-articulated
b) generated large amounts of empirical, up-to-date, information (for policy-makers) which was:
  a. well packaged
  b. appropriately communicated
  c. disseminated through National Workshops (for stakeholders in TEVT).

Specifically, one can point, in a matter-of-fact way, to the direct, concrete outcomes of the research projects as follows:

a) each listed project ended with an official written report which included policy implications and recommendations; and each report was submitted to the appropriate authorities and accepted;
b) for two of the research reports a higher degree (MPhil/PhD) was awarded;
c) three of the other project reports have been published as articles in international, refereed, academic journals (with the Gambian researcher for each project as the principal author of the article that ensued);
d) another one of the research reports was appended, in full, in the report of the Gambian Government's National Commission for the establishment of the University of The Gambia;
e) yet another report was used as a forerunner to the legislation about Vocational Training in The Gambia;
f) the position of Scientific Adviser to The Gambia Chapter of the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA) was created.

But in spite of the above outcomes, this model of piecemeal, project-based, North-South collaborative policy research is not above criticism. In point of fact, it may be subjected to the sort of criticism generally made of policy research projects which is that, in the very nature of such projects, their reports are directed to audiences concerned more with making policies work than with scholarship.

Another criticism is that this pattern of collaboration is unlikely to provide the "critical mass of expertise" (mentioned in Section 2.2.3) for the wide range of research tasks necessary in Education even for a small developing country such as The Gambia. Yet, arguably, collaborative policy research of the kind described in the present article has at least contributed to providing a firm foundation for Research Capacity Building within the TEVT sector, in the sense that, through working on these policy research projects, the Gambian researchers and research assistants have acquired some of the

understandings and technical skills necessary for researching educational issues empirically. It is possible to claim that this particular type of North-South collaboration has been something of a catalyst in bringing The Gambia to the threshold of an important organisational development ◉◉the elevation of the Gambian Chapter of ERNWACA to the status of an NGO.

5. The Future

What then is the future for this model of North-South collaboration in TEVT policy research? The reason for this question is that this particular form of North-South collaboration in policy research would seem to be out of step with the process of globalisation in education which is currently driven by international aid agencies, such as the World Bank. These agencies have the means to fund country reviews and sector studies of how educational systems work (Middleton, 1993), and as indicated above (see Section 2.1.1), they can influence educational reforms in developing countries by making such reforms a condition of Aid. Thus, it is possible to discern certain global trends in TEVT policies, such as the policy of competence-based curriculum development and that of increasing girls' access to TEVT (see, for example, Buchert, 1992; DESA, 1998; Hodkinson, 1995; Middleton, 1993; Wilson, 1993; Dyankov, 1996)

An important consideration too is that research in education is, in part, a cultural activity (Little, 1996) and that globalisation influences not only policies in education but also the research culture; the particularly relevant point is that, as global influences on educational development increase, the quantitative paradigm which dominates policy research is being transferred globally as an element of the research culture in education in developing countries (Crossley and Vulliamy, 1996). An initiative which illustrates this point is that of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (1997); for, the Association launched a programme of capacity building aimed at strengthening the statistical information systems about education in a' number of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, in order to support the need of policy-makers for relevant quantitative information. Whilst such statistical information is crucial for the higher tiers of the policy process (see section 2.2.1), it does not obviate the need for relevant qualitative data for policy making; for Crossley and Vulliamy (1996) have demonstrated convincingly the potential of qualitative research in developing countries because of its "increased attention to local contextual factors, detailed fieldwork, and case-study research in the field of comparative and international education". More to the point for the present article, Lauglo and Lillis (1988) have made a plea for detailed case-studies of technical education and vocational training systems, because such studies are essential for discerning how these systems operate; and Watson (1994) has thrown some light on what exactly is required for the analysis of educational systems using Case Studies. He states that the analysis "involves time, patience, on-going discussions and interpretation based on both external perspectives and internal understanding of the situation" a process of analysis rather like the one labelled "globalization" (Robertson, 1995), whereby the global and the local increasingly interpenetrate.

But Watson makes, in addition, the startling point that "far too many World Bank, UNESCO and other Aid agencies' influential reports lack" this "internal understanding" of local situations; and, probably with an eye for research capacity building in developing countries, he adds that such "internal understanding can only come from local personnel trained in the art of critical analysis".

I find Watson's statements thought provoking because they raise questions such as:

a) what exactly is meant by an "internal understanding" of local situations?
b) what is this "art of critical analysis"?

Taking "internal understanding" first, I guess the term here refers to the understanding that indigenous researchers have acquired, and which is borne of their experience, at first hand, of local problems in connection with:

a) the TEVT sector (such as problems relating respectively to budgetary reductions, the procurement of out-of-date equipment for which spare parts are no longer available, the weak links between training programmes and employers, and the recruitment of suitably qualified teachers);
b) the social, economic and political environment (such as problems relating respectively to continuing poverty, local and civil wars, political instability, and divisive social structures).

Presumably, the point is that such an understanding enables appropriately trained indigenous researchers to be effective in winning the support and participation of local communities (for community-oriented research projects), and ensures that these communities own the educational policies developed.

Turning next to "critical analysis", it is an approach (in social/educational research) which appertains to the Enlightenment Model for policy research (see Section 2.2.2). In the context of education, a critical perspective requires an investigation of the dynamics of change in education in order to unravel the constraints and contradictions in existing structures for Education and illuminate the historical processes, assumptions and premises that relate to these structures. Also, in such critical research, one seeks to understand a particular educational system in its totality and to examine how civil society influences the system. For example, presumably a study of TEVT would investigate not only TEVT in the public sector but also TEVT in the private sector and examine the growth in private TEVT as a response to social demand and/or to the liberalisation of the economy. By taking account of the social and ideological backgrounds one would develop "a more adequate sense" of how to penetrate the institutional structures and dig beneath the surface (without being censorious), and one's findings would enrich greatly the policy process (Popkewitz, 1984: Trowler, 1998). However, this line of reasoning may cut no ice with governments and external donor agencies if the work of indigenous researchers is regarded as "a form of opposition" and as "subversive to mainstream thought", as Namuddu (1991) claims was the case in the past; for, critical social research is concerned not only with unpacking reality but also with suggesting ways of altering it (Troyna, 1994).

For my part, whilst not wishing either to make a judgement about the superiority of any particular social research paradigm or to reduce educational research to a set of techniques, my view is that, in policy research, both the qualitative and quantitative approaches may legitimately be used but that problem definition is a key issue. Also, I have reservations about the use of statistical procedures in educational research (Benett, 1994), but acknowledge that statistical methods do provide researchers with a very powerful conceptual tool and do help to clarify procedures for collecting and analysing data. I do not, therefore, rule out statistical methods, especially if, for example, one is analysing differences between countries in, say, educational outcomes. Indeed, I have myself used complex statistical methods in the past (for example, in a study of teachers' attitudes to curriculum innovation in India, and in a study about the award of Scholarships for Secondary School Girls in Gambia). A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is what is often required for TEVT policy research (Vulliamy, 1990 a and 1990 b; Warwick, 1993), but I don't think that qualitative research in education amounts to simply giving descriptive, anecdotal accounts based on one's interviews and observations. Regrettably, to quote one of my research students, "it seems that, nowadays, in educational research, anything goes; one just goes around talking to people!!"

To return to what the future might hold for North-South collaboration in TEVT policy research, I suggest that an important consideration is that, historically, a cultural change (in educational research in general) began in the late 1960s in the countries of the North when qualitative research slipped into education "from an unexpected direction", that is, from Evaluation in education (Tesch, 1990); this change has grown in importance ever since and in its train it has brought the perspective of critical social research into education.

Whether the indigenous researchers in the countries of the South will accept or resist a similar cultural change will depend on:
a) how strongly they, their governments, and the external donor agencies value the traditional culture of quantitative research in education and
b) the indigenous researchers' experience of the new, impinging research culture of qualitative research.

However, given that, as already indicated, the effect of globalisation on TEVT policies and systems has been on the whole a trend towards convergence (Green, 1999), one may speculate that the trend in research culture will also be to converge; and that this cultural diffusion will be speeded up through North-South collaboration in policy research. This speculative idea gains some weight from the statement that donors are committed to training and capacity-building of counterpart staff in developing countries (Preston and Arthur, 1997).

It is outside the scope of this paper to take this discussion further (for example, by looking at Participatory Action Research in local communities), except to add that this cultural diffusion will undoubtedly benefit also from the possibilities offered by:
a) formal, national and cross-national education research networks (such as ERNW ACA),

b) the new communication technologies, as Ploghoft (1995) has explained.

6. Concluding remarks

All of what has been said above adds up to the proposition that although the account of the one case of North-South collaborative policy research presented in this article cannot be the basis for making generalisations about North-South collaboration in educational research, the account may, nevertheless, contribute to the debate about such collaboration.

Drawing together some of the points raised above, the conclusion is as follows:
a) whilst the developing countries may be justified to follow global trends when formulating their TEVT policies, they should also research exactly how these TEVT policies "work" in practice, in their own contexts.
b) North-South collaboration in TEVT policy research can be effective under the conditions reported in this paper; and the hallmarks of this particular case of North-South collaboration in TEVT policy research are that it:
  a. acknowledged the North-South interdependence.
  b. recognized the need for both the country of the North and the country of the South to invest money and effort in promoting and sustaining the North-South collaboration
  c. was driven by a commitment to empower the indigenous researchers in the country of the South through:
    • the researchers' acquisition of research skills
    • the development of an appropriate organisational structure for educational research
c) North-South collaborative TEVT policy research projects should aim to develop further a research culture which espouses a research methodology which is eclectic (though with an emphasis on critical analysis)

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