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EDUCATION, EQUITY AND ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS IN THE AMERICAS:

An Inter-American Dialogue Project

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**EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION
IN THE AMERICAS:
A REVIEW**

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SUMMARY

This paper provides a critical analysis of the role played by international cooperation, particularly multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, in support of large-scale educational reform programs in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is argued that most major educational reform programs have failed or had limited success. A review of what has been learned about designing and implementing educational reform provides a framework for examining the record regarding the contribution of international cooperation. It is argued that contribution has for the most part been negative. A list is provided of common counterproductive behaviors among donor agencies. An alternate model of international cooperation, labeled "horizontal intellectual cooperation," is described. It is finally argued that while large-scale national reform is difficult, school-level change is relatively easy. A useful role for international cooperation would be to assist in learning from many small-scale successful changes and to stimulate *local capacity to innovate*.

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Introduction

The letter from Jeff Puryear and Jose Joaquín Brunner that sets out the specifications for this review paper states the following: "Specifically, we would like you to prepare a comprehensive background memorandum that reviews experience with educational cooperation and assistance between North and South America, with the goal of identifying current deficiencies and suggesting new modalities. Your memorandum should look carefully at existing forms of educational cooperation and aid at the bilateral and regional level, take note of strengths and weaknesses, and suggest improvements." In addition, I am referred to the Dialogue's report, *Convergence and Community; The Americas in 1993*, the proposal for this educational task force, and, as a "benchmark for our initiative," the UNESCO-CEPAL document, *Education and Knowledge: Basic Pillars of Changing Production Patterns with Social Equity*. Reference to these documents is useful since they provide the context—the view of the future—through which any observations and recommendations I might make will be seen. However, in reviewing the "predictions" about the future contained explicitly or implicitly in these background documents, and comparing them to my own sense of where things are going, I am reminded of an old (possibly apocryphal) Chinese proverb: "Prediction is always difficult; especially with respect to the future." There are some of those predictions with which I agree (which means mainly that I share at least some of the biases of those who have made them), and some with which I disagree (which means that I don't share all of those biases). The matter is important to note at the outset because some of the differences lead to differing conclusions about appropriate educational policy and, consequently, to different notions about directions and modalities for educational cooperation.

I will at this introductory point provide only a few key examples of such differences of view of the future with attendant educational implications. On p. 1 of the master proposal it is claimed that one of the problems with Latin American educational systems is that they have "proved unresponsive to rapidly changing labor markets." Further down the same page the document states: "Open economies integrated into the global system require an internationally competitive labor force with an emphasis on science and technology." In all three documents the educational implications drawn from those claims are then drawn out primarily, if not exclusively, with reference to the *formal school systems of the region*.

There are several problems with this chain of analysis. First, if labor markets are indeed "rapidly changing," as they appear to be, then formal school systems which take from one to two decades to convert a first grade student into a labor market entrant, will by definition be unresponsive to such rapid changes. Less formal occupational training systems, operated by enterprises and nonformal education agencies, are required. Second, those labor market changes which are occurring do not provide a strong case for a "science and technology" emphasis for most students.

Evidence from the United States, based on projections by the American Bureau of Labor Statistics, indicates that while the greatest *proportional growth* will be in occupations demanding high levels of education and specialized training, particularly in science and technology, the greatest *number* of new jobs will be created in occupational categories which require minimal formal education. And the evidence regarding the "deskilling" of many such job categories suggests that many of those new jobs will require even less formal education in the future than they do now (Bailey 1991). Canadian occupational projections show much the same story. Well over half of all new jobs estimated to be created by the mid-1990s will be low level, increasingly deskilled, educationally undemanding positions. The five largest categories of new jobs are predicted to be (in order) sales clerks, bank cashiers and tellers, secretaries, clerks, and truck drivers (COPS 1990). Can one realistically expect the pattern to be different in Latin America? Indeed, the major concern among many North American workers is that the low tech, increasingly deskilled heavy manufacturing jobs will be those which are "exported south." Moreover, what is one really talking about when referring to a "modern workplace" for most Latin American workers? Can one really imagine that the millions of Latin American peasants, or their children, will find themselves in the foreseeable future in a "modern workplace" which is heavily science/technology dependent? Or the children of the millions of urban slum dwellers? Or the parentless street kids? Surely there is a need for more-and more sophisticated-science and technology knowledge among that relatively small minority of young people in *both* North and South America who are likely to end up in high-level managerial and research/development/entrepreneurial positions. And clearly it would be desirable for all people in all of the Americas to have a better basic understanding of "science." But while these are worthy goals, little is known about how to provide such general science understanding to the population not pursuing careers in scientific fields, and we in North America have very little to teach the rest of the hemisphere about how to do this. There have been many experiments but little solid evidence of widespread impact. What both of the observations above indicate is that responses to the changing nature of the world economy, and the position of all of the American nations in it, are likely to require much more emphasis on out-of-school-based knowledge creation and transmittal systems. Generally speaking, these are more likely to be designed and run effectively by nongovernmental than by governmental delivery systems. If this is the case, then forms of international cooperation which assume or depend upon government-to-government or international agency-to-government relationships are likely to be quite ineffective, and quite new forms of cooperation arrangements will have to be invented.

There is a further general problem with these background documents. There is an air of certainty about them, with respect to the future, and with respect to the current and desired future state of education over the entire hemisphere, which is somewhere between chutzpa and hubris. Surely if any of us once thought that we could make reasonably certain claims about how the future would unfold, particularly at the level of national and international economics and politics, the experience of the past few years should have disabused us of that notion. The confident claims about the future in these documents strike this reader as more nearly a neo-liberal wish list than anything else. Certainly there has been movement toward a more openly competitive and integrated international economy over the past few years, but the forces of national (or regional) protectionism are still strong, and which way things will actually go is still an open question. As of this writing (November 1993) it is not clear whether the North American Free Trade

Agreement (NAFTA) will actually be approved by all three of the nations involved. The U.S. has just approved it, but with many concessions to strong protectionist forces, and Canada has still not agreed. The eventual fate of the Uruguay Round of the GATT remains uncertain. The farm subsidy war between the United States and the European community, which is savaging the agricultural industry in Canada and much of the developing world, rages on. For every economist who confidently claims that we are beginning to emerge from the near-worldwide recession one can find another who will equally confidently claim that recovery will be a very long time coming, or indeed that things will get much worse before they begin to get better. Now, I have my own personal preferences on these matters, but I learned a long time ago not to assume that the world will necessarily work out as I would like it to. And I would not want to recommend that any nation of the Americas stake its educational policy on the assumption that one particular vision of the economic future will come to pass. Rather, one should be thinking of policies, and forms of cooperation, which will be useful across a wide range of possible futures. It turns out that many of the policy suggestions found in these documents do fit that prescription, but not all do.

There is a broader and deeper trend related to the above which may have a very profound impact on the ways we even think about educational policy and international cooperation. These background documents stress the "techno-economic" impacts of recent and ongoing technological change. What is not noted clearly is the *political* impact, the effect upon the very definition of the nation-state. Educational policy is a means by which states control and regulate the provision of opportunities to learn in organized ways among (at least) the young, and increasingly among adults. That is, it is an instrument of statecraft. There are several different models or theories of "the state," but all assume the modern concept of the nation-state which arose in Europe two to three centuries ago and which has become well-nigh universal.

Educational policy is a national activity, except in some federal states such as Canada where it is partly or wholly the responsibility of lower levels of government which for purposes of education behave like nation-states. But in the early 1990s many of the assumed basic characteristics of the nation-state appear to be changing. In an era where technology permits the essentially instantaneous transfer of huge amounts of capital from almost anywhere and any currency to anywhere, no nation has sovereign and autonomous control over its fiscal and monetary policy-as Sweden and the United Kingdom learned very recently. Cultural systems and symbols are rapidly becoming as easily transferred internationally as is capital. The technical wizards claim that we are a very short time away from the point where almost anyone anywhere in the world with the price of a cheap VCR can buy a small dish antenna which will give them access directly in their home to television signals from almost everywhere in the world, with no form of state regulation or control effectively possible. What does national cultural sovereignty mean in such circumstances? Those who have thought about such patterns at all in the past have tended to think in terms of some form of "dependency" theory. It appears that we are moving rapidly toward a situation where *all* nations are to a rather high degree *dependent* nations; where all states have less and less effective control over their economies, their societies or their politics. When these patterns are combined with a widespread growth of sub-national loyalties they are in many cases leading to the literal disintegration (in the precise meaning of that word: dis-integration) of nation states.

In a recent book Fuller (1991) uses the term "fragile state" to refer to conditions in many developing nations. It appears that currently all nations, rich or poor, are becoming increasingly fragile states. A further complication in many parts of Latin America, and in Canada, is that among many sub-national groups (indigenous peoples, for example, or a significant portion of Quebec society) there has never been a full acceptance of the power or legitimacy of the nation-state in which they live. Migdal, in his aptly titled book *Strong Societies and Weak States* (1987), observes that in such cases one frequently has a condition in which the various societies within a polity are stronger than the fragile nation-state which putatively encompasses them. All of this most profoundly challenges previous understandings of what educational policy is, and what it is about, but the implications are not yet at all clear. What does it really mean to plan education as an instrument of *national* economic, social, or cultural policy in such circumstances? What does it mean to talk of *international* cooperation when the various national entities involved are becoming increasingly fragile?

One possible implication for the main theme of this paper is the following. International agencies (e.g., the development banks and national aid agencies such as CIDA and USAID) work ordinarily or exclusively at the level of the fragile state. It is usually nongovernmental organizations which work with what Migdal calls the "strong societies" within the fragile states. This may have, and may increasingly have, the perverse effect of channelling the largest flows of international cooperation resources at the level where they can have the least effect, or may indeed have counterproductive effects. I will cite here just one example of how this perverse effect can work, which I know from personal experience. In a Latin American nation (which I will not name) a textbook development and distribution program partially funded by an international agency ran into difficulties in delivering the books in many rural villages because an ongoing "insurgency" (read civil war pitting indigenous peoples and very poor mestizo villagers against the "national" government) had effectively destroyed most of the transportation infrastructure and made life quite dangerous for any "agents" of the national government, however well-intentioned. I was told proudly by government officials and officials of the international agency that the problem had been solved by using the national armed forces, whose jeeps, trucks, and helicopters could reach even the most remote portions of the national territory, to deliver the textbooks. It never occurred to them that what this meant was that the textbooks, which "naturally" carried "national" messages and symbols, were being delivered by those who were, in the villagers' experience, the "nation's" main agents among them of death and destruction. I was told later by several literacy/community development workers with an NGO active in the villages that the symbolism had not been lost on the local people. The textbooks were rejected in the villages and their arrival led even more families to withdraw their children from the village schools. This is of course an extreme example, but as with extreme examples generally it serves to starkly outline the difficulties possible when working internationally with fragile states rather than strong societies.

One possible response to this general condition (or at least what might be seen as such a response) is the move toward "decentralization," often encouraged and supported through international cooperation. This approach is cited and lauded in the master proposal for this dialogue. I personally support it (but not in all cases; it is an often useful tool but not a universal

nostrum). However, decentralization as usually conceived misconstrues the problem. Decentralization normally refers to the devolution by the central state authority of various forms of power and control to lower, more localized levels of government. But if the central state is itself weak and becoming weaker, then there is less and less effective power and control to devolve, such that the entire exercise becomes increasingly empty and meaningless (rather like a person with little or no wealth going to great lengths to write a will governing what the heirs will inherit).

In sum, I am arguing that the most profound, and yet very poorly understood, effects of the international changes we are parties and witnesses to are not in the technical or economic realms, but in the most basic constructs we normally use to frame discussions of educational policy and international educational cooperation in the Americas. In the spirit of humility about predicting the future noted above, I make no claim to have a clear idea of what this all means or where it will lead us. But I do assert that any "dialogue" about educational policy and international cooperation in support of it which does not from the outset systematically attend to these changes is almost certain to be irrelevant to the conditions in which school children and adult learners in the 1990s will actually live out their lives.

One thing which these background documents emphasize however, and this is a point with which I entirely agree, is that when thinking about how to "strengthen international cooperation to improve educational systems throughout the region" (Puryear's letter of 5 February 1993 to me), we are not for the most part thinking about modest changes in such educational systems. The question to be addressed is what has been learned about how international cooperation may strengthen (or, conversely, weaken) national efforts at *major and fundamental reform* of educational systems in the Americas. To deal with this question one must first examine *what has been learned about how to design and implement large-scale and fundamental educational reforms*. Put simply, if we wish international cooperation to serve educational reform, we first have to understand educational reform itself. The section which follows reviews the experience regarding educational reform attempts in both rich and poor nations, noting *inter alia* some patterns or characteristics of international cooperation which have been either supportive or destructive of such reform efforts.

Designing and Implementing Educational Reform

We now have more than thirty years of experience with attempts to design and implement large-scale, long-term programs of educational reform in Latin America and other "developing" nations, often with the assistance of multi-lateral or bi-lateral donor agencies, and considerable experience with educational reform attempts in rich nations as well. During the past few years several major works have appeared attempting to summarize various aspects of the knowledge acquired from that experience. (for example, Bryson 1988; Caillods 1989; Fagerlind and Sjusted 1990; Ginsburg 1991; Klees 1989; Rondinelli, et al. 1990; Ross and Mahlick 1990; Farrell 1989b; Farrell, in press). However, much of the available knowledge is still in the form of "lore," the experience-based wisdom of those who have been attempting to produce educational change.

The observations below are based both on such published distillations and on such "lore," as I am aware.

One general lesson is that educational reform is a far more difficult and risk-prone venture than had been imagined thirty years ago. There are far more examples of failure, or of minimal success, than of relatively complete success. We know far more about what doesn't work, or doesn't usually work, than we do about what does work. A central lesson learned is that Nicolo Machiavelli was correct when he wrote more than four centuries ago: "And it ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things." The innovator has on one hand staunch enemies among "all those who have done well under the old conditions" and who see clearly an immediate threat to their privilege, but only "lukewarm defenders" among the intended beneficiaries of the change, since the putative benefits are uncertain in a dimly perceived future; and people generally "do not readily believe in new things until they have had a long experience of them" (Machiavelli 1952 [1513], 9). Moreover, when educational reform attempts have been successful, the process has usually taken a long time, frequently far longer than originally anticipated. There are in the experience of the past decades a few examples where an unusual combination of favorable conditions and politically skilled innovators have permitted a great deal of educational change to occur in a relatively brief period, but these are relatively rare and idiosyncratic. A motto which could well be hung on the walls above the desks of those attempting educational reform is: "T T T. Things Take Time." These introductory comments are not meant as a counsel of despair, but as a note of salutary caution. One can learn a great deal from failure, and combining that with knowledge gained from less common successes permits a number of observations about reform strategies and approaches, and modes of international cooperation to assist them, which are likely to be more effective and successful than others. But there are few certainties and no guarantees.

Another general lesson is that there is no single blueprint or strategy for designing and implementing educational reform which will "work" in all circumstances. There are some general principles or guidelines which are often applicable, but detailed design and planning must be based upon wisdom derived from a solid *knowledge of local conditions*. This observation is particularly salient for a paper such as this which is to relate to the very different nations and societies which constitute the "Americas." International cooperation has often been helpful in identifying and bringing to the foreground such locally based knowledge, and in building systems of institutions which can serve as on-going sources of creation and dissemination of such locally based knowledge. One thinks, for example, of the very useful support provided by many agencies for research and policy analysis institutions and units in education and related social sciences, and for networks of such agencies such as REDUC. However, such support has been a very small proportion of all international educational cooperation, and has typically responded more to the "regional" or "world-wide" priorities of donor agencies, such that kinds of knowledge seen locally as very relevant are often not developed. Moreover, large and powerful donor agencies still often routinely produce "regional" policy papers and directives which, while sometimes paying lip-service to intra-regional variation and the need for local knowledge, serve as multinational "cookbooks." A "one size fits all" approach to educational reform is nearly a guarantee of failure. This paper does not attempt to provide a single "recipe". Rather it provides a

kind of taxonomy of elements and factors to take into account when thinking about educational reform and the role of international cooperation.

The discussion which follows is organized under six stages of the "policy cycle" as portrayed in figure 1. This is an old, oversimplified, but still useful device for organizing a potentially confusing array of issues. Each stage will be briefly identified, and then considered in greater detail. These stages pertain to policy development and implementation in all areas of government concern, but the discussion here will of course focus specifically on education.

Problem Formation: accurately assessing the current condition of the educational system, and its likely future state if current policies and practices continue, and reaching agreement among key policy actors and stakeholder groups as to which of these "conditions" represent "problems" which can and should be addressed by new policy or policy changes.

Policy Agenda: getting the identified policy problems high enough up on the government's policy agenda that, within some reasonable time frame, they will actually be addressed by government. *Policy Formulation:* determining which of an array of potential "solutions" to the policy problems are most likely to be feasible and effective.

Policy Adoption: getting the proposed solutions formally "enacted" through whatever decision-making mechanisms are necessary and appropriate.

Policy Implementation: getting the enacted policy solutions actually operating effectively and more or less as intended in the myriad educational institutions of the nation.

Policy Evaluation: determining the impact of the implemented policies upon the performance of the educational system, identifying the sources of failure where it has occurred, and on the basis of that determination making such alterations as may be required.

In developing a long-term strategy for educational reform every one of these stages must be considered, and none can be taken for granted. Reform ideas and programs can go wrong, and have gone wrong, at each stage. Successfully passing through any one stage indicates nothing automatically about the probability of passing successfully through the next. Different sets of knowledge, skills, and strategies are normally required at each successive stage, usually requiring at least slightly different sets of people to be involved. Throughout, the process and the problems are much more "political" than "technical," having much more to do with conflicting human perceptions, ideologies, self- and group-interests, and emotions and values than with "hard" research data. This is true at each stage, including those which are often seen to be predominantly subject to technical analysis. One of the most common errors in planning educational reforms is to define the exercise in terms of, and concentrate exclusively upon, the technical aspects of policy formulation, implementation and (sometimes) evaluation. This has been particularly common in reform programs assisted by international donor agencies. Indeed, one of the most common sources of tension in international educational cooperation programs is disputes between donor agency officials who take a highly "technical" view and recipient nation officials who have a more "political" understanding. (See Samoff 1993, for a good account of this tension with reference to Africa. His analysis matches my own experience in Latin America.) Failure to

take into account the political aspects of the three stages noted immediately above, or ignoring the stages of problem formation, policy agenda and policy adoption, are an almost sure recipe for failure. Unfortunately the most widely available "data" refer precisely to the technical side of formulation, implementation and evaluation. Much less has been published regarding the political aspects of reform planning, although the relatively few studies which are available indicate clearly their central importance (see Farrell 1986; Farrell 1990; Farrell, in press; Klees 1989; McGinn, Schiefelbein and Warwick 1979; McGinn and Street 1986; Schiefelbein 1975; Weiler 1988). Here one must rely heavily on the "lore" referred to above.

As with any model, this one is a necessary oversimplification of a much more complex reality. What are depicted here as separate stages often blend together, overlap chronologically or run in parallel. Using the stages as reference points is simply meant to ensure that none of the necessary sequences of activities in the long process which moves one from a sense that a problem exists to a solution implemented well and widely is overlooked. It will also be noted that the treatments below of the various stages differ in length. This does not indicate that some are more important than others, but rather that more information and experience are available about some than others.

Problem Formation

This initial stage is sometimes referred to as the process of converting "tolerable ironies" into policy problems. In any national educational system, however rich or poor the nation, there will always be a variety of "conditions" which are understood by at least some individuals or groups to be "problems" which should be addressed by policy. In many poor nations a very serious difficulty at this stage is the lack of reasonably accurate basic data regarding the status and performance of the system. In such cases a first task is establishing systems for collecting and analyzing such data. As noted above, in many Latin American nations international cooperation has been very helpful in creating the infrastructure for collecting and analyzing such basic data, although in many nations much remains to be done (Puryear 1993).

A common error, however, and this is particularly common among international agency officials, is assuming that once such an information system has been established (whether a simple data assembly unit in a Ministry of Education or a complex research establishment) problem identification becomes a more or less automatic technical matter. This is far from the case, as different individuals and groups can be expected to interpret the same "evidence" differently with respect to whether or not it represents an educational "policy problem," and if so, what sort of problem it represents. For example, a relatively high rate of unemployment among school leavers may be interpreted by some as an educational problem, by others as a problem of the economy about which education policy can do very little, and by others as a transient situation which will soon take care of itself. A given percentage of dropouts and/or repeaters within the schooling system may be considered by some as a serious problem within the educational system, by others as a normal and inevitable phenomenon (a routine consequence of differences in academic ability and necessary for the efficient streaming of youth into occupational categories for which they are most suited), and by still others as a product of an

inequitable class system in the society about which schools can do little or nothing. Claims by employers and university professors that "standards" are declining may be roundly denied by teachers and students. "Hard" evidence from national or international testing programs that average scores are declining will be interpreted by some as a clear indication that the quality of the school system is deteriorating, but by others as evidence that the system is succeeding in holding more lower ability and/or lower class students in school longer.

These differing interpretations of the "evidence" reflect differing ideological assumptions, differing assumptions about what is "normal," and usually differing patterns of self- and group-interest. That is, they are not typically or simply "technical" disputes, but are deeply and intensely political, and must be dealt with as such. Moreover, even if one can achieve a reasonably broad agreement that a given set of "conditions" represent a set of policy problems, there may be considerable disagreement about the relative priority among them. It is also common for there to be serious disagreements at this stage between individuals within a country and representatives of international donor agencies, who come in with their own perceptions and their agencies' priorities. Resolving disagreements at this first stage is frequently one of the most difficult and sensitive tasks in the reform process, and one of the most time-consuming. It is also a stage where disagreements are frequently assumed away, by educators or researchers within the country who believe that they, with their expertise, "know" what the problems and priorities are, or by foreign agency officials who come with their own agencies' priorities and cannot imagine serious and legitimate disagreement, or by "expert consultants" who often bring their own preconceptions with them (e.g., if you bring in a computer or distance education expert, you are likely to be told that you have a serious computer or distance education problem-this is the adult equivalent of the "Law of the Hammer": give a four-year-old a hammer and suddenly everything will need hammering). If such inevitable disagreements regarding which "conditions" constitute "policy problems," and which problems are most important, are not resolved at the outset, at least to the point where most key actors and stakeholder groups agree, the probability of carrying the change process through to conclusion is low.

Policy Agenda

Even under the best of circumstances governments face far more demands upon their resources (money, energy, time) than can possibly be accommodated. Budgets are tight, senior and middle level officials face overcrowded schedules, legislative agendas and cabinet meeting agendas are full to overflowing (in one government with which I have worked-a reasonably typical case in my experience-the general understanding among senior government officials is that except in a crisis one can get discussion of any particular policy issue on cabinet agenda no more than once a year, if lucky). Almost all, if not all, other ministries are competing for government attention to policy problems they regard as being as important as, if not more important than, educational policy problems. Even if there has been some formal statement from government about being committed to "do something" about educational policy problems, it cannot be assumed that this will translate into high interest *at a particular point in time* in the particular set of prioritized issues arising from the policy formation stage within the education sector. The strategies most appropriate to move a set of educational problems sufficiently high on

a government's overall policy agenda to insure that effort will be exerted to "do something" about them will vary enormously from nation to nation, and over time within a given nation, depending upon, among other things, the relative political strength of various key political actors at any point in time. With regard to these judgments local knowledge must be decisive. International cooperation can have little if any constructive force at this stage, except by slowly altering the general international "climate of opinion" to which large numbers of key political actors in any given nation respond. (See Grindle 1989, for a useful discussion of the importance of the perceptual frames and assumptions of "policy elites.") Unesco's *Major Project in the Field of Education in the Latin American and Caribbean Region*, and the dialogue before, during and after the *World Conference on Education for All* are good examples of this indirect effect of international cooperation on political agenda-setting. But direct attempts by officials of international agencies to alter the policy agenda in a particular nation in the (false) name of international cooperation are almost always bound to be counterproductive, unless they happen to coincide with the efforts of strategically placed, locally knowledgeable and highly skilled local political actors. Unfortunately, a current trend in many international cooperation agencies in the Americas is precisely to try to influence the policy agenda of other nations directly; for example, by making balance of payment or structural adjustment supports contingent upon particular policy (in our case, *educational policy*) directions. This trend is more powerful in other "developing" regions than in the Americas (it is for example blatant in Africa under the rubric of "Structural Adjustment Policies"), but it is still worrisome in our region. Fiscal *blackmail is not a sound ground upon which to base educational reform*. Officials from international cooperation agencies based in rich nations should learn from their own national experiences. There are myriad examples in "developed" nations of educational reform initiatives from educational "experts" languishing because of inability to get through the policy agenda stage. If influencing educational, and national, policy agendas is very difficult to do from inside, it is even more difficult to do from outside. Working toward building up an international climate of opinion regarding priorities in educational policy is in the long term (and all educational change of importance is long term) the only effective strategy for international cooperation.

Policy Formulation

Work on this stage, judging which "solutions" to identified policy problems are most likely to be effective (and cost-effective), often overlaps chronologically with the previous stage. Indeed, the knowledge that there is a potentially feasible and effective solution to a policy problem can raise that problem to a prominent place on a government's policy agenda. (On this "legitimation theory" view see Weiler 1983 and Fuller 1991). It is with reference to this question, what "works," that most of the "hard" evidence is found. Much of that evidence has been analyzed and summarized in a series of "state of the art" papers, usually financed by or directly produced by large donor agencies, particularly the World Bank. (See, e.g., Heyneman, Farrell, and Sepulveda 1978; Fuller 1986; Lockheed and Verspoor 1990; Farrell and Heyneman 1991; Farrell and Oliveira 1993; plus many Latin American regional summaries produced by institutions associated with the LARRAG and REDUC networks.) The major conclusions coming from that literature are generally well known and will not be reviewed here. Rather, some cautionary notes will be provided. First, there have been strong methodological critiques

advanced regarding many of the underlying research studies, claiming for example that the regression techniques used in many of the investigations produce highly unstable and misleading results (Klees 1989), or that the statistical model used in most education-labor market studies produces results which are inherently uninterpretable (Farrell and Schiefelbein 1985). These problems can be taken into account when carefully reading the *individual* studies, but are very difficult to deal with when many such studies are summarized.

It should also be noted that while the amount of evidence regarding particular schooling factors that affect educational or labor market achievement in Latin America has been increasing rapidly in recent years, the total amount available is far less than in the United States and Canada. On questions where there may be hundreds of studies in North America, there may be none, or only a few, from all of Latin America. It is also clear now that educational research results from North America cannot be automatically transferred to Latin America. The available evidence is also spotty. Some questions have received much attention, others little. Some sub-regions or individual nations have produced much more educational research than others. Much of the research that has been done is still not readily accessible, although the REDUC network has made strong gains in this area. Moreover, the investigations themselves are of several different types. Some are large-scale correlational exercises, others are small-scale experimental studies, still others are evaluations of a particular program or policy in a particular nation. This makes it difficult to adequately summarize the results. And qualitative research, which often provides strong insights into "what works," why and how, is rarely included in summaries (for an exception see Fuller 1991).

Finally, just as we cannot assume that research results from North America will necessarily translate to Latin America, we also cannot assume that research results from any particular cultural group within Latin America are generalizable to other cultural groups. This is particularly important when considering educational policy for indigenous peoples. The anthropological evidence (see Hall 1985) is now clear that children from different cultures "learn to learn" differently. What will "work" educationally for children or adults from one culture may be quite ineffective or counter-productive in others. What all of this suggests is that any conclusions drawn from the available evidence must be cautious and tentative, and as location-specific as possible. I have suggested elsewhere that the best way to approach the general research evidence when considering educational policy in any particular nation is to consider it as simply providing some hints or suggestions regarding what directions may be "best bets," "worst bets," and "promising possibilities" (Farrell 1989b).

Unfortunately, there is a tendency, which appears to be increasing, for officials of donor agencies, in a "search for certitude," to take the results of regional or international "state of the art" papers as "gospel," and attempt to apply them willy-nilly to all nations in a region, particularly where there is not a strong local research base. This is particularly true of the World Bank (Samoff 1993), although there certainly are exceptions (its support of *Escuela Nueva* in Colombia and MECE in Chile appears to have responded to local research results). The way in which USAID has been responding to the results of large-scale research/summary exercises it has sponsored, such as BRIDGES, appears to have much the same character, in spite of appropriate cautions from the researchers involved. My own observation of "policy dialogue" within

Canadian CIDA finds much the same search for certainty, and over-generalization. This is an extremely worrisome tendency, and is to be avoided and resisted if locally sensible "policy solutions" are to be formulated.

There is another problem with the "what works" research, and the way in which it is often used in policy discussions/negotiations between donor agencies and recipient nations. It generally assumes the existence of, and works within (to strengthen some elements of), the "standard technology of schooling." That standard technology, or standard delivery system, normally has the following elements (and comparative research has shown a steady worldwide convergence toward this model over the past decades):

1. One hundred to several hundred children/youth assembled (sometimes compulsorily) in a building called a school;
2. For three to six hour per day, where;
3. They are divided into groups of 20 to 60;
4. To work with a single adult (a "certified" teacher) in a single room;
5. For (especially at the upper levels) discrete periods of 40 to 60 minutes, each devoted to a separate "subject," with;
6. Supporting learning materials, e.g., books, chalkboards, notebooks, workbooks and worksheets (and in technical areas laboratories, workbenches, practice sites, etc.), all of which is organized by;
7. A standard curriculum, set by an authority level much above the individual school, normally the central or provincial/state government, which all are expected to "cover."
8. Adults "teach" and students "receive instruction" from them.
9. Teachers (and/or a central exam system) "evaluate" student learning and provide recognized formal certificates for "passing" particular "grades" or "levels."
10. Most or all of the financial support comes from national or regional governments, or other kinds of authority (e.g., in church-related schools) well above the local community.

There are a variety of explanations (or "theories") regarding why and how this particular way of delivering opportunities to learn on a large scale has become well-nigh universal (see Fuller 1991 for a useful summary). However, a careful examination of the cross-national literature from anthropology (Hall 1985) and learning psychology (see Case 1985 re: children, and Kidd 1973 and Knowles 1983 re: adults) regarding how young people and adults best learn suggests that this "standard technology" is inherently ineffective and inefficient. People of whatever age simply do not learn best under these arrangements. I have argued elsewhere that one of the problems with using the "what works," or "school effectiveness," literature to devise educational policy is that we are, particularly in richer nations, reaching the limits of the already limited effectiveness and efficiency of that standard model (Farrell 1989b). However, on a more hopeful note, throughout Latin America (and North America and the rest of the world) one finds small and large attempts to fundamentally alter this traditional model, using combinations of fully trained teachers, partially trained teachers, para-teachers, community resource people, radio, correspondence lessons, peer tutoring, student constructed learning materials, students flowing freely between the "school" and the community, often with local financing, or with alterations in the cycle of the school "day" or the school "year." Such change programs do not simply alter one

feature of the standard school (e.g., change one part of the curriculum) or strengthen one or several parts of the standard model (e.g., add more textbooks or improve teacher training), or add one or two new features. Rather, they represent a thorough reorganization of the standard technology of schooling such that the learning program, although often occurring in or based in a building called a "school," is quite different from what one normally expects to be happening in a school. They tend to break down the boundaries between "formal" and "nonformal" education, and tend to focus less on "teaching" and more on "learning." Where they have been evaluated the results generally have been very positive. New groups of learners are successfully reached, and learning results are at least as good as, if not better than, those obtained in standard schools, and the costs are typically no more than, if not less than, those of the standard model. Thus, from a cost-effectiveness point of view they are generally very successful. Moreover, because they typically serve the most marginalized, hardest to reach and hardest to teach (in the standard mode) students, the learning results from a "value added" perspective are quite spectacular (Schiefelbein 1991; Psacharopoulos, Rojas and Velez 1993).

Two outstanding examples of such "model breaking" educational reform programs in Latin America are the *Escuela Nueva* program in Colombia (Schiefelbein 1991) and various vocational training (or education for production) training programs for disadvantaged youth who have been very poorly served by the standard schooling system (Corvalan-Vasquez 1988). International cooperation, through a variety of donor agencies, has been key to the development of both of these alternative programs from initial ideas and small-scale experimentation to large scale successful implementation. Although these are success stories, international support for such model-breaking programs is, unfortunately, rather rare. As noted above, one can find throughout Latin America many such potentially promising educational change programs, often developed by local teachers or risk-taking action/researchers in response to the desperate situations they routinely encounter; but most are unknown by Ministry of Education officials (standard procedures and reporting channels tend to shut such information out), let alone by international agency officials who work only with government officials, although knowledge about them is often common currency among NGO's and local teachers and base level administrators. A very useful role for international cooperation would be to assist in identifying such potentially useful fundamental alterations in the standard model of schooling, funding detailed small-scale studies of how they got started, and how they work and achieve their results, and supporting carefully evaluated experiments in diffusing them to other locations. Such work can be highly productive in the long term, as the two examples noted above illustrate, but it is not typically attempted by donor agencies, principally, it seems to me, because the support required is too small scale, risky, and long term to fit well within the normal administrative practices of such agencies. Nonetheless, a potentially very creative role of international cooperation would be to fund a set of locally based and locally administered micro-regional programs for identification and experimentation with such locally and independently developed fundamental innovations. If such support were linked with support for regional research and information dissemination networks such as REDUC, the potential for maximizing the influence of such knowledge as is already locally available would be high. It appears to be very difficult for international cooperation agencies to play this kind of role, but the two examples noted above indicate that it is not impossible. Detailed examination of how these successes occurred would be very helpful.

Policy Adoption

Getting a set of policy problems high on a government agenda, and *keeping them there* (often a very difficult matter), and arriving at a set of reform propositions which are analytically sound and generally supported by stakeholder groups, is no guarantee that government will *actually do anything about them*. The previous stages require a combination of analytical and political skill. At this stage the job is almost wholly political, and can be accomplished only by individuals who are highly skilled, locally based and locally knowledgeable political operatives (whatever their formal job descriptions might be). It is at this stage that the competitive and conflicting interests of other ministries and agencies of government come most strongly into play, and convincing the Finance Minister (or his/her officials) becomes crucial (unless one is in the rare and happy position of advocating a reform proposition which will not increase the total budgetary allocation to education). Very carefully done cost analysis is often necessary to convince finance ministry officials, and it is frequently useful to be able to demonstrate that a significant portion of the costs of the reform program will be supported by reallocations within the existing Ministry of Education budget. The very "fuzzy" nature of the boundaries between education and other social policy sectors can often be used to turn potential opponents from other ministries or agencies into allies, by incorporating some of their goals and interests into the educational reform proposal (this is often done at the policy formulation stage). One must beware, however, of creating "smorgasbord" or "Christmas tree" programs, which consist of large numbers of only vaguely related elements. Such projects often result from a confluence of local political need to satisfy a variety of competing interests, and the desire of donor agencies to put together an administratively convenient (i.e., large enough) investment package. Such reform projects are generally cost-inefficient and very difficult to implement and administer effectively, and should be avoided.

Enactment of an educational reform package typically requires an array of decisions (legislation, directives, decrees, regulations), many of which are obvious but others less so. For example, reform programs have sometimes been blocked or seriously slowed because necessary changes in, or exceptions to, import taxes or restrictions could not be obtained and essential material could not be acquired, or because necessary personnel changes were blocked by existing civil service rules which were not changed. Thus, to successfully enact the reform, someone, or some group, has to know clearly which parts of the overall reform proposal have to be approved and enacted by which agencies or institutions of government, and through which processes, and keep track of who is responsible for which parts of the overall process, keeping everything running more or less in parallel. It is not uncommon to find a reform scheme stymied because while almost all of its necessary elements have been "approved" one key element is irretrievably stuck in some bureaucratic or political swamp. (In my experience this is as common in rich nations as in poor ones.) If there are active opponents to the reform proposal one must assume that they will be looking for precisely such "sticking points" as strategic areas to exert blockage power. Outside consultants or international agency officials can often play a useful role here in asking the right questions (of the "What has to be done here?" or "Are there any regulations which need changing there?" sort), but they can never presume to have the right answers.

As in all political decision making, judgments regarding proper "timing" are crucial; in all political systems there are good times and bad times for attempting to enact policy changes, and these follow a pattern which has little or nothing to do with the internal cycles and needs of the educational system. These political cycles also have nothing particularly to do with the decision and funding cycles of donor agencies. Waiting until the "time is right" politically to maximize the chances of a reform proposal passing through the adoption phase is frequently very difficult for technically oriented planners/policy developers and international agency officials responding to their own bureaucratic constraints, but it is essential. In contrast, it sometimes happens that the politically propitious moment for enactment occurs before all of the technical work has been completed. In such cases it is usually far better to take advantage of the political opportunity, as it is generally easier and quicker to fill in technical gaps later than it is to wait for or try to recreate the political moment. Indeed, being ready to move when political windows of opportunity open up (usually briefly) is a key element of reform design and delivery. Another key aspect of the "timing" question is deciding whether to attempt to enact the entire reform package all at once, or to proceed by stages. There is no universal prescription. Both options have sometimes succeeded and sometimes failed.

To repeat, dealing effectively with all of the issues noted in this section depends upon locally based, knowledgeable and sensitive political judgment. This cannot be emphasized too much. Political misjudgment during the policy adoption phase is an extremely frequent cause of educational reform failure, in both rich and poor nations. In developing nations such misjudgments are often, unfortunately, the result of pressure from outside consultants or international agency officials who are insufficiently knowledgeable about and sensitive to the needs and constraints of local political decision makers, and the way in which politics "works" in a particular nation, and who are responding primarily to the decision cycles of their own agencies and their own career-advancement imperative to "move the money." It should be noted finally that while reliance on such local knowledge and judgment is essential, it is no guarantee that a reform proposal will successfully work its way through the policy adoption phase. Political judgment is inherently risky and failure-prone, as any number of involuntarily retired politicians can tell us. But not relying on such local knowledge is a near guarantee of failure.

Implementation

Managing the *implementation* of change in educational organizations is more complex than in most other public or private enterprises. In education one is attempting to deliver (or change the delivery of) an intangible end-product (learning) on a non-sale basis to a diverse, diffuse, and often reluctant clientele, using delivery agents (teachers) over whose routine daily behavior one has minimum or no effective control, and in conditions where efforts to exert such control are frequently counter productive to the general goals of the system. Beyond this, in educational change one is dealing with what is most important to most people in a society: the destiny of their children and the future of the society in which their, and everyone else's, children will live their adult lives. Almost every group in a society are potential stakeholders in the process, passions are easily and quickly aroused, and the deepest value conflicts in a society are played out in debates over, and reactions to, attempts at educational reform (Farrell 1990). These

passions are found throughout the policy cycle, but they come very quickly to the fore during the implementation stage. For here, abstract notions and vague possibilities begin to assume a reality in the lives of youngsters. It is at this stage that *potential* stakeholders tend to become real stakeholders. If their interests have not been taken into account fully throughout the process, they will make them fully visible here. The management of educational reform implementation is *quintessentially political*. It is not fundamentally a technical exercise in which PERT charts, logical framework analyses, organizational analyses, or other tools of the professional "change agent" trade, which are very much in vogue in donor agencies, have much use (except as ways to keep files straight and an office efficiently running). The single most common cause of implementation failure is focusing on the technical and forgetting the political; of forgetting that implementation means changing the routine behavior of very large numbers of people at all levels of the system (including students and their parents) who cannot effectively be "commanded." It is a matter of treating people honestly rather than manipulatively, of persuasion, demonstration, tolerance for variation, and getting the positive incentives right.

It is extremely important to build in a capacity to learn *during* implementation. Things will always turn out differently than expected in at least some important areas. Educational *systems* are systems. Changing anything will change other things in ways which are almost impossible to fully anticipate. Ongoing learning capacity also allows detection of blockage points early enough to do something effective about them. Ongoing "evaluation" (see below) provides the "data" for such learning capacity, but equally important is keeping administrative systems flexible enough and regulations general enough that changes can easily be made as required in response to such data. Rigid bureaucratic rules and complex and time-consuming processes for approval of changes in a program design imposed by international donor agencies are a major inhibitor to the development of this ongoing learning capacity.

Top-down, centrally driven, and command-oriented forms of implementation almost never work well; and where they can be *made* to work well they tend to create resentments and resistances which make future changes even more difficult and impair the ongoing learning capacity discussed above. Several of the most commonly cited implementation "models" in the literature (e.g., Fullan 1982; Miles 1987) can best be described as "disguised" or "manipulative" top-down models. They are in essence approaches for manipulating teachers and lower level administrators so that they will behave in accordance with the ideas or decrees of senior officials or "experts." Teachers are considered as "objects" whose behavior is to be modified, not as sources of knowledge, insight, information and ideas. Parents and students hardly figure at all in such models. By manipulating or ignoring precisely those groups whose enthusiastic collaboration is essential to the solid implementation of significant educational reform, such models are recipes for serious problems in the mid- to long-term. Teachers must have the opportunity to learn: about the proposed reform and about how to operate it successfully in their own classrooms. (This assumes that their views have been given significant weight during the policy formulation process. If not, there is little that can be done at this stage to correct for the error; the reform effort will be doomed to serious implementation problems.) This teacher learning is best conceived and arranged not as a "teaching" process (experts from the ministry or the university going out to tell the teachers) but as the provision of opportunities to learn, through teacher centers, demonstration classes and centers, chances to experiment safely, mentoring

arrangements, and such. This kind of *innovation diffusion* approach to implementation often appears to work more slowly than a major-push, centrally-driven "blitz." But in the medium to long term it tends to work far better and deeper. Unfortunately, the "limited term project" mentality common in donor agencies works directly against such a long-term diffusion approach to implementation.

Evaluation

There is vast and generally well-known technical/methodological literature on "evaluation" which there is no need to recapitulate here. Rather, a few points which are sometimes overlooked in the literature and practice will be briefly noted.

Much of the data required for routine ongoing evaluation of a reform program are available from information collected by the Ministry of Education (and other agencies of government) for routine administration purposes (e.g., enrollment patterns, test scores, assigned grades, financial flows, and the like). However, such data are often incomplete and/or wildly inaccurate, and are often hidden or purposely distorted for bureaucratic or political reasons. Finding out where the good data are before mounting a major reform effort is often an expensive but essential up-front investment. Moreover, even the good data can easily get lost in bureaucratic files if special systems are not established to ensure that they arrive in a timely fashion on the desks of those responsible for monitoring the reform project. One cannot simply assume that because such data exist somewhere in the ministry (or other elements of government) they will automatically be provided to those who need them for project evaluation purposes. Since the possession and control of information is a major source of power, it is safer to assume the contrary, and therefore to establish special procedures for rechanneling such data. Funding research/policy analysis institutions outside government, or at least outside normal bureaucratic channels, which can provide a relatively independent view of such data could be a very useful role for international cooperation. Many of the institutions associated with the REDUC network, supported by a variety of donor agencies, have played a very useful role in this regard.

Non-routine evaluation exercises involve the *creation* of information not normally produced from the ordinary functioning of the educational system. They are often essential, but they are also expensive. Because of the cost it is important that such exercises be carefully and judiciously designed, taking into account information that is already available somewhere in the system, and the use to which each piece of newly created information will be put. Two of the most common and costly errors in reform evaluation design (and I have seen these repeatedly in international cooperation projects, usually because international agency officials were following some sort of agency "cookbook") are (1) collecting information which is already available somewhere in the system and (2) collecting information which is never used.

A mix of evaluation techniques and approaches is required for most reform projects, since they combine a variety of objectives and processes. Both quantitative and qualitative "evaluation research" approaches are usually needed. Often, the most generally useful sources of information are classroom observations, and the opinions and experiences of students, teachers, and parents.

Much of this information is anecdotal; setting up systems for recording and archiving such anecdotal evidence is usually well worth the investment. Although the pattern is slowly changing, it is still the case that large international donor agencies rely upon and take seriously only "hard" quantitative evaluation data. (Samoff 1993, provides a very good analysis of the organizational dynamics behind this quantitative data focus regarding the World Bank's work in Africa, which is generalizable to many other agencies and the Americas.)

Evaluation exercises, especially "end of project" evaluations, designed and/or commissioned by funding agencies are often quite useless from the point of view of the recipient country, as they focus heavily on the administrative requirements of the donor (e.g., was the money disbursed on schedule, did planned activities take place on time, has material been acquired and disbursed on schedule, etc.) rather than on actual ground-level changes and the results of the reform.

Roles of Donor Agencies

From the above it should be evident that serious educational reform, of the sort that seems to be needed *throughout* the Americas (and not just in Latin America), is a slow, complex, chancy and highly political business. A central argument here is that many of the standard operating procedures of international donor agencies, who are the major financiers of international educational cooperation within the Americas, and thus the central actors in the process, run directly counter to, and interfere with, the way in which effective major educational change takes place, in the relatively rare occasions in which it does take place. Many of these patterns of behavior have been noted briefly in the pages above. Some of the more important are listed below, in summary fashion.

There is a tendency among donor agencies to overgeneralize from the results of often problematic research and attempt to apply "standard solutions" to all nations in a region. This is combined with a pattern of "faddishness" as different sets of standard solutions go in and out of fashion. For example, support for secondary level technical or "diversified" education was once very much "in"; now it is less so. Support for primary education was long a low priority; lately it has become fashionable.

There is within donor agencies a predominant "search for certitude" and a desire for "quick fixes" which ignore just how risky and slow effective educational change usually is.

There is an overwhelming tendency to regard educational change as a "technical" matter and to consider "politics" as at best a bothersome nuisance. The prevailing view is captured in the following quote: "The politicization of decision-making in Latin America has traditionally undermined the role of technical analysis" (Reimers 1991, 348). To imagine that politically sensitive educational decisions (and they are almost all such) could be taken without "politicization" is destructively unrealistic. If "political factors" are taken into account at all they are typically viewed as something to be gotten around or gotten through rather than as an inherent and essential part of the change process.

Funding patterns are normally short term compared to the length of time required for educational change, and based on one or a collection of specific projects with rigid (as well as too short) time lines. *Educational systems do not change that way.* When reasonably long-term funding has been arranged, usually through a succession of short-term projects, and some success has been achieved, this is frequently a signal to the donor to cut off the funding and redirect the resources to some area of more "desperate" need. This cuts off the possibility of the really important benefits which only come in the more long term, and effectively penalizes the recipients for having been successful.

The administrative imperative to work with large investment packages (keeping the donor's administrative costs down) produces "smorgasbord" or "Christmas tree" programs consisting of collections of discrete projects which are fundamentally unrelated (except perhaps in the prose of a proposal writer with high creative writing skills).

Constant personnel changes in donor agencies produce serious continuity and institutional memory problems in necessarily long-term programs. This happens regularly even with relatively short-term projects. I was recently involved in a three-year project of quite small scale which experienced four changes of donor agency program officers. Much of our time was spent (wasted) in bringing each successive agency official "up to speed." This is not, I am sure, what the taxpayers of Canada imagined they were financing when their members of parliament supported the overseas assistance appropriation. Recipient country project managers have to spend an inordinate amount of their time educating successive waves of equally uninformed donor agency officials. (As one such official said to me in exasperation a few years ago: "The least they could do is talk to each other while they play musical chairs!") This pattern may be great for the personal growth and career advancement of donor agency officials, but it doesn't do much for educational reform.

Donor agencies funding or looking for projects in education in a particular nation rarely work effectively together, and seldom have a clear idea of what everyone else is doing. Their competitive, jealous, non-cooperative collective presence in a particular nation makes educational reform even harder than it normally is. Indeed, one frequently sees the bizarre situation in which the donors are even more uncooperative among themselves (and more assiduously protective of their own national interests) than are the recipients who are accused by the donors of being overly protective of their national interests. One might call the situation Kafkaesque, but that would be unfair to Kafka. He never described a situation quite so strange.

In one sense the obvious "lesson" is that donor agencies should alter the behaviors noted above. I must admit, however, that I have no clear idea as to how that might actually come about. Some would argue that these patterns of behavior are the inevitable consequence of well-nigh universal organizational imperatives of large bureaucracies, and therefore nearly impossible to change so long as international cooperation is financed and administered by large bureaucratic organizations. Others would argue that they are the ineluctable consequence of highly unequal power relationships between donor and recipient nations, and will not change until those power relationships change. I am convinced of one thing, however. If these patterns of behavior and attitude are not changed the probability is very low that international cooperation can in general

promote and support educational reform in the Americas; indeed, if such patterns are not changed the probability is highest that international cooperation will be a *hindrance* to educational reform. It will most likely be time, energy and money not only wasted, but used counter productively. There are, however, some "successes;" cases in which significant educational reform has been accomplished, and in which international cooperation has played an important role. Cases which come to mind and with which I am personally familiar include the educational reform in Chile during the Frei regime, the development of the REDUC network, the development of education for production programs for disadvantaged youth, the *Escuela Nueva* program in Colombia, and (as far as one can tell at the moment), the MECE project in Chile. My own impression, based on personal experience, and the "lore" referred to above, is that these successes have occurred because the local change agents were smart enough and lucky enough to circumvent or overcome the donor agency patterns discussed above, and/or were able to manipulate the donor agencies to their own advantage. A very useful role for the Inter-American Dialogue would be to *initiate a careful investigation of how these "successes" occurred and how international cooperation was in these cases actually helpful, and to compare these cases to a good sample of the more typical failures in educational reform and international cooperation in support of it.* A further useful role would be to *facilitate discussions with donor agencies regarding ways to alter the counterproductive behaviors discussed above.*

Toward a Different Model of International Cooperation

Underlying the organizational behavior difficulties discussed above is a deeper problem which has been briefly alluded to. The basic "model" of international cooperation which has become well-nigh universal is not the "solution" but the "problem." That model, the "foreign aid" or "technical assistance" model, is inherently hierarchical; one set of nations (the "donors") bring their resources and expertise to bear upon the problems of another set of nations (the "recipients"). It is assumed implicitly (and sometimes explicitly), that the recipients have the "problems" and the donors have the "solutions" and the resources required to apply them. It is assumed, although this is rarely said out loud and often officially denied, that there is a natural confluence between having more resources (money) and having better ideas or more "expertise." Even when "ideas" from recipient nations are financed by donor agencies, those ideas must first be accepted and approved by those with the funds. Such a model necessarily breeds arrogance on one side and resentment and frustration on the other; and it has in general proven to be ineffective or counterproductive in promoting educational reform in the Americas. I argue that even where it has in a general sense *seemed* to be successful it has sown the seeds of its own failure. In pursuing this argument it is useful to separate discussion of fiscal flows and ideational flows.

Fiscal Flows

It is obviously the case that one of the differences between rich nations and poor nations is that the former have more money than the latter. It is also obviously the case that at least some of the educational reform problems in poor nations cannot be dealt with without infusions of

money from richer nations. But *how* such money gets transferred is all important, and the record within the Americas over the past few decades has not been encouraging. Reimer's analysis of fiscal flows in support of international cooperation in education within the Americas over the past decades is most instructive. He notes that the massive educational expansion in Latin America during the 1970s was "credit led" (Reimers 1990, 45). That is, a significant portion of the *marginal* costs required by that expansion were financed by borrowing from international donors. However, the educational borrowings were part of the overall debt whose servicing created the "debt crisis" of the 1980s and 90s, whose effect has been (among many other things) to cripple the educational systems of many Latin American nations and to, in effect, bring them back to where they were, or worse than they were, before the expansion of the 1970s. In sum, international debt-financed educational change helped create the cause of its own destruction (Reimers 1991). This is not to argue for a cessation of transfers of funds from those who have more money than they need to those who have less than they need. It is to argue for an alteration of the *terms* of such transfers so that they do not create a repetition of that disastrous cycle.

Ideational Flows

The notion that educational "ideas" or "solutions" originating in the North of the Americas are better or more powerful than those originating in the South of the Americas is bizarre and arrogant, and indicates that educational "experts" from the North have little understanding of just how badly they have managed collectively to diagnose and correct the difficulties in their own educational systems. The operative phrase here should be: "Physician, heal thyself!" The educational research and reform industry in the United States and Canada is massive, offering gainful employment to thousands of professors, researchers, and change agents. Yet complaints of massive educational problems are common currency in both of these rich societies, and their educational systems seem to have remained impervious to the expenditures of huge sums of money on their putative improvement.

Fierce scholarly and political debates rage in both nations regarding the causes of the educational malaise, and what might be done about it. Attendance at any annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association or the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, or organizations of various specialized groups of practitioners or researchers, will bear witness to this rampant confusion and disagreement. Yet, leading "experts" from both of these rich American nations regularly presume to tell educational officials from the poorer nations of our hemisphere what *they* ought to do about *their* educational problems! The educational and economic/political disadvantages of members of racial and ethnic minorities in both Canada and the United States continue, in general, to remain impervious to attempts at educational reform. The economies of both nations are mired in deep recession, and various attempts at educational change and job training schemes have had nil effect to date. In both nations income distribution has been steadily worsening since the early 1980s. What exactly do either of these nations have to teach to the rest of the hemisphere about how to use educational reform to improve either economic growth or social equity? My answer is simple: practically nothing at all, except as salutary bad examples. But of course it would be very hard to even imagine a well-paid, upper-middle class professional representative of one of the donor agencies (or even a middle-middle class representative of one of the increasingly noticeable nongovernmental

agencies) actually admitting that they don't really know what to do; that in reality nobody knows what to do. It would be even harder for them to admit that indeed the primary beneficiaries of the "foreign aid" model of international cooperation have been the quite well paid professional administrators of those otherwise often useless, and frequently counterproductive, North to South fiscal flows.

What has to be done is to recognize collectively that whether we speak English, Spanish or Portuguese, whether we are members of rich nations or poor nations, we are all equal in our befuddlement about what sorts of educational changes might contribute to the solution of the economic, social and political problems all nations of the Americas face, and about how to enact and implement effectively such educational reforms. At the same time, all nations of the hemisphere have examples of modest but potentially promising "successes." And we all are, or at least ought to be, equally puzzled by the direction and consequences of the evident massive and rapid changes in the global economic, political, social, environmental (and educational) conditions. In this context it is somewhat disheartening to note that all of the background documents referred to in the first paragraph of this paper are redolent with language which reflects the traditional "foreign aid" understanding of international cooperation. For example, in these documents the "problems" are all discussed in relation to Latin America, as though the social, economic, political and educational problems were not equally difficult and intractable in North America. But, if we were all collectively to admit to it in due intellectual humility, the collective and mutual confusion regarding the changing nature of our world, and the place of educational reform in dealing with it, could provide the basis for developing a quite different model of international cooperation. I have elsewhere referred to this model as "horizontal intellectual cooperation" and have described one small effort at enacting it among one Canadian and two Chilean educational research institutions (Farrell 1989; see also Shaeffer 1991). This model starts from the assumption that we *all* have much to teach each other and much to learn from each other; that all of our knowledge is equally tentative and equally valid; and that such knowledge derived from any given society or culture must be carefully tested and validated before being applied in any other society or culture. This model would place less emphasis on the transfer of funds among agencies and governments, and more on the collective creation and critical examination of *ideas*. Operationally, such a model would imply support for institutions and centers which create and analyze educational knowledge, and for collaborative interchange among them. Support for the expansion of networks such as REDUC would be a good place to start. Collective exploration of how this model of international educational cooperation might be enacted would be a task worthy of the Inter-American Dialogue. It would likely be a far better use of such resources as can be found than trying to "fine tune" the traditional "foreign aid" model of international cooperation.

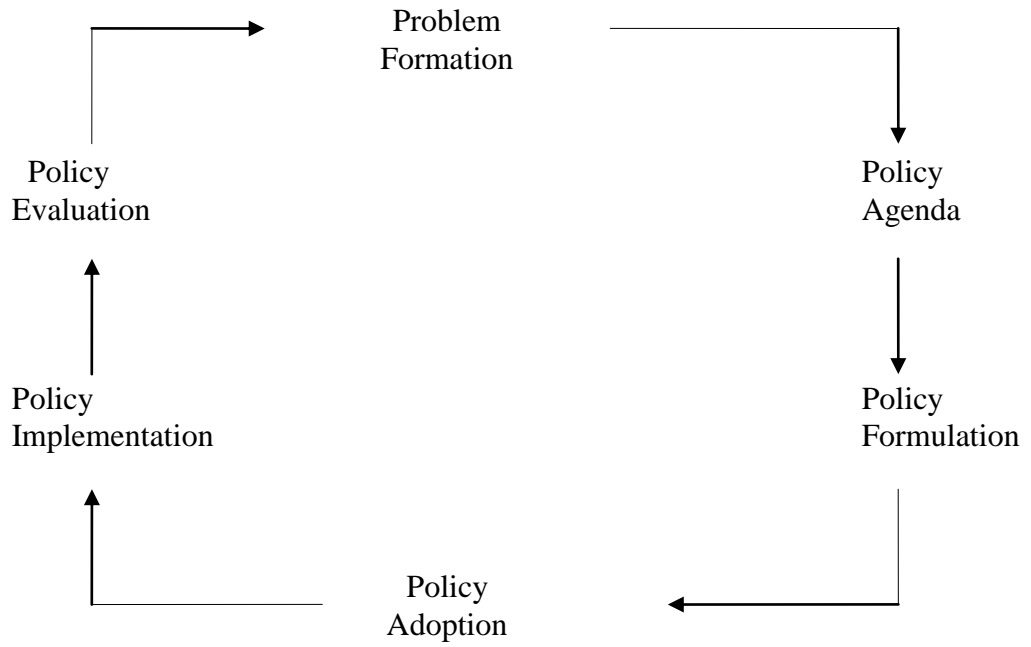
Some Concluding Observations

The reader of these pages may arrive at this point with the conclusion that I take a pessimistic (perhaps unduly pessimistic) view of the possibilities of achieving needed educational changes, and of the possibilities of inventing modes of international cooperation which might support such change efforts. The experience, and analysis of it, briefly outlined

above, could easily lead one to such a pessimistic conclusion, but that is not where I will end this essay. I actually take from this experience what might best be called a "cautiously optimistic" conclusion. It is clear that it is extremely difficult to successfully accomplish large-scale, national-level and top-down educational reform programs. But at the same time we have many examples of very successful change attempts at the level of the local school, or a small system of schools, and occasionally (as in Colombia's *Escuela Nueva* program) in systems of thousands of schools. That is, while it seems very difficult to change a *national school system*, it appears relatively easy to change a *classroom*, or, *a school*, in ways which are often unknown by national- or international-level officials. And thousands of such very local changes can, over time (in an innovation diffusion process), build from the bottom-up into a major change in the overall "national" education effort. What we have to do, I would suggest, is to identify these local successes and *learn from them*. That task is not to invent and implement "the innovation" or "the reform" across the whole national territory, but rather to develop and unleash a *capacity to innovate* throughout the system. The result would likely be a highly variegated, locally adapted, set of learning systems which, while occurring in buildings called "schools," would have few of the characteristics of the "standard model" of schooling outlined earlier.

It is not yet at all clear how that capacity to innovate which we see in these localized cases of successful change can be generalized. It does seem clear that, under the right circumstances, even very poorly paid teachers working under extremely difficult conditions, *can* enact major educational changes in their own classrooms and schools. It does seem clear that national educational system administrators *can*, under the right circumstances, become change agents rather than change blockers. It does seem clear that, under the right circumstances, officials of international donor agencies *can* work through or around the constraints of the bureaucratic systems in which they operate to assist in the creation of truly hopeful innovations. The periodic successes indicate that the task is possible. But how do we convert the *possible* into the *probable*? How do we create the "circumstances" which can unleash the human energy and sense of vocation which draw most people into the "education" and "development" fields in the first place? I do not claim in this paper to have provided many answers--certainly not any definitive answers-to that question. A central task of the Inter-American Dialogue would be to provide a forum in which the answer to that question can be collaboratively developed by people representing all of the groups which have a stake in the way in which their society manages the provision of opportunities for its citizens (young and old) to learn. But one cannot possibly get the "answer" right until one gets the "question" right. My main aim in this paper has been to contribute to getting the question right.

FIGURE I
POLICY CYCLE



Source: Anderson, Brady and Bullock 1978

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