THE IDENTITY CRISIS OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

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Abstract — As long as educational expansion was considered to be decisive for achieving economic growth as well as social and political equality, the prospects and merits of educational planning were rarely questioned. However, the failure of educational expansion to produce the desired results, challenged the relevance of educational planning to such a degree that it is now suffering from an identity crisis. The author critically reviews traditional and contemporary technical approaches to educational planning, governmental planning activities, and the role of educational planning as a part of the political apparatus. Weighing up the possibilities and the limitations of educational planning, he stresses the need to build a new identity for it in order that it should be able to cope with the demographic, educational, economic and financial challenges of the 1980's.


Résumé — Tant que l'on considérait l'expansion éducative comme le facteur décisif du développement économique, de l'égalité sociale et politique, les expectatives et les mérites de la planification éducative ne furent que rarement contestés. Cependant, l'échec de l'expansion éducative au niveau de la réalisation des résultats souhaités a tellement mis en cause l'importance de la planification éducative qu'elle souffre maintenant d'une crise d'identité. L'auteur procède à un examen critique des approches techniques nouvelles et traditionnelles de la planification éducative, des activités de planification du gouvernement et du rôle de la planification éducative en tant que partie de l'appareil politique. En évaluant les possibilités et les limitations de la planification éducative, il souligne le besoin pour la planification éducative de construire une nouvelle identité afin de pouvoir répondre aux exigences démographiques, économiques, éducatives et financières des années 80.
Disillusion with Educational Planning as a State Institution

The early 1960's marked the beginning of new departures in educational policy-making. The nations both of the industrialised North and of the developing South set themselves lofty goals to be achieved with the aid of educational expansion and reform: economic growth and prosperity, a greater measure of social justice and a higher degree of democracy. Educational planning became the means of co-ordinating and steering educational policy and was turned into a government institution. Because the practice of planning has to be conducted from an adequate theoretical basis, academic research was given the task of developing models and concepts of educational planning.

Educational policies, however, failed to achieve the goals expected of them. This was the result mainly of unrealistic expectations and of deteriorating economic and financial conditions. But the failure of educational policies and the sudden shift from a mood of euphoric confidence in the possibilities of education to one of crisis, led to disappointment, resignation and widespread discontent with educational policy-making and planning. Since the reputation and self-awareness of educational planning depended for the most part on its identification with the ambitious objectives of expansionist educational policies, it found itself in an identity crisis when these aims failed to be achieved. This primarily affected educational planning as a political and state institution rather than planning as an academic discipline, for there was seldom active co-operation between political and academic educational planning — it was more commonly a case of parallel coexistence.

For the public today, constant use of the term 'educational planning' as a political slogan with wide connotations, has greatly devalued it. If the concept is to be given a new meaning, and educational planning is to be rehabilitated and to regain its identity, then a critical look at the past is called for. It is essential that the tasks and objectives, the potential and limitations of educational planning, be clarified. A critical historical analysis of the development of educational planning institutions, models and practical work, and of the experience available, should enable us to redefine the position and role of educational planning. Everything necessary should be undertaken to ensure that the stock of theoretical knowledge and practical experience accumulated over the past twenty-five years is used to the best advantage to deal with the planning tasks of the present and the future.