Until fairly recently the comparative study of educational systems has been largely concerned with the exchange and collation of descriptive material. With the establishment of international agencies such as UNESCO, OECD and the Council of Europe's Council for Cultural Co-operation, this exchange and collation has been intensified with the result that there is a wealth of data relating to different patterns of educational organisation, curricula and teaching methods. However, where any analysis of these data has been undertaken this has been of the classification type and usually within countries. Furthermore, none of the data collected internationally has included measures of outcomes of education. It has become increasingly evident that formal education plays an important part in the social, economic and technological development of a country; at the same time, it is known that few countries have sufficient resources to satisfy the growing demand for educational expansion and this has underlined the need for a critical enquiry and re-appraisal of some of the educational practices in existence today. Anderson 1), in a previous number of this Review, has indicated the need to introduce into comparative educational studies established procedures of research and quantitative assessment so as to gather information about the "efficiency" of various types of educational systems. Bereday 2) too has emphasised the need for the analytic (both qualitative and quantitative) stage in comparative education. This implies that internationally valid cognitive (and non-cognitive) tests and questionnaires are produced so that comparable data are obtained about a number of educational systems at the same time. Such data are of value:

1) when one wishes to study the relationship between certain variations in educational practice and educational achievement, but the practices one wishes to compare are not well represented within a single country.

2) when it is desirable to test the generality or universality of a relationship that has been found in some one country.

One illustration of the former would be an inquiry into the relationship between the age of commencing formal schooling and subsequent a-

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achievement. How does achievement at, say, age 13 compare for pupils who entered upon formal schooling at age 5, age 6, or age 7? The uniformity of practice within a single country almost precludes any study of this question within national boundaries, whereas an international study would reveal the diversity of practice in different countries and make data on this point readily available.

An illustration of the second type of relationship is the allegation that boys do better than girls in certain subjects. Is this a general phenomenon or is it limited to certain countries? If the latter, what are the characteristics of the national cultures and of the educational systems in which boys do better and of those in which girls do better? Thus, an international study of education must centre on the kinds of questions that can be answered best (or solely) by comparisons of the achievement of pupils in different countries, and that can be answered poorly, if at all, by studies of pupils within a single country. The International Project for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement is the first large scale cross-national educational research study to be undertaken. The aim of this article is to describe briefly the history, structure and present work of the I.E.A.

History and Structure

In the middle fifties, groups of educators and educational researchers from different countries had met at places like the Unesco Institute for Education, Hamburg, to examine problems such as those concerned with school structures and organisation, selection processes, examinations and failure in school. Two important publications emerging from some of these meetings were edited by Hotyat 1) and Wall 2). Throughout these meetings there was a growing awareness of the need to establish evaluation techniques which would be valid cross-nationally. At the same time, more or less independently of each other, educators in the United States (Foshay, Bloom and Anderson) began to consider the possibilities of undertaking such research.

In 1958, all of these people came together at a meeting in Eltham under Dr. W. D. Wall of the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, and also at the Unesco Institute for Education, in Hamburg. At those meetings it was decided to carry out a pilot study to discover if an international research project would be administratively possible and meaningful. Research Centres from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States were established. The final report by the International Project for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement provides a comprehensive overview of the project and its findings.

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