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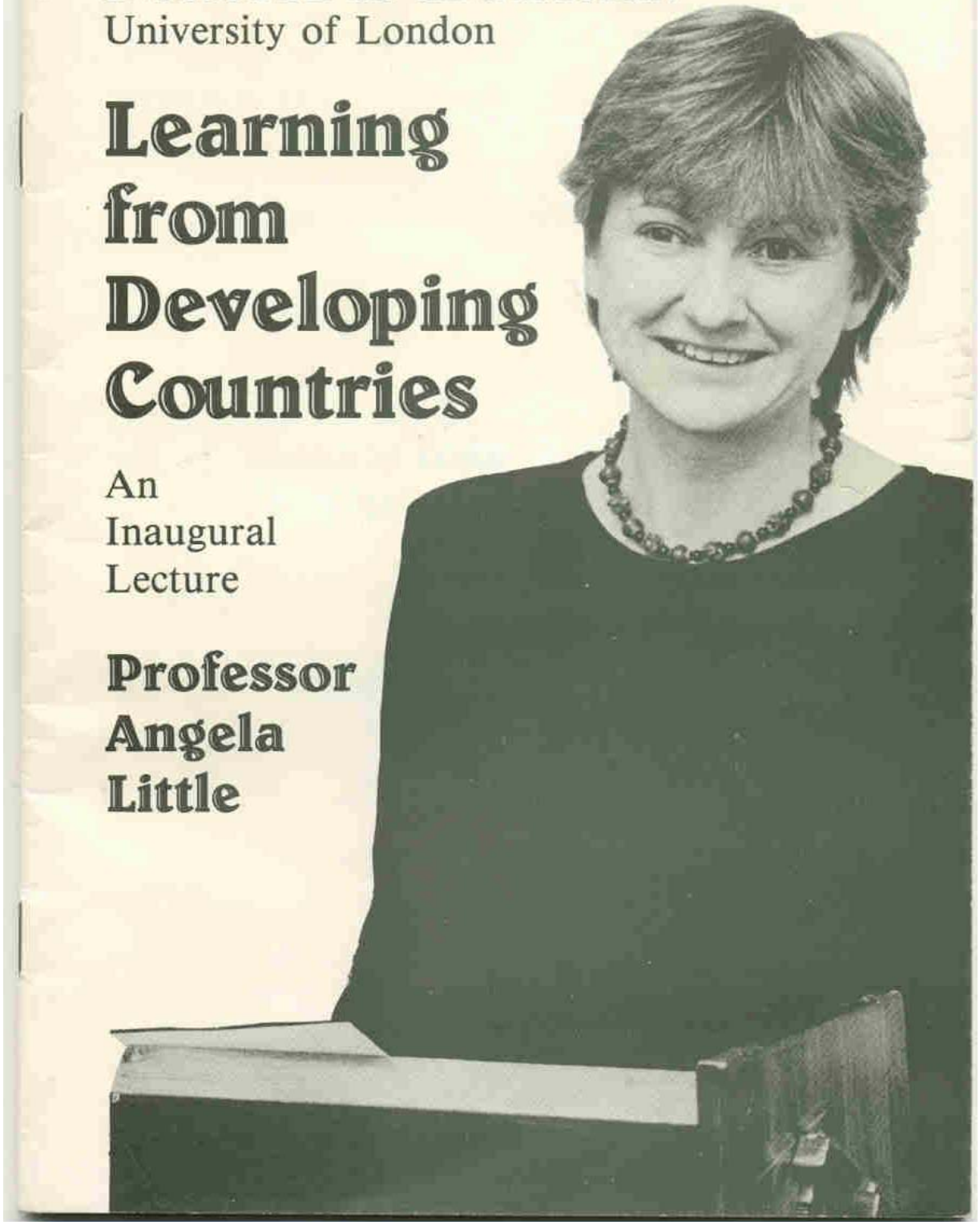
Learning from Developing Countries

An
Inaugural
Lecture

Professor Angela Little



Learning from Developing Countries

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For my parents

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A.L.
June, 1988

Learning from Developing Countries

I am sure that most of us have at one time or another eaten spaghetti in an Italian restaurant. But I wonder how recently it was that we learned that spaghetti originates not from Italy, but from China? Or that the roots of Eric Clapton's inspiration are to be found not in suburban London but in West Africa? And how long ago did we forget that the Lancaster-Bell monitor system, which was to form part of the bedrock of mass elementary schooling in England in the early part of the nineteenth century, was an educational innovation of its day which originated not in England, but in India? Or that ethnography, on which so many contemporary British educational studies are based, is grounded as an analytic approach and set of research techniques not in London, Liverpool, Manchester or Milton Keynes, but in the Trobriand islands in Melanesia and elsewhere in those areas of the world now classified as developing countries?

Developing countries are generally regarded as those which are economically poor, where substantial proportions of the population are employed in agriculture and where the social conditions of the mass of the population are depressed. The majority of countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and Oceania fall into this general category, though the variations between countries on these and many other economic, social and political dimensions of development are enormous.

I propose to explore my theme, Learning *from* Developing Countries, in three ways.

First, I shall describe and comment on a recent advance in Western educational theory which cries out for refinement and elaboration by researchers in and from developing countries if it is to justify itself as a theory having international status; second, I shall discuss recent work on learning orientation which was developed in collaboration with educators and researchers from developing countries and which offers one model for the creation of international knowledge about education; and third, I shall identify some policies and practices in developing countries which have relevance for our thinking about contemporary problems and issues in education in Britain.

The examples which I shall use to illustrate these three aspects of learning *from* developing countries draw on work on student achievement, assessment and motivation.

* * *

Let us start, then, with a fairly well known theory of achievement and motivation — attribution theory, associated with several American social psychologists, including Harold Kelley (1972) and Bernard Weiner (1979). The theory was elaborated in the early 1970s and has received empirical development over the past decade, when it also began to filter into educational circles. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this theory, may I first offer a little background?

The theory is predicated on the notion that an adequate understanding of human social behaviour must rest on a description of how human beings perceive and report their social world. It is assumed that all people want to predict and control their social environment, a desire which leads the individual to perceive events as being caused, or, to use the words of the attribution theorist, to assign attributions to events. Moreover, and this is the important point, the individual's attribution of causes is assumed to have a significant impact on future achievement behaviour. We don't have to read the theory, however, to know that students and their teachers and parents are seeking out explanations for academic success and failure almost daily. A teacher's diary (Marshall, 1976) records dialogue between himself and the father of one of his Ugandan students.

Father: Teachers at Malobe school are lazy.

Teacher: That's not quite true you know.

Father: But your results are bad.

Teacher: You mean the students' results.

Father: No, not the students' results, students only do as the teachers tell them. When the teachers tell them the wrong thing, they get bad results.

Teacher (perplexed): But surely the students have something to do with it. Some are cleverer than others . . .

Father: At Budo students always get good results because the teachers are good. At Malobe they get bad results because the teachers are bad.

English headmistresses and students also have notions about the causes of success and failure. In the 1930s, a nine-year-old girl won first prize for reciting a poem in a drama festival. When the girl returned triumphant to Huntingdon Road Elementary School, the headmistress remarked, 'You were lucky.' 'I wasn't lucky,' she replied, 'I deserved it.' This sentiment was echoed at her victory press conference in 1975, when a reporter asked her, 'Why do you think you won?' 'Merit', replied Margaret Thatcher briskly!

Cleverness, laziness, good luck, and merit are perceived by different people at different times as causes of, or attributions for, academic success and failure. But how do these attributions for success and failure form, how do they develop and what implications do they have for learning experience in the classroom and, as the last illustration suggested, for future experience in the world outside? Here the attribution theorists have been very active in their experimental designs. As with most American social psychology, the empirical development of the work has been experimental, rigorous, logical and controlled. We have learned, for example, that people who attribute success to ability have a greater expectation of future success than those who attribute success to effort or luck. We have also learned that American men tend to attribute their own success to ability and their failure to lack of effort or bad luck and have high expectations of success in the future; whereas American women tend to attribute their success to effort and good luck and their failure to lack of ability, and have lower expectations of success in the future. Men, incidentally, while attributing *men's* success to ability, tend to attribute *women's* success to effort and good luck.

Attribution theory explains such findings in terms of the dimensions of controllability, locus and stability (Figure 1). Ability is classified by the attribution theorists as internal to the individual, stable over time and uncontrollable. Luck, on the other hand, is classified as external, unstable and uncontrollable. Effort is usually classified as internal, unstable and controllable. The dimension of stability is considered to be critical for future expectations of success and failure, while the dimensions of controllability and locus are crucial for other types of outcome concerning affect, esteem, and interpersonal judgement.

The socio-economic context that gave rise to attribution theory and its main experimental base is Western, industrialized, predominantly American and, until quite recently, adult. Cross-cultural interest in the theory has grown rapidly in the last few years and many of the American experiments have been replicated. But the process of replication side-

	LOCUS			
	Internal		External	
CONTROLLABILITY	Stable	Unstable	Stable	Unstable
Uncontrollable	ability	mood	task ease	luck
Controllable	typical effort	immediate effort	teacher bias	unusual help from others

Figure 1: Attributions for success and failure, classified by locus, stability and controllability (Weiner, 1979). Copyright (1979) by the American Psychological Association. Reprinted by permission of the author.

steps sociological and anthropological studies which have documented cultural variations in beliefs about personal causation. And as well as cultural differences, how well would attribution theory account for the attributions of schoolchildren in different cultures making daily sense of academic success and failure in the *classroom* rather than in the experimental laboratory? After all, the matrix of attributions was derived from the personal introspection of the attribution theorists themselves, and it was a good ten years after experimental research had started in earnest that Kelley and Michela (1980) suggested that the irony of the research was the lack of enquiry into the causal distinctions made by ordinary people. How much more ironic, then, that this ungrounded matrix should be applied by attribution researchers first to American children and second to children in other cultures.

In the mid-1970s, I examined attributions among schoolchildren in England and Sri Lanka (Little, 1985, 1987). Although Sri Lanka is a poor country with a very low level of income per capita, it has a literacy rate of 86 per cent and a long record of high social demand for education. In both countries educational success and failure are key determinants and legitimators of access to positions of power and status.

The present education system in Sri Lanka is centrally controlled and financed, textbooks are free, students follow a national curriculum in most subjects and sit national examinations. But it is a system wedded to a socio-cultural context that is predominantly, though not exclusively, Sinhala-Buddhist, a culture whose characteristics are well described by Sri Lankan anthropologists, such as Gananath Obeyesekere (1979).

Sinhala-Buddhism is by no means a nominal religion. It provides a lay ethical code and a set of beliefs which help people to explain their daily existence. Among the beliefs which make up Sinhala-Buddhism is Karma, or 'the law of moral causation' and the associated belief in rebirth. Good deeds bear good fruit, either in this life or in a future rebirth, and bad deeds bear bad fruit. The present is the fruit of the past and the seed of the future.

In my own attribution study, schoolchildren aged five to fourteen years in Sri Lanka and England were presented with stories describing familiar events from their own classrooms. They were encouraged through interviews to explain freely why they thought the events had occurred, why, for example, children obtained different marks in a maths test, or why some children who started reading a book at the same time had finished at different times. The data from the English and Sri Lankan children were analysed at the same time, thus avoiding the temptation so

common in cross-cultural studies, to examine the way in which the data from the second culture (usually the developing country) approximate the data from the first culture (usually the industrialized country). The analysis sought to identify categories which were common and uncommon across the two cultures. It confirmed the salience of many of the categories used conventionally within attribution research, but went further. Children in both cultures produced attributional responses not normally taken into account by conventional models. For example, good classroom behaviour and bad classroom behaviour, expressed as, 'He mucks about in class, that's why he's not doing very well', or age, 'She's older, that's why she's doing better'. A number of attributions were also seen to emerge developmentally in both cultures, especially those of ability and effort.

One of the most intriguing findings was the Sri Lankan children's elaboration of Karma. Forty-nine of the eleven and fourteen year olds were asked directly whether Karma could affect the learning of a child in school. Just over half said it could — but how? A few children did not explain any further, but the majority did. Some perceived a direct connection between good and bad deeds in a past life and high and low achievement in this life, e.g., 'He must have given some books to another boy in his past life, that's why he is doing well now'. Others perceived the link between Karma and achievement to be mediated by economic circumstance. In these explanations good or bad deeds in the past life were perceived to determine the wealth or poverty respectively of the family into which one is born in this life. The economic condition then determined how well one learned in school.

The problem for attribution theory is how to classify an attribution like Karma. Remember that the concern of the theory is with the *lay* person's understanding of the social world and with the consequences of this understanding for future action.

One's first inclination as a Western observer is to relate it to the work on locus of control by Rotter, Seeman and Liverant (1962), on mystical and ascetic religion by Weber (1963) or on the characteristics of Inkeles and Smith's 'modern man' (1974). Following these writers Karma would probably end up classified as external, uncontrollable and stable. But Karma appears in a number of forms which defy easy classification. Karma, remember, is a causal force that is thought to link past life with present and future life. At any one time a person is influenced both by his or her past Karma and by present Karma. Present Karma is equivalent in meaning to present deeds and action including (and this is the difficult bit) present effort. Since life is a continuum present Karma, which includes

present effort, becomes past Karma for the next life, just as one's current Karma reflects earlier effort. Effort and Karma are for many people compatible explanations, mutually reinforcing. Moreover, a bad Karma from the past life can usually be overcome by present effort. Only a belief in an extremely strong past Karma leads to feelings of resignation and uncontrollability.

Since it is the dimensions of attributions which are considered crucial for future action, it is important that attributions are not misclassified within the taxonomy. For example, Karma, like effort, may be viewed as internal, stable and controllable. This possibility also raises the question of whether the dimensions of lay people's theories should be elicited *from* the subject, rather than *imposed* by the researcher. One would think that this question is important enough for intra-cultural studies but crucial for cross-cultural studies.

* * *

This excursion into a branch of current education theory and examination of part of one small study highlights the importance of examining processes and outcomes of education and schooling in the context of their broader society and culture. The blind or blinkered export of attribution models by Western scholars and their blind or blinkered import by scholars in countries like China, India or Nigeria would no doubt lead to a proliferation of replication studies and hundreds of PhDs. Through these we should learn a great deal about the extent to which Indian, Chinese and Nigerian children and adults approximated Western attribution models, but we should never know — and, more importantly, Indians, Chinese and Nigerians would never know — whether the most important attributions or dimensions had been identified and elaborated, or whether the most important concepts of social and interpersonal causality had been examined.

After all, attribution theory is based on the Aristotelian concept of 'efficient causality', but many other concepts of causality are used by children and adults alike in trying to understand and act on the world around them.

If cross-cultural attribution studies follow this replication and reproduction route over the next few years, they will not be the first to have done so. In the 1950s and 1960s studies of children's intelligence and achievement conducted in a number of African countries were based on Western theories and tests of intelligence. In the 1960s and 1970s 'need for achieve-

ment' tests and the IEA* tests of school achievement swept through much of the developing world; so, too, did Piaget's tests of 'conservation', designed to examine the speed and sequence of transition from pre-operational to concrete stages of thought among primary-school-age children. The view of economic, social and cognitive development implicit in these studies is linear. Development proceeds along a continuous line or up a ladder of stages. The important results are the comparisons of the economic, social, educational or psychological indicators with 'international' criteria set by outsiders. Internally designed criteria are less important, may not be considered, and are often unavailable.

Those who may be in a position to lead the development of internally-designed criteria have often been trained in the West, following curricula designed largely for students from the West, and their professional reference groups may well be Western or, more accurately these days, cosmopolitan. The rarity of locally set research questions in developing countries, embodied in local or national intellectual, social and cultural values, concerns some of us who work with students from developing countries. It sometimes gives rise to the feeling that we may not always be contributing optimally, together with local universities and colleges, to the creation of a critical mass of people who have the professional self-confidence and the intellectual tools to research new fields of study which are socially and culturally attuned to their own circumstances and are relevant for the *mass* of their country's populations, rather than for the urban, middle-class minorities. Such a contribution by Western institutions is of course a very tall order. Let's think about it for a moment in reverse.

Imagine that a British teacher decides to follow postgraduate education studies in a Chinese university. Before leaving England, she struggles for two years learning pu tong hua. All the lectures are on the Chinese education system, on Chinese curriculum and assessment issues, on Chinese political economy. She reads books on pedagogy by Liu Fonian and on educational psychology by Pan Shu.

Few of the sociologically-oriented studies she reads focus on social class and its implications for educational achievement and occupational selection. She visits Chinese schools and learns of the important role of moral and political education, and observes how class peers are invited to assess publicly each other's class performance and provide social and peer group reinforcement for academic success and failure. She also observes how children perform eye muscle exercises to music each morning to reduce

*International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement

eye strain and the chances of scoring a poor mark on the eyesight test which will prevent access to a key high school. In the library she finds Chinese translations of Russian texts and just a handful of books in English written by American and British authors, many of them in the nineteenth century. She may be lucky and be able to enrol on a course on comparative education where she will read books by Professor Wang Cheng Xu, one of China's foremost scholars on comparative education in general, and on British education in particular. If she visits the library at Beijing Normal University she will be lucky indeed: not only will she find books by Watts, Peel and Lauwerys, and recent handbooks on international education written by colleagues from my own department, but she will also find no less than four books by Professor Lawton! At the end of her period of studies she returns home to Britain, where she is promoted to a very senior education post in a county education authority.

An unlikely scenario, you may say. Yes indeed, but in reverse this scenario happens regularly, perhaps not so noticeably with Chinese students since their numbers are still relatively few; but with many students from elsewhere in Asia and Africa, who are often promoted to extremely senior positions on their return home.

The learning experience of a developing country student in educational institutions in an industrialized country like Britain, is less problematic when the student is a member of a group where British students are not in the majority. When the formal and hidden curriculum is genuinely international, where the student is exposed to a variety of educational models and to a wide range of educational policy and practice, including that from his or her own country, then the process of evaluating *and valuing* one's own country's experience can begin. Yet the situation is still far from ideal, the most striking shortcoming being that the theoretical perspectives on education and development which subtend discussions of policy and practice are still offered disproportionately by Western scholars.

* * *

I turn now to the second aspect of Learning *from* Developing Countries, in which I shall describe a learning exercise involving researchers and educators from industrialized and developing countries, and which offers the beginnings of a model of working practice for the creation of international knowledge.

The Student Learning Orientations Group, better known by its acronym SLOG, is a network of educational researchers based in India, Sri Lanka,

Nigeria, Malaysia, Japan and England. SLOG is interested in students' definitions of why they learn (SLOG, 1987). Though related indirectly to the attribution theory research described earlier, this work focuses on students' definitions of learning motivation, rather than on their explanations for learning success and failure. The work arises out of Ronald Dore's well-known, if controversial, thesis of *The Diploma Disease* and subsequent research on labour markets, qualifications, assessment and the quality of learning in Mexico, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and China, conducted at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex in the 1970s (Dore, 1976; Oxenham, 1984). The SLOG group is concerned with the extent to which assessment goals are perceived to motivate learning in the classroom and, by comparing the assessment motive with other motives for learning, the extent to which assessment goals dominate other motives for learning.

Students vary in their perceptions of the purposes of and motives for learning. One student in an English comprehensive school expressed it in this way:

> I don't think anyone would come to school if there were no exams — most people associate exams with working hard and getting something out of working. So if you are going to come to school and stay on for an extra two years and then get nothing for it, you think, 'God, what a waste of time'.

Another student in the same class, however, put it like this:

> I love learning — I do enjoy school and I don't want it to end. Some of our subjects are really interesting, so interesting that even after the exams are finished I'll go on learning.

Our research is not confined to the classroom, however, for we are concerned with the transfer of this hidden curriculum of the affective learning environment from school to work. Is there any link between what students learn to believé motivates them to learn at school and what adults learn to believe motivates them at work? More particularly, and this is the controversial suggestion embodied in the Diploma Disease thesis, does the headlong rush for assessment and qualifications inhibit the long-term motivation for sustained learning, challenge, innovation, and creativity? We have not completed our quest — do we ever? — but a few of the findings I can share with you now.

As a starting point for our empirical work we emphasized the importance of developing new measures of students' perceptions of motivation

which had *intra*-cultural relevance as their primary aim and *inter*-cultural relevance as their secondary aim. Consequently we have come up with related but different sets of measures for the six countries.

Our insistence on grounding our empirical work in classrooms in six countries and the development of research measures *simultaneously* in these six countries meant that concepts and measures which would have been *excluded* had the entire conceptual framework been defined in the West, and then applied cross-culturally, were now *included*. For example, Asian colleagues insisted on the inclusion of what came to be known as 'significant others', especially parents, as a perception of learning motivation among secondary school students. In the questionnaires which we developed out of interview material, items such as the Japanese translation of 'When I do not do well in examinations my mother gets quite upset' became a key part of the Japanese definition of the concept of parental press, but did not survive as an important measurement of the concept of parental orientation in the English research. In Malaysia the item in Bahasa translation which read 'I am learning now in order to enter a prestigious university' was a key element in what the Malaysian researchers labelled extrinisic job orientation. It was important also for the Japanese, but not for the English.

When we moved from our intra-cultural measures to our inter-cultural measures we found that the overall structure of learning orientation varied between cultures. At the inter-cultural level we were able to distinguish between three learning orientations — assessment, task interest, and others — and examined patterns of relationship between them (Figure 2).

The Sri Lankan and Nigerian patterns were very similar to each other. There appeared to be a high degree of interrelationship between an orientation to assessment, to task interest and to others, especially parents. A student who expressed the importance of one was likely to express the importance of the other. But the Malaysian pattern was different. There appeared to be a degree of differentiation in the structure. Whereas an orientation to others was strongly related to assessment, an orientation to learning interest was weakly related to both assessment and others. What this means is that a student highly oriented to assessment would tend also to be highly oriented towards others but less oriented towards task interest. The Japanese pattern approximated the Malaysian, though the relation between interest and others was even weaker than the Malaysian, and the relationship between others and assessment stronger, reflecting perhaps what both Japanese and Western researchers have written about the social definition of achievement in Japan.

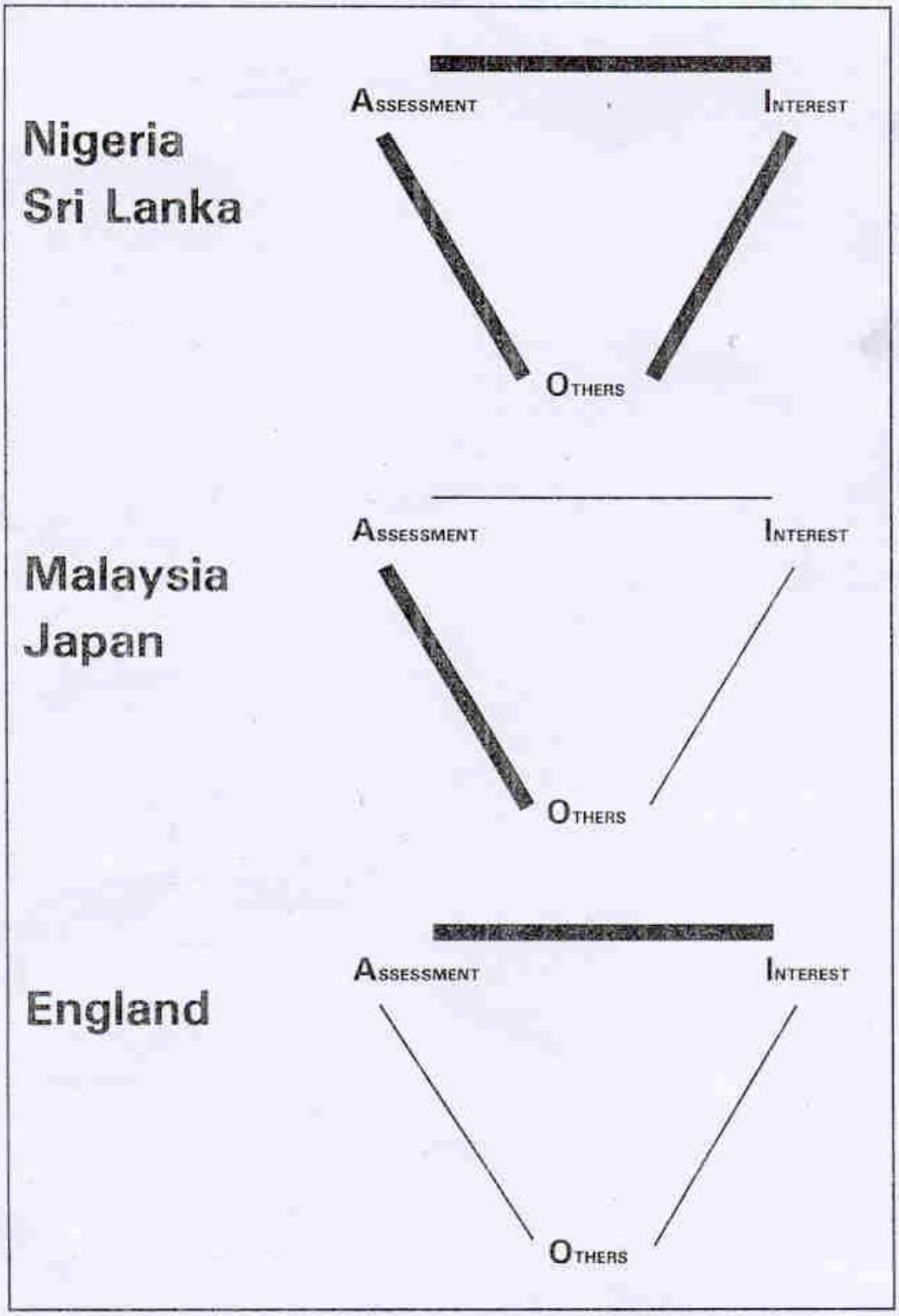

Figure 2: Patterns of relationship between assessment, interest and others.

The English pattern approximated none of the other patterns. Here assessment and interest were moderately related, but an orientation to others was hardly related to either assessment or interest, reflecting perhaps the more individual and personal definition of the meaning and purpose of assessment and achievement.

None of these findings has enabled us yet to refute or confirm the general propositions about assessment orientation, but that is perhaps less important at the moment than the knowledge about our own and each other's educational system and the methods through which we have sought that knowledge. Our Asian colleagues insistence on the inclusion of the concept and measurement of significant others, especially parents, broadened the conceptual framework, which, had it been left to the British researcher, would probably have focused on assessment and interest motivation. This is not to suggest that parental motivation is not perceived to be important at all by English students, but, given what English students expressed in free response interviews, the overall framework of the research (the link between learning motivation and innovation and creativity at work) and the need to focus the research progressively, this more restricted framework would probably have emerged.

Our insistence that empirical work be conducted simultaneously and that the empirical data had to be analysed against intra-cultural standards first, and against so-called international standards only second, allowed us to develop item banks and measures which could be useful for other colleagues working primarily in a national rather than international setting. It also freed our thinking about levels of analysis and allowed us to seek out dimensions appropriate at one level (e.g. the national) and less appropriate at another (e.g. the international). For example an orientation common within one culture will not, by definition, emerge as something which differentiates among students in that culture. But commonality within one culture can be apprehended at the international level of analysis, where it might then differentiate between one national population and another. Though we could see the possibilities we were less able to translate some of them into practice, hampered as we were by funding restrictions, and had to resort to a number of analyses which are still less than ideal.

Another weakness of our study which we hope others involved in international and comparative work will see their way to overcome, is that, while we encouraged empirical specificity and differences between countries, we worked within a common conceptual framework. One of the challenges for international and comparative work in the future is the

building of conceptual and theoretical models which take national conceptual models as their priority reference point. Only from such a firm base can truly international conceptual models be created.

* * *

I turn now to the third aspect of learning *from* developing countries, and here I change my role slightly. While my main professional commitment is to the expansion and qualitative improvement of education in developing countries, there will be in the audience this evening educators whose main professional commitment is to education in Britain and who may be most interested in exploring whether Britain herself has anything to learn from the experience of education in developing countries. And there may be others who consider the very notion that Britain has something to learn *from* developing countries just a little obtuse.

Let us think for a moment about the concept of social and economic development. Most conceptions of development still place countries with high levels of gross national product per capita at the top end of the development ladder. Countries at the top end of the ladder have either reached their destination or are assumed to be moving even higher. Countries at the bottom end only have to look ever upwards to see where they are going. As Marx wrote in the preface to *Das Kapital,* 'The country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed the image of its own future.'

In *Development in a Divided World,* Dudley Seers (1971) challenged some of this linear and evolutionary thinking and drew attention to the interaction between the stage of development and the nature of the international economic and political environment in which development takes place. In his elaboration of a similar idea, Dore, drawing on Gerschenkron's concept of 'late development', distinguished between early developing countries, late developing countries and later developing countries (1972). Early developers such as England began their drive towards industrialization at a time when the international economic and political environment was very different from that facing a later developer such as Japan in the latter part of the nineteenth century. And the international conditions facing Japan were different again from those facing countries as diverse as Tanzania, Sri Lanka and China today. The developmental patterns of each of these will be conditioned, to different degrees, by the contemporary realities of international debt, economic dependence and political struggle and the interactions between each of these and respec-

tive national economic, social and political structures and histories.

The futures of developing countries are not necessarily pre-set to follow the image of the more industrialized countries. As Trotsky commented when writing his *History of the Russian Revolution:* 'England in her day revealed the future of France, considerably less of Germany, but not in the least of Russia and not of India.'

Thought of in this way, development patterns and policies of an industrialized country like Britain, are unlikely to be reproduced anywhere in the developing world. Indeed there may be a sense in which development images are offered in a reverse direction. Late developing countries tend to borrow from elsewhere models of education and employment which are current internationally when their industrialization begins. Under some conditions the subsequent development of these models may be more rapid than their rate of development in their country of origin. Japan was a hesitant pioneer of job certification and manpower training practices which were borrowed selectively from elsewhere, but which developed in the Japanese context very rapidly and are now being taken for granted worldwide. Education selection systems based on examination achievement were a late addition to the British education systems, but were exported widely to developing countries at a time when their Western-oriented systems of education were in their infancy. The subsequent development of these selection systems may have been more rapid than in Britain, where selection based on achievement overlays selection traditions based on ascriptive criteria such as social class.

Let me illustrate the idea that industrialized countries may identify some images of their own future with an example from Tanzania. In 1974, the Tanzania Ministry of Education introduced nationally-controlled continuous assessment as part of the O and A-level examining system. Continuous assessment was part of a package of reforms adopted by the ruling party, TANU, known as the 'Musoma Resolution', designed to redefine and extend the policy of education for self reliance. An excerpt gives the flavour of the policy:

> We have to get rid of the ambush type of examination . . . the excessive emphasis placed on written examinations must be reduced and students' progress in the classroom, plus his performance of other functions and the work which he will do as part of his education, must all be continuously assessed and the combined result is what should constitute his success or failure.

How similar much of this sounds to some of the policy documents

currently being produced by the Secondary Examinations Council in Britain today in connection with the introduction of GCSE.

The integration of Tanzania's national system of continuous assessment with more formal assessment began in 1976. Continuous assessment contributed 50 per cent of the marks in every subject examined and was broken down further into 25 marks for exercises, 20 for tests and 5 for projects. In addition, what is known as 'character assessment' was conducted as part of the continuous assessment. In Britain we would probably translate this term as a pupil profile, focusing on personal and social skills. In Tanzania the profile included items such as 'attends classes punctually', 'works well with others regardless of their status or rank', 'assumes responsibilities when given leadership', 'accepts reasonable demands even though disliking them', 'inspires others to follow'. One example from Britain, from the county of Dorset where profiling has mushroomed over the last four years, includes a similar range: 'punctuality', 'works well in a team', 'leadership', 'working with those in authority'. Unlike Tanzania's Examinations Council however, the Secondary Examinations Council in this country has not issued a single profile to be used country-wide — not yet anyway!

Teachers and educators from abroad are often struck, if not to say a little mystified, by the decentralized system of education in this country. Centralized curricula and examinations are the rule, not the exception in most developing countries in Africa and Asia, though less so in Latin America.

Last year in April, I accompanied a group of African and Asian curriculum developers and examiners on a visit to the School Curriculum Development Committee and the Secondary Examinations Council, over in Newcombe House in Notting Hill Gate. During our meeting with Sir Wilfred Cockcroft, my Tanzanian colleague, Dr Agnes Njabili, suggested during discussion that Britain might think seriously about introducing a national curriculum and a national examination system. From her Tanzanian point of view it seemed one way forward for Britain. Sir Wilfred smiled. As we left Newcombe House just after 4 o'clock that afternoon we were handed a press release: 'The Government has today announced plans for a national curriculum . . .'

I do not propose to say anything more about the national curriculum — that, after all, is Professor Lawton's task tomorrow evening in this Institute.* But I would like to draw out one or two points from the

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* Professor Denis Lawton, Director of the Institute of Education, gave a lecture, 'The National Curriculum', on 16 March 1988, as part of a series on the Education Reform Bill.

Tanzanian example. I am not implying that the British Conservative Government has in any way borrowed an educational model from Socialist Tanzania — not consciously at least! Nor am I implying that Britain *should* borrow or emulate models from Tanzania, or from Germany, Japan or the United States of America for that matter. How could I argue that when I was stressing earlier the importance of endogenous models of education and development and was urging against the importation of inappropriate external models?

What I am saying is that educational innovation does not always start in industrialized countries and trickle down to developing countries. There is and always has been considerable educational innovation in developing countries, innovation which faces problems to be sure — but where is the educational innovation anywhere in the world which does not? But industrialized countries are less good at recognizing innovation in developing countries than are developing countries at recognizing innovations in industrialized countries.

I chose to illustrate my point about images of Britain's future through just one example from Tanzania. I might have selected educational experiences from any number of developing countries, examples which, while not offering themselves as models for import, nonetheless provide contrasting experiences which help throw into relief the problems and possibilities at home. Were Desmond Nuttall in the audience this evening, he would be able to describe how and why a new form of moderation currently in use by the Caribbean Examinations Council may well be a forerunner of things to come in England and Wales.

Others in the audience this evening could offer developing countries experience of education for pluralism, the vocationalization of the curriculum, or full employment schemes, all of which resonate in discussions in Britain today. I would also suggest that questions of computer literacy and computer illiteracy may well find some illumination in the work on literate and pre-literate societies, a literature which is already international, benefiting from experience from both industrialized and developing countries. If we seek beyond our shores at all for ideas and experience of educational relevance for Britain, then we usually look no further than across the Atlantic, the North Sea and the English Channel. I am suggesting that it might be worth looking just a little further.

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Let me draw to a close by focusing on the implications of what I have been saying for work on international education in this Institute. First, theory and research. Ten years ago when the Department of Education in Developing Countries was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, rather than its sixtieth which we celebrate today, C.E. Beeby, writing about teachers, teacher educators and research, commented, 'the educational theorists for the most part have stayed cosily in their rich countries without risking their theories in the rough and tumble of the poor ones . . .'. To the extent that we are interested in developing educational theory which generalizes across national boundaries then we need to be able to understand the context of the subject of our theory. At one level of analysis — the individual child at school for example — this may mean understanding much more than now about the development of and interaction between attitudes, aspirations, cognition and the quality of learning environment among children, living in a very wide range of social and economic settings, the most typical of which bear little resemblance to those we find in this country.

The schools attended by the children of the rich in many developing countries provide computerized learning environments not dissimilar to those found in the best British schools. But these are not typical. More typical are those which are struggling to provide a minimum quality of learning against a background of diminishing resources, a rural economy and, often still a pre-literate population. It is all too easy for us to forget that nine hundred million of the world's population aged 15 and over are illiterate, ninety-eight per cent of whom live in developing countries, half of them in China and India. Although most developing countries have made impressive strides in combating illiteracy especially among younger school age populations, population growth rates and declining resources available for education may conspire and ensure that innumeracy and illiteracy will persist and possibly worsen well into the twenty-first century. Even in my own department the dominant focus of our current work is on children and young people *in* the formal education system rather than those *outside*.

At another level of analysis we need to understand much more than now about the interrelations between education and ethnicity, caste, language, religion, gender, tribal group and economic class. Our understanding of the process of development and the role of education in that process enjoyed a significant advance in the 1970s when the then dominant theories of modernization were challenged by the dependency theorists from Latin America. We learned to appreciate the significance of rela-

tions between a dependent economy and its *métropole,* to focus on the reproductive role of education in the legitimation of local elite status and to understand the role of education in the incorporation of elites into a transnational economy.

But dependency theory like most others, is partial, relying as it does on a restrictive definition of class and its almost exclusive focus on the reproductive role of education. Ten years ago Ali Mazrui (1978), in his *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa,* argued that the Marxian concept of class be reconceptualized for an understanding of social and political formation in Africa. Social formation he argued emerges from the question, 'Who knows what?' rather than, 'Who owns what?', thus emphasizing education's active role in social formation rather than the more passive, reproductive and legitimating role to which dependency theory consigns it. I look forward to the integration of Mazrui's views into improved international theory on education and development.

The second implication of what I have been saying concerns consultancy. The emphasis on a better understanding and theory should encourage the development of better advice, on those occasions when we are still asked. A better understanding usually implies a more complex understanding which, because it takes time, will slow down the headlong rush to provide the 'quick fix' panaceas of which there are precious few in quality learning and education. I realize in saying this that I am speaking a little against the economic tide which is pulling British universities further towards the national and international marketplace. That international marketplace certainly has a stall which we should rent, but we should respond to the opportunities which this market presents with a degree of caution. Only when prepared to spend the time doing our homework to learn and understand more about the situation on which advice is sought, and only when prepared to share responsibility when things go badly wrong, should we erect our 'for sale' signs. International consultancy work is difficult, and time and energy consuming, if it is to be done well.

My third implication concerns the learning environment in which to work with colleagues and students from developing countries. Those of us involved in teaching students from developing countries must continue to keep abreast of their literatures, to recognize their intrinsic merit and to help students to evaluate them in relation to literatures from elsewhere. We also need to be aware that the dominant flow of traffic of theory and empirical standards in education on the North-South motorway is changing

in shape and is beginning to filter into some side-street routes to improved knowledge and understanding.

National educational research associations in developing countries are growing in strength, as are national educational research institutes, funded in many cases by international agencies. Regional networks for information-exchange and research between developing countries are enriching the already elaborate networks of economic, cultural and social exchange and are reinforcing regional identities. But the pool of educational experience in developing countries is not yet fully integrated into the realms of international knowledge. To achieve this we need constantly to expand our library resources and explore more ways of bringing scholars from developing countries to work with members of the department and with our students over periods of time.

Our aim is to help students from developing countries to value their own country's experience and further the development of endogenous and national models of education. The existence and recognition of endogenous models in turn provide the conditions necessary for the collective creation of international knowledge and international models of education.

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Learning from Developing Countries

The commitment of the Institute of Education, University of London, to the expansion and qualitative improvement of education in developing countries stretches back over sixty years. In this inaugural lecture, Professor Angela Little, holder of the Institute's Chair for Education in Developing Countries, reflects on the state of her field.

Professor Little describes how the focus of study and research is changing. In the recent past, theoretical models for the understanding and development of education were transferred to developing countries from the West with little allowance for local conditions, perceptions, values and needs. Now, the context of the broader society and culture within which education develops is being emphasized and along with it the need within a country for 'a critical mass of people who have the professional self-confidence and the intellectual tools to research new fields of study which are socially and culturally attuned to their own circumstances and are relevant for the *mass* of their country's populations'. Only from such a base can truly international knowledge and models of education be created.

It is a context in which, Professor Little suggests, the learning process between 'developed' and 'developing' countries involves a two-way traffic. She concludes with some reflections on the challenge which the new situation presents for the Institute's work in international education.

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