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educators viewed as a part of the mathematics community? Similar questions arise when research in mathematics education is surveyed from other domains, including history, philosophy, anthropology, and psychology.

An approach from both within and outside the field of research in mathematics education raises the following questions, among others, to be discussed:

1. WHAT IS THE SPECIFIC OBJET OF STUDY IN MATHEMATICS EDUCATION?

The object of study (*der Gegenstand*) in mathematics education might be, for example, the teaching of mathematics; the learning of mathematics; teaching/learning situations; didactical situations; the relations between teaching, learning, and mathematical knowledge; the reality of mathematics classes; societal views of mathematics and its teaching; or the system of education itself.

If a mathematics educator studies mathematics, is it the same object for him or her as it is for a mathematician who studies mathematics? What is mathematics as a subject matter? What is “elementary mathematics”? Analogous questions could be asked concerning the learner of mathematics as an object of study. Is it the same object for a mathematics educator as it is for a psychologist or a pedagogue? Is the mathematics class or the process of learning in the school viewed in the same way by a mathematics educator and a sociologist, anthropologist, or ethnographer? Are questions of knowledge aquisition viewed the same way by a mathematics educator and an epistemologist?

The variety of activities offered at the ICMEs certainly distinguishes these congresses from, say, the international congresses of mathematicians. ICMI 7 was compared by some to a supermarket. Is there a unity in this variety? What gives unity to different kinds of study in mathematics education? Is this the object of research? Or is the object of research perhaps not even something held in common? Might the commonality lie in pragmatic aims of research in mathematics education?

2. WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF RESEARCH IN MATHEMATICS EDUCATION?

One might think of two kinds of aims: pragmatic aims and more fundamental scientific aims. Among the more pragmatic aims would be the improvement of teaching practice, as well as of students’ understanding and performance. The chief scientific aim might be to develop mathematics education as a recognized academic field of research.