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Development Policy and the Training of Foreigners

by H. Pakleppa, Cologne *

Foreigners have always been able to study and follow practical courses in Germany long before the authorities responsible for cultural affairs abroad and those concerned with development policy began to take an active interest in these matters.

Courses of study and training abroad have always been regarded as an important means whereby different cultures could be mutually stimulated, new ideas spread and changes initiated. Before the German authorities began paying grants to foreign students, these used to come — and some still do — on their own initiative, helped by governmental or private aid given them in their own country or on private initiative in the host country. Apart therefore from the “stipendiaries”, studying at German universities and other institutions, there are today large numbers of “non-scholarship” students whose progress during their training in Germany and after their return to their native country it is worthwhile following in the interest of German cultural policy abroad.

In comparison with other forms of foreign travel such as a mere visit, a participation in a seminar or a round-trip, a course of vocational study in a foreign country makes much greater demands on those undertaking it. Not only must these students learn to speak a foreign language; they must also come to terms with a foreign society as well as with different living and working conditions. Those who have successfully completed their studies at a university or a vocational training establishment in Germany, once returned to their native land, are therefore competent to pass considered judgments in matters concerning the country in which they received their training, and it would be wrong to underestimate the strength of the desire on the part of these foreign graduates to be accepted in their native country as partners of German institutions and individuals.

For a long time wishful thinking used to play a big part in promoting study and practical training

courses for foreigners with political ends being uppermost in the minds of those responsible for foreign cultural policy. These practices have at times had disappointing results. The theory was that by granting scholarships it was possible to induce in the countries whose students one was attracting a favourable political attitude towards the country who gave them educational assistance. Today, however, it is fairly generally realised that scholarship schemes — and this probably applies to all other cultural and development programmes as well — are ineffective as rewards for good behaviour or as a means of inducing in the recipient country a political attitude favourable to the donor country.

Demand-orientated Educational Planning

As far as the LDCs are concerned, most of the work of attracting foreign students is nowadays no longer done by those responsible for cultural policy — i.e. the Ministry for Foreign Affairs — but by those concerned with development policy, that is to say by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ). As a result, more and more attention is being paid to the LDCs' own educational plans and aspirations in an endeavour to avoid mistakes in the working out of new grant schemes, for these must on no account lead to the production of a surplus of trained experts for whom there is no demand. Adjusting educational facilities to demand is easier said than done. Not even in our own society have we been able to achieve complete harmonisation between supply and demand in the educational field, and controversies between educational planners and politicians about the prospective demand for, say, graduates are a common everyday occurrence. It may be advisable, therefore, to be on one's guard against any feeling of sanctimonious arrogance towards LDCs, and peremptorily to require of

* Carl Duisberg - Gesellschaft e.V. Slightly abbreviated text — with some additions — of an article, first published in 1972 in a special number of “Die Dritte Welt” (The Third World) under the title of “Aspects of Cultural Foreign Policy in LDCs”. Publishers Wolfgang S. Freund and Uwe Simson, Meisenheim am Glan, 1973.

them more efficient planning and utilisation of their educational resources would be entirely wrong.

And yet, the problem of adjusting educational facilities to prospective demand is a particularly crucial one for LDCs because of their need to create employment. According to calculations by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), there is need to create during the Second Development Decade — that is between 1970 and 1980 — additional jobs for 226 mn people. In India alone, some 170 mn people will reach the age of 15 during this decade and will want to be incorporated into the work force. But let us cite a more vivid example: According to the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung", the Central Bank of India recently advertised fifty vacancies, ten of which were temporary. In response to these advertisements the Bank received 22,000 applications, without exception from graduates, and it is fair to assume that all of these applicants were unemployed.

Programmes for the Further Education of Foreigners

Funds for educational purposes are scarce even in our society; they are scarcer still in the LDCs. The educational aid these latter receive from outside can at best be marginal; all such aid can do is to give an impetus. For these reasons development policy must give priority to educational schemes which produce more jobs and contribute to economic growth or — to express it more simply — the educational system must be so designed as to give the people who have been trained an opportunity to put the knowledge and the know-how they have acquired to practical use within a reasonable period of time. In the face of these most urgent requirements, any educational aid programmes which are not strictly geared to what is needed most and are unlikely to have

any short-term effect on the labour market, such as for instance general literacy schemes, are fading more and more into the background.

The purpose of this article is not to discuss educational aid in general, but merely to deal with the programmes for the further education of foreigners. Today such programmes no longer exist in isolation, but are ideally closely connected with other projects and programmes. Today's educational aid for LDCs consists of a pluralism of instruments and programmes. A large part of the aid is nowadays given on the spot, i.e. in the LDCs themselves, where schools are constructed or promoted or where foreign expert counsellors are ready to give advice. This means that in the Federal Republic of Germany itself educational aid programmes are now largely confined to the provision of further education for foreign experts and management personnel who have already received their basic training in their native country and have a clear conception of their own professional position and know-how to make use in their native country of the additional knowledge they will acquire in the Federal Republic. Such educational programmes are in part tied to special projects; those participating in them are intended to replace German or other foreign experts and thus help to ensure the long-term success of development projects after the departure of the foreign managers and teachers.

The principle of adjusting the granting of scholarships in accordance with the demand situation is more strictly observed outside the universities than within their walls. The organisations concerned with the training of people from LDCs have established centres, have published relevant literature and appoint expert advisers, specialising in certain branches of learning, and all these special agencies are now endeavouring to ascertain the special requirements of LDCs in the educational field and to produce tailor-made pro-

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grammes to meet specific needs. The policy statement of the BMZ says on this point that, if need be, further educational establishments of this kind may be set up in the light of the requirements of the LDCs.

As far as universities are concerned, it is however much more difficult to establish special training centres for overseas students and to adjust any courses of study to the requirements of the countries these students come from and to the conditions they are used to. This is why the facilities for foreign students at German universities are still far from perfect, for no one has as yet succeeded in harmonising the requirements of German students with those of their colleagues from abroad. One radical solution would be the establishment of a university for foreign students, but this in turn would conjure up fresh problems such as the creation of a ghetto mentality. A step in the right direction may possibly be the creation at certain German universities of special courses for specific groups of students, as is suggested in the educational programme worked out by the BMZ. The relevant passage reads: "In the academic field, it is suggested that Lands and universities cooperate in setting up suitable centres for further education and in working out programmes for them, having regard to the experiences of comparable foreign institutions concerned with urgent problems of the LDCs"¹. It should be interesting to see what comes of this.

On-the-spot Assistance

Among the multitude of different forms of educational aid must also be mentioned the assistance given "sur place", i.e. on the spot. This kind of aid is becoming increasingly popular because it avoids numerous difficulties which normally arise when foreign students come to Germany to complete their education. Stipendiaries can be spared the trouble of having to learn a difficult language before they begin their proper studies, and one obviates the problem of getting the students' native country to recognise the validity of the certificates and diplomas they have obtained in Germany. The German educational system differs indeed in many respects from those of many LDCs, which have frequently modelled their educational institutions on those of their former colonial rulers, i.e. primarily Great Britain and France. If therefore the education of foreign scholarship students takes place in their native country or in a neighbouring state, it is possible to circumvent the "problem of equivalence" — the recognition

at their proper level of the final certificates they have obtained on completion of their studies abroad.

The increasing multilateralisation of German development aid may possibly also help in this respect, bearing in mind that UNESCO has been working for years on a comparative study of courses and diplomas. Perhaps it may be advisable for the German authorities in this complicated matter to make greater use than hitherto of the world-wide contacts and sources of information at the disposal of the multilateral organisation that is UNESCO. If scholarships are to be awarded "sur place", those who grant them must also be in a position to have a voice in the selection of suitable candidates and to keep track of their eventual success. The provision of on-the-spot educational aid, however obvious a solution, raises another tricky question — the question of who is to monitor the success of the studies undertaken under such auspices. It is easy to imagine what blunders may be committed by any "inspectors" appointed to supervise such "sur-place" programmes. In this connection it may be possible to learn from the experiences of others who have already awarded "sur-place" scholarships, thus avoiding the mistakes they have made. Another possibility of promoting education in LDCs to which insufficient attention has so far been paid is through correspondence courses or educational broadcasts which are very popular in many LDCs, and in view of the enormous size of the educational task to be tackled and the scarcity of funds to tackle it, it may well be worthwhile trying to close many a gap by using this relatively cheap means of communication in conjunction with other media.

The "Brain Drain" Problem

One of the objections still frequently raised to the training of foreigners outside their native country is that it leads to their "alienation" and makes them reluctant to leave their host country for home. The problem of the "brain drain", caused by the tendency of a country's intelligentsia to migrate to countries with a higher standard of living and better facilities for study and work does indeed exist and may well bring the entire development aid into disrepute. In fact, in German hospitals one may find an Iranian in the position of head physician, while German doctors are employed in Iranian hospitals as development aid workers. In these circumstances the German taxpayer can hardly be blamed for asking why Germany should send qualified personnel to developing countries, if graduates and experts from these very same countries prefer to live and work in Germany.

¹ "Grundsatzprogramm der Bildungs- und Wissenschaftshilfe" der Bundesregierung (The Federal Government's policy statement on educational and scientific aid). Bulletin issued by the Federal Government's Press and Information Board; No 3, 7. 1. 1972, p. 22.

In the case of most scholarship programmes, as mentioned above, the problem of adequate work has been solved to a large extent. But it is different with programmes which are designed to help students from LDCs to study for several years abroad. Here the problem of their finding, after their return home, employment of the kind to which their qualifications entitle them, is indeed a difficult one, for during their long absence they have had no opportunity to look for suitable employment in their own country. Moreover — and we have already briefly made this point — there is still the large group of non-scholarship students and probationers to be considered. As long as the Federal Republic of Germany has no objections to foreigners studying and exercising their profession in Germany, even if they have come on their own initiative and without any state grant, it must be the concern of the German authorities to see what practical use these foreigners can make of the training they received in Germany, the exams they passed and how they can be helped to find, on returning home, satisfactory employment in their chosen profession. In this connection it matters little under which label this assistance is given, whether it is to be regarded as part of "cultural foreign policy" or of "development policy".

Necessary Transfer of Knowledge and Know-how

In fact, the competent authorities are presently considering certain proposals designed to help those students. We have already pointed to the need to persuade LDCs to recognise German certificates and diplomas. Such recognition would benefit non-scholarship students just as much as those aided by state grants. Whether it will be possible to institute special courses for students from LDCs at German universities, remains to be seen. BMZ is helping to arrange re-integration seminars at which students are informed by competent experts from their native countries about the possibilities they will have of finding jobs in certain fields of professional activity on their return home. One proposal now under discussion is to assist former foreign students with their re-integration by granting them some kind of initial credit which would make it easier for them to set up an independent practice or to purchase the machinery and tools they would need to make a living. There is also talk about creating a central labour exchange for the purpose of establishing better contacts between foreigners temporarily residing in Germany and the labour markets in their native countries. It remains to be seen how far these plans will be realised and whether they

are at all suitable for the purpose of at least partially solving the problem of the brain drain.

It would be a mistake, however, if one were to conclude in the light of the problems outlined above that the only way of helping LDCs educationally is to provide them with the means of educating and training their citizens within their own high national walls. One of the objectives of development aid is, after all, to help LDCs to achieve a steadily increasing participation in the world-wide division of labour, and this includes, of course, free interchange of knowledge and know-how.

If LDCs are to take part in a world-wide division of labour as independent partners, they will have to enter into exchange agreements with industrial countries. Exchange agreements of this kind have for long been in force between Germany and other industrial countries. They provide for the exchange of students, post-graduates wishing to practice their skills, experts leading in their respective fields and managerial staff. A refresher course in a country other than their own is always a useful means by which people in leading positions can extend their knowledge and experience; the benefit to them is all the greater, if they choose for this purpose an industrially advanced society to study its methods and working conditions at first hand. In this manner they are able to acquire an "insight into the interplay of social and economic factors (at work in that country) and become aware of its social responsibilities"².

Growing Xenophobia

Political, social and economic trends all point in the same direction, indicating that the Third World and Europe, including Germany, are steadily growing more closely together. And yet, in the LDCs there are signs of growing hostility towards foreigners. Foreign experts, development aid workers and missionaries are being increasingly resented, and in many LDCs the presence of foreign advisers and teachers is being regarded as a threat to the traditional way of life and as prejudicial to national self-confidence. In view of these developments, Germany's guests from the Third World — and this applies in particular to technical experts and managerial staff — have an important role to play: they must exercise their influence through personal contacts with their German hosts with a view to smoothing the path towards a better mutual understanding on a human level, for the establishment of better human relations is essential, if development aid and development policy are not to become the exclusive domain of technocrats and experts.

² cf. "Grundsatzprogramm der Bildungs- und Wissenschaftshilfe der Bundesregierung", published 22. 12. 1971.