

ECLA/POS 74/13

Date: 9 December 1974

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA
Office for the Caribbean

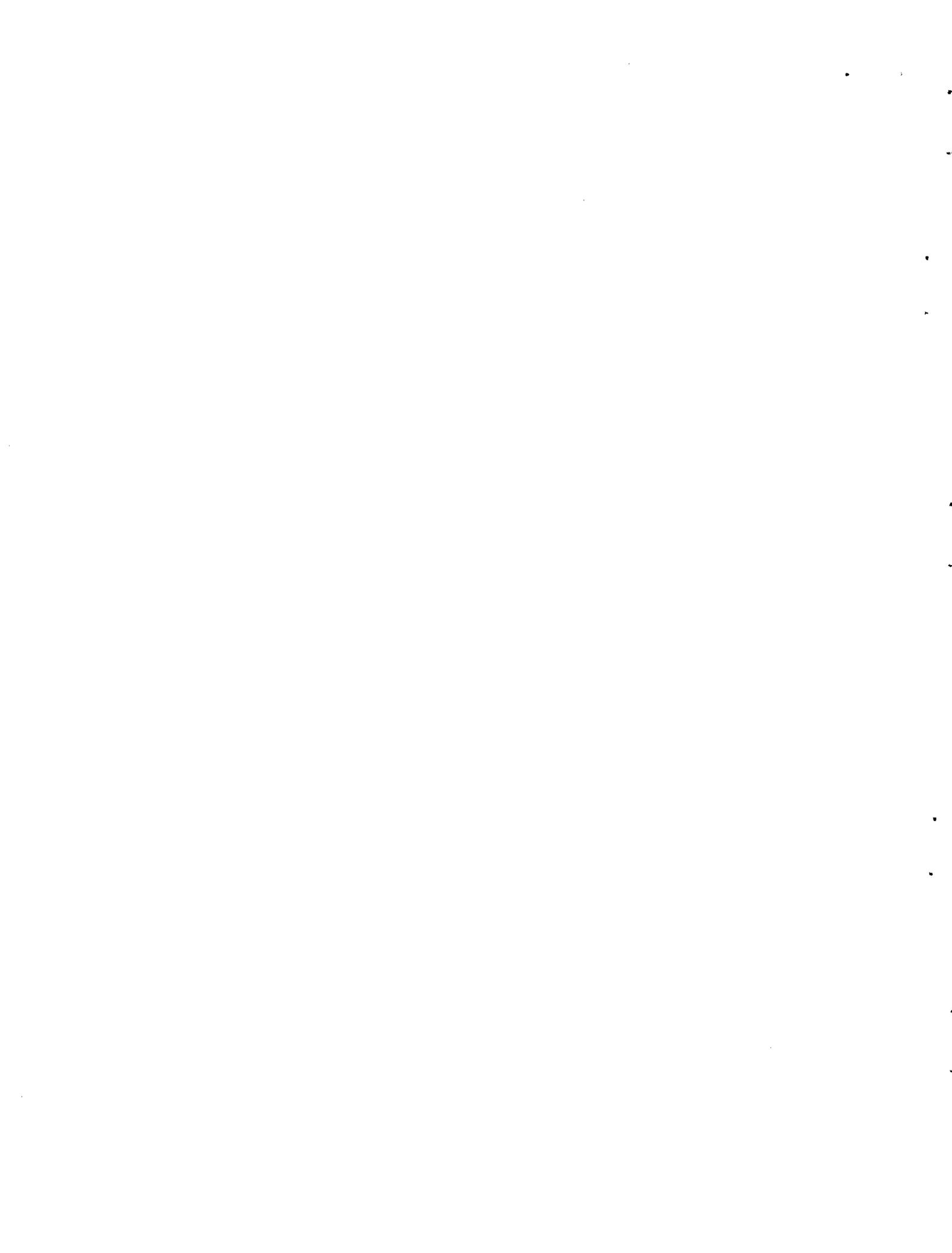
SOME THOUGHTS ON
TRAINING OF PERSONNEL IN GUYANA

Prepared

by

U.C. Ghildyal

UN Regional Adviser on Rural
and Community Development



SOME THOUGHTS ON
TRAINING OF PERSONNEL IN GUYANA

The process of development pre-supposes availability of trained manpower but when new programmes of change are required to be implemented, old hands have to be picked up and trained afresh for new jobs. Changing policies and complexions of regimes in power invest the on-going programmes with a new purpose, a new slant and even a new form. Quite understandably, it is not possible for any Government to raise a new corps of workers for its new schemes and, therefore, those who are already available are selected for the new jobs on their performance in their previous assignments and on their perceived capability to carry out the new ones. An exigency of this kind naturally creates an urgency for training functionaries so that they comprehend their roles clearly in the new environment and perform their tasks efficiently.

Training has accordingly assumed a crucial significance today primarily because it is the only effective and sure way of keeping pace with ever-increasing and rapid changes brought about by advances made in science and technology and their consequent impact on attitudes, behaviour-patterns and life-styles of people. The tremendous variety, frequency, intensity and continuity of training programmes organised by governments and non-governmental organizations for their personnel at all levels and stages of careers are baffling; the costs involved are colossal and keep on mounting in fantastic proportions corresponding in the degree to which evaluative research support is intensified to reinforce the effort of making the training programmes realistic and relevant. One wonders why organizations and governments all the world over should continue to invest so much of their time, effort, resources and manpower on training of cadres, inspite of costs and look for returns in performance of their employees as a result of their investments in training. The answer and rationale are that these investments have the multiplier effect and pay off more than commensurately because they become, in essence, investments

in men who operate as instruments and catalytic nuclei for assimilation and dissemination of technical and technological change.

Paradoxically, training is economical even inspite of apparently terrific costs because it helps ensure a certain standard of performance from the beneficiaries and maximises productivity of the paid time. It is advantageous because it indoctrinates and inducts new entrants into the norms, values, objectives and performance-patterns of organizations. It reconditions the old hands, preventing them from reaching too soon their "levels of incompetence" and becoming early victims of the "Peter principle". It induces and inculcates an element of harmony in the individual members of the organization among themselves and fosters integration between them and the organization; thus reducing chances of deviancy among the new and reinforcing conformity with organizational objectives among the old. It bridges the gap between policy and performance - projecting the plans of the organization, developing empathy among the incumbents and serving as a protective cover as well as a cushion for perpetuating certain conventions of the system. In short, training helps them perceive what Talcott Parsons mentions in a different context as "goal-achievement", "pattern-maintenance", "adaptation" and "integration" within the system and outside with related systems. Above all, training is necessary because it is a means to reduce obsolescence among the personnel constantly encountering relentless increase of technological innovations. In developing countries, increased knowledge and skills and their application constitute a latent resource which can be mobilised by training without placing heavy demand on scarce capital, scarce foreign exchange (barring the fortunate few among the oil-rich ones) and still more acutely scarce resource of trained manpower to train others, the indigenous often succumbing to the irresistible lure of "brain drain". There is a perennial need for re-adjustments to new compulsions of change-economic, social and political and training thus becomes the "open sesame" for most of the many developing nations which abound in teeming manpower, often unlettered and seldom possessing a temper for technology.

It is, to some extent, in this perspective that one can comprehend the effort of the Government of Guyana in launching an all-embracing programme of regional development and youth development with a view to achieving their objective of building up co-operative socialism. As a step towards attaining

this objective, a Co-operative Development Bank was started followed by building up a corporate business complex and now, in the third stage, by spreading co-operative education. In the wake of the visit of the Guyanese Prime Minister to Tanzania, where he saw Co-operatives being pressed into service in all fields from production to consumption (including transportation and marketing); where youngsters were being trained in short courses on co-operation, mostly on the Scandinavian pattern, the need for establishing a Co-operative College in Guyana was crystallised and one has now been started in the interior at Kuru-Kuru.

Kuru-Kuru Co-operative College:

As a preparatory measure to recruit and equip suitable personnel, Mr. Basil Armstrong was deputed to Scandinavia in 1972 before he was appointed as Principal of the College. A nucleus of core staff has now gathered to assist. The courses of training are not confined only to theoretical enunciation of co-operative principles of Raffeisein and Roschdale pioneers or "the Antigonish way", but also include practical experience of living and working co-operatively with others. The College is located at Kuru-Kuru on the Linden Highway about two miles south of the first toll barrier and then on an approach road branching off to the left about two and a half miles in the interior. The sylvan setting of the campus is both attractive and challenging on a level land of 600 acres, about half of which is already in the process of being cleared and utilised for the College campus and the rest being earmarked for co-operative farming and livestock rearing by 30 settlers to be allotted 10 acres each. The College buildings are coming up very fast on a plot of 80 acres of land. Various infrastructures are being rapidly provided and the rate at which this is happening is really commendable.

The components of training are derived from the organizational goals and broadly consist of:

- i) the trainers;
- ii) the trainees;
- iii) the learning situation and institutional environment;
- iv) the training; and
- v) the inter-action among all of them individually and collectively.

The content of training at Kuru-Kuru such as I could see in my brief visit, appeared to be problem-oriented and job-related - the bias being consistently placed on practical aspects in order to adjust it threefold to the environment, the academic level of the participants and to the capabilities of the teaching staff. The prospects of developing Kuru-Kuru Co-operative College as a Regional Centre for the Caribbean particularly in the field of co-operative training seemed to be bright indeed. Having provided adequate staff and infrastructural resources, the opportunity for using the campus later on for developmental training in general would be easier and the cost lesser.

The areas which deserve to receive quick and adequate support for making the Kuru-Kuru Co-operative College an effective institution are as follows:

- a) Staffing
- b) Infrastructural facilities
- c) Equipment
- d) Research
- e) Training methodology and materials

a) Staffing: Since the participants of the training courses at Kuru-Kuru College - even for training in Cooperatives - would consist of a heterogeneous group of teenagers or adults who might differ in age, levels of academic attainment, comprehension and background experience, their training would have to be organised and conducted in a manner that theoretical concepts are constantly explained in terms of what they already know and are familiar with and their practical experiences will need to be interpreted to explain and enunciate related theoretical concepts. Besides, it is not enough for them to have an isolated view of co-operatives - nor is it intended or designed, but they have to be enabled to perceive the relevance of co-operatives in their total environmental perspective and in terms of the socio-economic and politico-cultural background of the country. This implies that the staff provided at the College should be inter-disciplinary in character and impact and has to be academically well qualified and sound. But that alone would not suffice. They should also be fully conversant with and perceptive of the national objectives on the one hand and their roles and responsibilities on the other to relate their fields of study with others in the total setting. At present, the staff is just a skeleton and would need to be increased to a full complement representing all disciplines in social sciences - particularly, the behavioural. Assistance from the academia - the social sciences faculty of the University of Guyana, the Critchlow Labour College, the Carnegie School of Home Economics and the like - can and should, of course, be

obtained on a regular basis but such assistance can only be supplementary to and not a substitute for the core staff of the College faculty.

b) Infrastructural facilities: The campus is taking shape fast and gives, in an embryonic form, a total view of what it is intended to be at its full stature. It is already a self-contained unit for water and electric supply. It has to be so for many other things much more because of the distance at which it is located from Georgetown (33 miles) and, therefore, its facilities have to be enhanced fast and in several ways in order to make it really attractive enough to hold and sustain interest. In order that it becomes a Regional Centre, also drawing participants of higher levels as it grows, it should provide better accommodation and living facilities and better recreational opportunities. There is a dire need for such things as a well-stocked consumer store and grocery, a dispensary and a drug store, a regular, dependable and inexpensive transport service, a school, a community centre, an auditorium, a recreation centre and an open-air theatre, playgrounds, very good gardens and lawns - studded with flowers, fruits and vegetables blooming all the year round; well maintained feeder roads having on both sides avenues of perennials and tropical flower-bearing trees such as Gul Mohars, Spithodias and Acacias, etc., and well-preserved forest groves which provide the fascinating backdrop of the creek and the scenario of Kuru-Kuru. Since the campus is in the making, landscaping has to be done by avoiding unnecessary felling of young trees, which, by themselves, are a great resource to add to the beauty of the site but do not now have enough timber to yield if they are felled wantonly. Above all, it should have experimental farms in food, vegetable and fodder crops and also demonstration units relevant to studies being undertaken there and also more importantly to various aspects of rural life in Guyana and the Caribbean.

The campus has to emerge as a spot exemplifying modern amenities in a rural setting - a model of rurbia which can be replicated at different points in the country and the region where townships have to be built. I envision Kuru-Kuru as an emerging model of planned township in the hinterland and this can be done now with imagination and understanding. It will be a lamentable loss of opportunity, if it does not happen now and I am sure the Planners are seized with the idea.

c) Equipment: The College has to be equipped fully with suitable machinery for farming, training and living. A full and modern complement of audio-visual aids is a necessary pre-requisite. Items such as tape-recorders, film-projectors, epidiascopes, slide and film-strip projectors, films for instruction and entertainment and all the rest in the whole kit - are essential.

In the setting of Guyana and Kuru-Kuru in particular and the Caribbean in general, I envision the possibility of developing a well laid-out unit of prevalent folk forms of communication. The Caribbean is fabulously rich in them. This place can serve as an excellent laboratory for preserving, refining, adapting and innovating the conventional forms of communication and use them for educational purposes. This becomes more relevant in terms of the levels of needs of the participants and their capabilities of comprehension. There is so much available in the vigorous folk traditions of developing societies yet there is so little done to use them for effective transmission of ideas. The folk forms are, perhaps used as legendary relics in "Mashramani" or Carnivals more as pageants for entertainment or for romantic revival of the past. The calypsonians sing about current social problems in their pungent incisive satirical strains. Why can't they also get more and more interested in articulating in a positive way the national aspirations and objectives? An inventory of folk forms can be developed with advantage and used efficaciously for conveying ideas. Local resources and talents available plentifully - sometimes even for the asking, have to be garnered, organised and adapted to current and growing needs. The springs of motivation and the highlights of vigour and success of Ambakaila need to be analysed for adaptation to local traditions, conditions and educational requirements. It is in such fields as these that services of distinguished and perceptive persons such as Arthur J. Seymour or Aubrey Adams could be fruitfully utilised.

A related field in which Kuru-Kuru can take and give a lead is to start from now and develop a really outstanding documentation centre which could serve as a clearing house of ideas in the Caribbean cultural context.

Connected with this would be a museum and a library, the latter being a nerve centre of an institution of this kind. While it is necessary to have a good stock of books and publications firstly on the Caribbean and then in all behavioural sciences, it is equally or even more necessary to have an efficient and trained library service.

d) Research: It is common experience that when a beginning is made in a new programme of this kind which has to take roots in the indigenous environment, very little is available in the repertoire of printed material which is directly relevant to the local situation. It is, therefore, necessary to build up case material and case research from the very start. There is not only the need for it but there is also a splendid opportunity.

This is why adequately trained staff constitutes a necessary critical mass in the situation. This was done at Comilla in Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan). When the Academy was started, the staff recruited were initially trained in social research and a system of conducting research simultaneously with teaching was an ingredient of faculty functioning. In due course of time, sufficient case material accumulated to serve as teaching material. There is dearth of suitable literature in the Caribbean context and case studies scientifically made could serve both as teaching material as well as guides for corrective action in implementing programmes. There does not seem to be any need now, at this stage, to indulge in fundamental research or to apply sophisticated techniques of multi-variate analysis but what seems to suffice is action-research or social research, which is fundamentally problem-oriented and job-related. At the time of recruiting members of the faculty, research capability can certainly be laid down as a criterion. But it might be worthwhile to organise, from time to time, on a regular basis short courses on essentials of research methodology.

e) Training methodology and materials: The kinds and levels of participants who would come to Kuru-Kuru Co-operative College would be adolescents, teenagers and adults. The methods of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes to them will therefore have to be adopted and adapted to suit them. The need for preparing an inventory of appropriate training methods on a systematic research is basic to the whole effort and merits attention at this stage. It is sometimes assumed that methods of training found effective in a given cultural setting or with an age group of a given level would also serve as effectively in another situation. But this does not necessarily happen. The methods of training therefore need to be adapted to suit given groups and situations and may vary. The group methods applied and found successful in "sensitivity" or "laboratory training" at a certain place for a certain purpose or in a certain cultural setting would need to be reworked and adapted differently at another place or for another purpose and in another setting.

Besides training methods, a systematic effort is also necessary to build up teaching materials in the form of text literature, notes, handouts, sketches, graphs, charts, pictures, etc. relevant to the local setting. The Centre could develop a materials production unit.

Regional Centre for advanced Studies in Youth Work:

It was fortunate for me to have had the opportunity of attending the Planning Meeting organised under the auspices of the Commonwealth Secretariat at Georgetown, Guyana, from 4 to 6 February 1974, to consider establishing of a Regional Centre for advanced studies in Youth Work in the Caribbean. Ever since I had visited Kuru-Kuru on the

15 January 1974, I was struck by the possibility of developing it as a Regional Centre in terms of decisions taken at the Lusaka Conference. I was happy to find that Kuru-Kuru was finally selected for the Caribbean region. This would facilitate developing of the Kuru-Kuru Complex on sound lines and also quickly. I am sure that with the support and initiative of perceptive and progressive leadership, Kuru-Kuru will soon emerge as an effective institution for development not only for Guyana but for the entire Caribbean region.

