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UNIVERSITY PLANNING AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Prepared by

Betty Sedoc-Dahlberg
University of Suriname

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INTRODUCTION[1]/

It is advisable to outline the main boundaries of this subject by a few preliminary observations.

The role of the University within the framework of Planning in the Social Sector has very broad dimensions, the extent of which can be envisaged by recognition that a comprehensive approach is the only meaningful one to planning. For whether or not one is concerned with the national, regional or sectoral level, there are always interactions between components of the planning model. My main concern will be to focus on the educational component in social sector planning, without losing sight of related development in other sectors.

Closely connected with the above is the fact that within the social sector, adjustments have to be made since all components are inseparably related to one another. I am here referring to the education component, the housing component, the medical care component, etc., all of which fall within the category of the social sector. Within the education sector the sub-components both with regard to level and vocational orientation should be considered in relation to one another.

It is also useful to make a distinction between policy and planning, since by doing so an insight can be gained into problems which are related to decision-making, goal formation, alternatives and means. In this regard, the administrative sector plays an important part in relation to policy-making and planning.

The views of Third World scientists on roles of universities in their countries have been accorded dominant weight in my thinking because many of them have addressed themselves to the urgent need to introduce innovations which could bring university courses nearer to development needs in their own countries. In so doing, they have had to reject some

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1/: This refers to the Caribbean countries. Regional in a sense.

of the approaches of universities in the industrialized world and also to alter
the direction of many Third World universities and other institutions of
higher learning whose curricula had been determined in pre-independent eras
by foreign or local academics trained abroad with a western frame of
reference.

Though the whole Third World scenario provides background for this
paper, our main concern will be with the Caribbean in its post-colonial
period. Due to the lack of comparable statistically relevant data[2/], the
approach to the subject will be of a thematic character, and some supplemen-
tary observations will be made on political and social independence in
relation to education and research at universities.

II. ABOUT SOCIAL INDEPENDENCE

The premise that the granting of political independence necessarily
brought an end to colonialism is false. The falsehood in this equation
stems from the notion that political independence implies social indepen-
dence. But in fact all historical patterns of reference (socially,
culturally and politically) were either adopted from the colonial period,
or imposed by the colonial European countries, and are still dominant in
many of our states. Many problems derive from this. In the first place
development concepts, the philosophy related thereto, and the values and
standards derived therefrom, are embedded in the structure of interests
of the former colonial powers, and cause stagnation in the process of
defining development objectives tailored to the needs of our own societies.

This is not the case in all Third World countries, some of which
clearly indicate in what manner and by what means they intend to bring
about their development. In this respect they do not apply a number of
values stemming from colonial patterns as central standards, but rather
a number of solutions which are based on concepts derived from interpreta-
tions of their own social and economic needs. These countries attained a
certain measure of social independence, defined as the capacity of a nation
to attempt solutions to a number of its development problems in accordance
with what it deems relevant in its own social, economic and political system.

2/ : Referring to the investigation of the UNESCO 1974 on University
planning. Detailed data necessary for the purpose of this paper
are not available.

I do not advocate rejection of all values originating in the former colonial European countries, but the determining factor should be that the criteria should be relevant and meaningful. The term social is to be interpreted in its broadest sense, namely: "everything that is concerned with people". Interpreted in that sense it includes technology, economics, politics and societal and cultural factors.

Social Independence and the University

As has been pointed out in the foregoing paragraphs social independence is characterized by the capacity of a nation to solve a number of development problems that are deemed relevant within its own social systems in a purposeful and meaningful manner. Striving to achieve social independence and/or self-management [3] entails the need to train local and regional intellectual cadres who are able to make essential contributions to defining relevant problems, to finding adequate solutions and providing managerial expertise required for overall development. Universities in the region should therefore be viewed as having an important development role.

Cooperation between governments in the region and universities is essential in order to give substance to the contribution expected from the university.

Where in the region a development philosophy is non-existent, governments cannot make a substantial contribution towards this end. The innovating, criticizing and counselling nature of the university is socially effective when, as was stated before, governments and universities in the region are striving for the same objectives in the development process and are operating in relation to one another. Research and expertise are both necessities in order to generate a well-aimed development process.

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[3]: I make a difference between:

Social independence which refers to a certain attitude and level to find solutions for developing problems. Mostly this capacity can be illustrated in ad hoc situations. Here is supposed that the solutions are related to a long term goal. Self-management is used here to refer to qualified trained persons who can "handle" the process. Self means trained local persons. In a way self-management can be interpreted as the "know how" that is available to operationalize self reliance and social independence.

Research in the context of social independence

In many countries of the Third World universities have not succeeded in giving sufficient content to the formulation of a number of relevant problems and in indicating solutions.

Research done within the universities is too often determined, not so much by priorities related to development needs of the countries, but rather by individual spheres of interest. Much of the work was done by foreigners and certain subjects hardly received the attention they deserve.

For example, a comparative research of development models can be envisaged. Research of this nature could provide important information about the relation between a development model and, for instance, the spreading of welfare and the participation of the population in the labour process.

Or at the micro level one can consider problems relating to planning and implementation of projects.

There is an obvious need to shift from partial and fragmentary research to more integrating and synthesizing studies that address themselves to the society - social structure and economy -- in its entirety. Since the attainment of independence, significant changes have occured in the political systems of many countries. The process of modernization has brought about fundamental changes in the social and economic structure and a great number of varieties in the approach of development were introduced in several countries. This offers a unique opportunity to scientists to undertake analytical and interpretative studies on the transformation process and on new orientations of our societies and economies.

A similar phase in the history of the present day industrialized countries has led to the production of a range of classical works that succeeded in defining the dynamic forces and in characterizing the form of the emerging societies. Only a small number of such books have been published in the Caribbean countries.

Secondly, it should be observed that for a realistic analysis of the nature of development problems it is essential to liberate oneself, to some extent, from methods and theories that have been worked out in the context of the industrialized countries.

There is need, in all disciplines that fall within the category of

social and economic sciences, for the development of new concepts includ-
ing analytical categories and models that fit within the situation which
is characteristic of our countries. In like manner statistical methods
applicable to developed countries should be adapted to the conditions
of our economies in order to be serviceable to development goals, policy
and planning.

The empirical research methodology which is still dominant in
social sciences in the Western societies has, to some extent, contributed
to the views held by the social scientists in our countries with respect
to social problems. For a long time there was an aversion to so-called
finalities (goal - means). In the conception of science strongly
dominated by positivism, the central question was the explanation of
phenomena, the so-called empirical research methodology.

The starting point was the so-called principle of falsification,
whereby verification offered the possibility to reject hypotheses or not.
The emphasis thereby is not laid on uniqueness but on the unvarying
uniformity of phenomena under identical conditions.

For a contribution to policy-making and planning the central
issue is how to induce change. The pivotal question is the goals-means
relationship, in other words, not only causalties, but finalities are
at the centre of interest. Hence, at issue is not only the empirical
scientific methodology, but the methodology of decision-making, also
referred to as normative theory because priorities on the basis of
alternatives are the main concern here. The central point is not the
principle of falsification, but the principle of rationality.

For our purposes therefore empirical methodology and normative
theory are both important, for empirical research results help to
modify normative prescriptions. Emphasis has been placed on decision-
making or the normative theory rather than on empiricism which pre-
supposes central theories on the basis of which hypotheses can be
formulated. For it is often premature and restricting to accept
truths that may be relevant only for other societies, without having a
good insight into our region and own societies.

Finally to achieve greater efficiency of policy-oriented research it is mandatory to go further than the technical analysis of a given development problem. Special attention should be paid to the political and administrative feasibility of the totality of applicable political instruments. Attention should also be paid to the various groups and classes that will be affected by the proposed changes. Nor can a policy-oriented research neglect:

a) the means and methods to get the support of those groups that are involved in the proposed changes and

b) the steps necessary to diminish and neutralize the counter action of groups with divergent vested interests.

Research of this nature can only be successful if the scientists have a thorough understanding of institutions, traditions and values of the populations in the countries.

EXPERTISE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL INDEPENDENCE

The training of experts and the creation of expertise at universities is of major importance within the framework of the struggle to achieve social independence. Practically all studies on the universities in developing countries focus primarily on the formal and material aspects of education.

For example, there is a constantly ongoing discussion on innovation in the curriculum. Although the importance of this cannot be under-estimated, it is striking that little attention is paid to curricula within a societal context. For it is precisely that which is associated with the transfer of values and standards as they occur in the halls outside the lecture rooms, the commenting on a variety of domestic and foreign affaris, the attitude of the lecturer in a conflict, the manner of dressing, all this I should like to classify under the "unwritten", concealed curriculum, which I deem of invaluable importance for the training of young people to achieve social independence.

Often indigenous values that serve as central standards to assess a number of major social problems are not dealt with through lectures but through informal contacts, especially with members of staff with critical and analytical minds. It may concern reference to the colonial cultural pattern, or reference to modern conceptions in the former colonial country, or it may concern the adoption of an attitude of consistent aloofness. In all three cases certain values are transferred to students.

It is frequently asserted that there exists an identity problem in many Caribbean countries. But we should bear in mind that we can only speak about an identity problem when there is alienation from the familiar environment without accomodation into the new one, or in case there is only a partial adaptation. A person who is not entirely at home anywhere, in fact, does not know who he is and sets out "in search of his identity". But whoever is searching for something assumes that the object of his pursuit is somewhere to be found and alas, there is no identity if there is nothing with which one can identify oneself.

In so far as the identity problem is relevant, it is of importance to train people who, on the basis of involvement in their own societies, are able, with expert knowledge, to recognize and formulate relevant

development problems, and to indicate adequate solutions.

I shall now refer to two problems that are extremely relevant.

Social needs versus national and regional manpower needs

Costs of universities in the third world countries are continuously on the increase. The fact that increasing capital expenditure has not been accompanied by comparable growth in employment for graduates, is criticized in publications on universities in the Third World. It is stated that the education policy has resulted in an increase of the number of unproductive university trained experts. Lack of planning has resulted in enrollment of students for various studies without consideration of future manpower needs. Increases in the number of students enrolling for courses every year are due to:

a) the status and material remuneration accorded to holders of university degrees, and

b) the fact that secondary education in the region is primarily geared to further training at universities.

It is worthwhile noting that in our societies there is also an emancipatory aspect of university education, so that the desire to bring about structural reforms in the social and economic areas also implies the promotion of social mobility: Offering the opportunity to people from all walks of life to acquire that position which is in line with their talents, interests and capacities.

The annual growth of the number of jobless academics has led, in many South-east Asian countries, to efforts to arrvie at a more selective education rather than mass education.

The solution attempted ignores the structural nature of the problem, for it will only be possible to solve the problems relating to supply and demand of the growing number of university trained people, if there is an insight into the future need for manpower in various sectors.

UNIVERSITY: RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

The provision of scientific education and the performance of research are important functions of our universities which can make significant contributions to regional development. But their ability to do this will be limited if they function as exclusive institutions for producing elitist cadres in society. At the same time universities embedded in exogenous value systems can contribute very little to development of the country. Monumental problems also arise where a university is made into an instrument of a government-imposed and strictly defined development programme derived from an explicit socially doctrinal context. Such a university does not train scientists who will be able to give substance to principal tasks of the development-oriented university, such as: the innovative, critical and analytical monitoring of a planned development process.

UNIVERSITY PLANNING AND POLICY

The policy of the university can be entirely or partially formulated by the government, or more or less, be entirely a concern of the university itself.

With respect to autonomy one can therefore envisage a continuum from absence up to total autonomy.

UNESCO has carried out an investigation in a great number of universities most of which were situated in Third World countries. This investigation has resulted in four publications entitled: "Planning the development of universities" 1974. [4]/

It can be concluded that comprehensive planning is desirable for "the whole and the component parts" even when proportional growth is the central theme. The common practice among universities is restricting themselves to tailoring financial to physical planning. There is need for greater rationalization and a more structural approach to university planning.

Higher education is multifunctional and multi-stratified. Its functions include training of experts, contributing to science by the practice of science, provision of education, and undertaking relevant research in technology and socio-economics. The multi-stratified character is reflected both in the range of qualifications universities confer and the wide variety of lectures given.

Three prime functions of our universities need to be considered:

a.) Scientific

Whether regional universities should concern themselves with scientific problems focussed on by universities in the industrialized world, or whether they should meet the requirements of development-oriented universities; to design models, to contribute to technology and science, to draft strategies based on their own societies; is a matter of great concern. Universities in the Caribbean also belong to the international university community, and cooperation in a regional context can considerably widen the scope for research. Common positions should be taken on the practice of science and on development, and since scientific standards are related to academic attainments of the staff,

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4/: UNESCO publication (4 parts). "Planning the development of universities" 1974.

qualitative improvement must also receive consideration. This can be determined through professional attainments of lectures, through scientific and socially relevant research and through setting high levels of standards. In this context the content of education is relevant to achieving progress-ive, scientific, technological and socio-economic development.

The professional qualifications of young staff can be improved through study leave, and active participation in regional and international scientific meetings.

b.) Social

Consideration should be given to the socio-economic needs of the country in enrolling students. There is a quantitative imbalance in the supply of and demand for graduates. In countries with scarce financial means where manpower planning is not practised, universities themselves should carry out surveys on job opportunities for graduates. The results of such surveys can help to rationalize intake of undergraduates. A start could be made through an annual survey relating the number of graduates to employment opportunities for them.

Development Institutes in the region can help to provide greater orientation of students toward Caribbean needs by exchanges of lecturers and by running courses both for students and citizens in general. The Law Faculty of the University of Suriname has already set up such a course.

Activities of this nature can be institutionalized to great advan-tages. They could lead to inter-faculty activities, to multidisciplinary approaches to development problems, to increasing the access of the community to the university, to broadening regional experiences, to increasing the level of the university and non-university staff members and students, and to intensifying the contact between lecturers and the community.

c.) Training of Student

The university must also reflect on the training of academics. Apart from the intellectual achievements, personality development is also important to our society. Recruitment of staff exclusively on the basis of intellectual qualities does not ensure that the teaching staff will pay attention to all aspects of student development.

It is only in certain socialist states that both the professional train-
ing and the mental training have been incorporated as general objectives.
In view of the fact that in many third world countries it is chiefly the
university that trains the executive and managerial cadres of the society
and that, on account of the shortage of these cadres, academics in most
countries are called upon, soon after graduation to bear great responsibil-
ities, it would seem desirable for universities to pay much more attention
to Caribbean societal goals in character development.

Restrictions and Constraints

There are many restrictions and constraints to good university planning
in the region.

In order to take right decisions it is desirable to have an insight
into regional problems in their full dimensions. To this end a good informa-
tion system is a pre-requisite.[5] Data are required on the dropping out of
students, the costs of various study programmes and activities, and insight
into the patterns of applied information systems. This will require both
the re-organization of existing information, and also the collection of new
information essential for decision making. In this respect a first step in
the right direction might be the publication of a regional university informa-
tion bulletin through which interested groups in and outside the universities
in the region could be informed on development within universities.

This preliminary examination of some problems in regional universities
shows that apart from the socio-economic, financial, pedagogical and political
fields, there are demographic constraints. The number of disciplines which
can be offered in the university must be related to the minimum number of
students required to run a course. One of the ways of overcoming this
problem is cooperation between universities in the region.

Regional concern with these and other constraints is important for
comprehensive university planning. Even if governments show little enthusi-
asm for planning, universities should among themselves seek to establish
closer linkages in efforts to overcome regional problems in the field of
education.

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[5]: The functioning and meaning of an information system however is
directly tied to the political system in which the university
is embedded.