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CRITICAL MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION PROBLEMS IN
AFRICA

(Note by the secretariat)

1. Africa's major manpower problems

African countries want accelerated economic and social development in order to achieve better living standards for the masses of the people. To this end it is necessary to mobilize fully the region's human and material resources for the development effort. However, the contribution of human resources to national development can reach optimum only when available manpower is developed to acquire the right skills and attitudes and when the labour force is fully and effectively utilized.

Unfortunately, African manpower suffers from a number of drawbacks:

- (i) An overwhelming proportion of the labour force is untrained and lacking in skills needed to raise productivity.
- (ii) A good part of even that small proportion of the labour force that has had some training also lacks the ability to comprehend and apply modern scientific and technical knowledge to production process and business management.
- (iii) Workers' attitudes to work and income are rooted in traditional social values and the social status accorded to some categories of work is hardly reconciled with the socio-economic values and prerequisites of a modernizing economy.

In terms of manpower needs for accelerated economic development, the following manpower development and utilization problems are of priority concern to most African countries:

- (i) Shortages of middle- and high-level managerial, professional and technical personnel, especially in fields concerned with direct production in agriculture, industry, natural resources, etc. The most acute of the manpower bottleneck is the shortage of personnel with training in science and technology and having the capability to apply modern techniques to production processes.

To illustrate the problem, take the case of the Ministry charged with promoting industrialization in an African country. The typical situation is that such a Ministry often lacks the technical and professional personnel capable of evaluating technical reports on industrial project proposals, designing and selecting appropriate technology, analysing and costing production processes or of conceiving appropriate solutions to technical production problems. The result is that these technical services are usually contracted to foreign consulting firms at considerable expense.

- (ii) A politically explosive and socially undesirable problem is what to do with the jobless educated primary and secondary school leavers whose numbers are rapidly increasing in all major cities. They demand white collar jobs that are hard to come by and a fair standard of living, but they lack either the attitude and the technical skills for engagement in non-clerical duties or the means to continue their education.
- (iii) Lack of financial and institutional capacity for manpower development such as could effectively make good quantitative shortages and qualitative deficiencies in manpower requirements, and to provide facilities for the further education and vocational training of unemployed school leavers.
- (iv) The problem of educational programmes which are not adequately related to development needs, especially in terms of manpower requirements for industrialization, agricultural modernization and the supporting services and in terms of the need to cultivate

attitudes that are receptive to, and eager to apply development innovations.

- (v) The shortage of qualified teachers, especially science teachers and technical instructors, that are needed to implement programmes aimed at increasing substantially the proportion of school leavers with technical and science-based education and for the reform of the educational systems to cope with the challenge of development.
- (vi) The inefficient utilization of available trained manpower often due to factors such as political and social constraints, inappropriate and unwieldy administrative structures, lack of proper manpower planning machinery, and the prevalence of wage policies and wage structures inherited from colonial practice and which do not adequately reflect development needs in terms of the place of technical personnel in national development efforts.
- (vii) The seeming neglect to develop appropriate training programmes for the bulk of the labour force - the untrained and unskilled manpower whose production efforts determine, to a very considerable extent, the size of the national income. Thus, the attempt to modernize the rural sector cannot achieve the desired objective if due attention is not paid to training programmes aimed at raising the productivity and living standards of rural workers and to creating new economic opportunities. Rural modernization requires the injection of a substantial amount of technical skills, capital and receptive and innovating attitudes.
- (viii) The sheer lack of clear national policies and programmes on population, manpower utilization, income and employment as integral elements in national overall economic and social development policy and programmes, sanctioned by total national commitments to the realization of development objectives.

2. ECA's approach to resolving Africa's manpower problems

ECA considers Africa's human resources as the continent's most valuable asset for realizing the objective of economic and social development - the improvement of the people's standard of living. Consequently, this valuable asset has to be developed, mobilized and rationally deployed for accelerated economic development. Its employment has to be planned and integrated with overall development plans and programmes. ECA is, therefore, concerned with programmes that aim at encouraging member States to identify and plan their manpower and training needs, evolve policies and programmes that will develop adequate manpower to meet requirements, devise appropriate machinery for manpower and employment planning, orientate educational programmes to cope with manpower needs and, at improving performance capability of their personnel.

ECA's manpower development programme includes activities in the following main fields:

- (i) advice to member States in developing appropriate manpower policy and human resources development strategy and in evolving effective administrative machinery for manpower planning and the translation of manpower policy into concrete employment-creating development projects;
- (ii) identification and assessment of manpower and training needs, overall and sectoral, especially for the requirements of multinational development projects, and thus provide guidelines for multinational co-operation in education and training;
- (iii) the training of African administrators and executives in specific areas of development planning and administration, including the training of statistical personnel, manpower planners and trainers, and the dissemination of information on training opportunities open to Africans;

- (iv) seeking scholarship and fellowship facilities and co-ordinating programmes for the training of Africans in priority areas of development;
- (v) the promotion of multinational institutional facilities for specialized training and research in priority areas of development needs and assistance in seeking external aid for the establishment and/or development of these institutional facilities;
- (vi) the promotion, establishment and operation of an African scholarship and fellowship fund within the scope of the proposed Special Trust Fund for African Development, such as will make it possible to take advantage of specialized training and research facilities in Africa as well as in other parts of the world for the purpose of training Africans for the implementation of multinational and economically strategic national development projects;
- (vii) initiation of studies and evaluation surveys on specific areas of manpower, employment, educational and training problems such as will provide guidelines for the rational development of manpower and employment programmes and policies in member States;
- (viii) promoting international co-operation and concerted action in developing programmes aimed at ameliorating Africa's manpower and employment problems at regional, multinational and national levels by acting as a co-ordinator and catalyst of efforts to assist Africa within the United Nations system.

3. Highlights of ECA's Human Resources Development Programme, 1969-73

The ECA organizes annually, and in collaboration with interested organizations and specialized agencies, seminars, courses, workshops and study tours, aimed at improving the performance capability of personnel in the public and private services of member States and at giving course participants an opportunity to consider new ideas

and approaches in grappling with their countries' development problems. These training activities are undertaken in relation to identified urgent training needs in the region and in direct response to enabling resolutions adopted by Sessions of the Commission and the recommendations of its subordinate bodies.

For the period 1969-73 the main highlights of the training activities are as follows:

- Regional seminar on education for development in Africa, including a consideration of education for rural modernization (1970).
- Training courses in the techniques and methodology of manpower planning and training programming (annual).
- Seminars on human resources planning for policy-making officials (1969, 1971 and 1973).
- Trainers' Workshops on modern training methods and teaching aids (two workshops annually).
- Promotion of sub-regional and/or regional centres for the development of training materials, for trainers' workshops and manpower planning courses and for research in human resources development problems.
- Seminar on the role of private employers and trade unions in the education and training of workers (1971).
- Seminar on correspondence education for the development of personnel in Africa (1971).
- Sub-regional training courses on rural extension and community development (1969, 1970).
- Training of social work personnel: development of indigenous teaching materials (1970/71).
- Seminar on the administrative framework for development (1970).
- Orientation seminar on administrative training for professional and technical civil servants (1971).

- Sub-regional seminars on personnel administration and training in public corporations.
- Seminar on modern administrative systems for rural development (1973).
- Training course for supervisory building personnel (1972).
- Sub-regional training courses for Building Contractors.
- Training courses for census personnel.
- Seminar on employment policy and economic growth (1973).
- ECA/UNESCO Regional Symposium on the utilization of science and technology for development in Africa (1969).

It is obvious from a consideration of the above projects that ECA's programme of human resources development is largely one of indicating the direction member States should be moving in developing national manpower and employment programmes and policies. The main action and responsibility for human resources development and utilization has to be taken at the national level. ECA programmes can do no more than encourage and guide African Governments to take the desired action.

4. Prospects for the future

For the next decade, as most African manpower programmes have shown, the supply of trained manpower will fall short of demand by substantial margins. The manpower shortage envisaged will be particularly critical for science and technology based disciplines at the middle- and high-level categories. But the exploitation of Africa's natural resources, and the achievement of the set goals of industrialization and agricultural modernization depend to a considerable extent on the application of appropriate scientific and technical knowledge and skills. To fail to have an appropriate measure of these vital inputs would mean failing to achieve the desired development targets.

While a quantitative shortage is envisaged during the 1970s in the supply of certain types of skills, qualitative deficiencies in available and prospective manpower supply will further accentuate manpower bottlenecks. Similarly, the inefficient deployment of available trained manpower will worsen the situation. If future manpower supply is to cope effectively with the need to apply science and technology to development, educational and training programmes must be evolved which would emphasize the vital factor - scientific and technological knowledge and the skills to apply it. All African Governments are committed to such a programme, but they lack adequate means for realizing the objective and the capability for implementing the programme. It is in this respect that multilateral and bilateral external aid has an important role to play in rendering such assistance that will have the right impact as desired by African Governments.

Granting that the financial resources, including external aid, and a sense of national commitment will be available to support an expanded programme of science and technical education, including research for the application of acquired knowledge, the implementation of such a programme may be wrecked by the present shortage of science teachers and technical instructors. Therefore, the training of science and technical teachers and the development of appropriate science teaching aids should form an integral part of any science and technical education programme and of any external assistance in aid of such a programme.

Middle and secondary schools in an increasing number of African countries are producing school leavers who are finding it difficult to obtain gainful employment because they lack the type of skills required by the growing sectors of the economy. Given an appropriate vocational and technical training and the right attitude to blue-collar work, these same jobless school leavers could become the vital link in the production process, that is, as middle-level industrial skilled and semi-skilled workers, agricultural extension workers, and technicians for the transport industry and other services. But African Governments, faced with the current heavy burden of expanded primary and university education and with the slow rate of increase in their national income, find it extremely difficult to mobilize

additional resources for the further education and vocational training of these unfortunate school leavers. However, to turn the surplus educated persons to meet the shortage of skilled and semi-skilled workers, it is of the utmost importance that the will and the means to do so be mobilized for the vocational and technical training of school leavers, and that such a training should be directly related to the potential job opportunities in the economy.

It needs to be realized that the future well-being of African countries depends as much on the modernization of the rural economy as on industrialization. There cannot be the one without the other; the development of both these major sectors as much as other sectors, depends so much on the application of science and technology.

The rural sector presents peculiar problems that are not so easy to determine and solve. It is in the rural sector that some 75-80 per cent of the total population live and earn a living. It is the sector where production processes currently rely on the most primitive techniques and where innovation is not readily understood and willingly applied because of deep-rooted socio-cultural and economic constraints. It has been described as the "majority economy" which contributes most to the national income. This major sector of the economy must be modernized in order to give gainful employment to the great bulk of the active labour force. This means that not only must agriculture be modernized to yield higher productivity and give full employment to fewer workers, but also other economic activities, ranging from rural crafts, commercial services to agro-allied industries, must be developed to give new employment opportunities for an increasing number of rural inhabitants, particularly for the graduates of rural schools, including rural agricultural and technical schools. This further requires a new approach to the structure and content of education for rural development and a consideration of the type of science and technology programme appropriate for rural development and which should be infused into the curricula of the educational system as applied to rural communities.

Subject to the availability of funds and personnel, ECA will give due consideration to the above critical problems and will intensify action aimed

at ameliorating, and if possible, resolving some of them during the United Nations Second Development Decade. In particular, efforts will be made to promote more effective inter-agency action for an integrated approach to rural development. Action oriented studies will be made on the re-structuring of educational programmes and the allocation of educational resources in order to make education serve as a more effective instrument in fostering development. Similar studies will be made in collaboration with the appropriate agencies, on the problem of employment creation and the pre-vocational training of young school leavers. Special programmes will also be mounted, in collaboration with interested agencies, to promote the development of national programmes for science policies and science popularization, including science education in schools as well as out of school. Special attention will be given to the promotion of regional and/or sub-regional institutions for applied science and technology closely designed to cope with the challenge of economic development.