

## A MANPOWER STRATEGY FOR ETHIOPIA:

Eli Ginzberg & Herbert A. Smith,

Central Printing Press, Addis Ababa. (iv 79 pp.)

It is rather difficult to make a critical appraisal of the Ginzberg and Smith Report without more specific information about its terms of reference than that given or implied in the foreword. In the following paragraphs the reviewer intentionally concentrates on the points that touch directly on the Haile Sellassie I University

A fairly large number of recommendations<sup>1</sup> have been made, and there is no doubt that several — perhaps most — of them, though by no means new, could be useful to the University and the Government.

The recommendations<sup>1</sup> are generally sound, and their implementation, after clarification, by the appropriate authorities will certainly contribute to the furtherance of Ethiopia's modernisation. Unfortunately, in the absence of any clear-cut guidance, the authors have ended up by being experts in a number of different fields — history and the preparation of secondary school teachers not excepted.

The authors appear to accept the uncritical and exaggerated, though not entirely unfounded, belief that the "topography of Ethiopia with its highland plateau helps to explain why invaders from the North and East were repeatedly repulsed" (p. 7). Whilst topography, no one will deny, has been a factor, it should hardly be singled out as the one important factor to account for the independence of Ethiopia in the face of foreign aggression. In the same way, several of the statements dealing with the Church, missionaries, foreign experts, etc. are so broad and general that one wonders why they were included in such a manner in a work which purports to be 'a manpower strategy for Ethiopia'. Perhaps the most serious weaknesses of the report are its lack of depth and freshness and its failure to break any new ground. One must have heard almost all the conclusions and recommendations of the report repeated time and again in Ethiopia from various sources. It is a little bit discouraging to find that such a work should be a mere summary of previous opinions and recommendations, since this is perhaps the first serious manpower study ever made in Ethiopia on Ethiopia.

There are other points of weakness, but these are perhaps areas of disagreement with the opinions of the authors rather than serious weaknesses of the report itself.

The stand taken by the authors on the subject of the ESLCE is alarming. They must have been misled about the different avenues used by the University in admitting freshman students. Contrary to their assumption, people in the University have not made any conclusive statement about the superiority of the ESLCE to other criteria, or, conversely, the inferiority of the other criteria to the ESLCE. If other avenues of entrance were opened on a trial basis, it was on the clear understanding that they were believed to be at least comparable to, but by no means inferior to, the ESLCE.

1. See R.T. Wilcox, *Ethiopian Journal of Education*, vol. 1, No. 1, p.57



The authors also suggest that the number of different nationalities and, possibly, different philosophies of education to be found in the faculty tends to lower the effectiveness of the University.

If a national university in a developing country is to be modelled on the prototype of one nation and one nation alone, and consequently one ideology alone, this view of the authors may be acceptable; but if a developing national university without any prior tradition of its own is to benefit by what is "good" from several different nations with different educational philosophies, then the authors' view is not acceptable. In our case, H.S.I.U. seems to have chosen the latter course. What might be tragic in such a situation is the host country's either not knowing what it wants to achieve or else neglecting to lay down a general guideline for the most effective channelling of the experience of other nations for its own enrichment.

If the University, as the foreword states, has been partly responsible for bringing the manpower question to the fore, one might expect some guidance for its further expansion and development to be given.

In fact, three guidelines, specifically for the University, are given:

1. The University should not "respond too narrowly to the pulls of the moment", should not be "overly responsive to current and prospective manpower needs as defined by various interested groups" (p. 54). It would have been enlightening to learn what these "various interested groups" are, since, in a backward country, the most obvious influence-wielding factors are the Government and the donors.

2. The University should expand the student body only modestly with a view to improving the quality of its students. The authors do not seem to have a complete grasp of the factors affecting student drop-out. In fact, the tone of the study seems to suggest that everything should be expanded except the University.

3. "Let the students themselves decide which of the existing faculties they wish to join" is another recommendation. The impression of the reviewer is that the authors have not come to grips with the realities of the day. The development of careers, perhaps with the exception of the Church and military service, is relatively young in Ethiopia. The "open-market" development, as one observes it in developed countries is of questionable value in the initial take-off stages of development, and it is utterly premature and unacceptable to allow students to join any faculty of their choice at this time. Development in developing countries is controlled and guided; in the same way, development in the University should be controlled and guided. This control and guidance is explicitly intended to accelerate national development — even at times at the expense of individual interest. The theory of individual differences in interest, ability, etc. is all very well for a developed country, but not for developing societies involved in initial catching-up exercises. If implemented, this recommendation would, at best, be short-lived, and, at worst, would accelerate the over-deployment of meagre human resources.

The belief of the authors that the distribution of students among the various disciplines and faculties is unimportant (p. 56) as long as students acquire the technique and habit of thinking reflectively, analytically, etc. contains a dangerous half-truth. That University training should contribute to analytical inquiry is, without any question, the essence of university education; but that, in this twentieth



century of ours, there should be some balance between general education and special education is equally unquestionable. In making this recommendation the authors have forsaken the realm of Ethiopian reality for that of idealism, as one meets it in the western world.

The authors are aware of the critical and urgent problems of teacher demand and supply, especially at the secondary level. But their suggestion that the expansion of the University (including the Faculty of Education) should be brought to a halt is totally unacceptable to anyone who honestly and seriously wishes to remedy the situation. A further suggestion to introduce an open-door policy for liberal arts graduates and Ethiopian students returning from abroad without the necessary teacher education (p. 60) is parallel to the thinking of some who believe that college graduates without teacher-training make good teachers. All that can be said at this stage is that Ethiopia should make a thorough evaluation of this policy without any prior commitment. It is an open-ended issue, perhaps, debatable if one is a "layman" educator. Perhaps an evaluation of the untrained Peace Corps and Ethiopian University Service teachers in Ethiopia might serve as a pilot study.

The negative stand of the authors with regard to Ethiopian University Service, the errors of fact (e.g. the statement on p. 4 that only ten Ethiopians with Baccalaureate degrees are teaching in our secondary schools, and the crediting, on p. 41 of the work of a committee to one man) — all these and many more points, could be enlarged on, but what has been said already is sufficient to illustrate the general reaction of the reviewer to the study.

The major value of the report is perhaps its concentration on the raising of qualitative issues. There is a general tendency in manpower studies to be more quantitative, but unless the several political, economic, social and educational issues are answered by a responsible authority there can be no realistic framework for the quantitative calculations.

The authors have positively stated that "critical appraisal of reports, findings and recommendations will represent another significant advance" (p. 79) in future manpower study and planning in Ethiopia. This study is indeed a good beginning, an attractive preface to future manpower study in Ethiopia.

The reviewer hopes, however, that the mistake of not including two or more knowledgeable, experienced Ethiopians to work with foreign experts in such projects will not be repeated in the future. Outsiders cannot be expected to understand the subtleties of life in Ethiopia after only a short stay; it is therefore imperative that any such study in the future include Ethiopians on the team.

**Akilu Habte.**



## PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS IN AFRICA:

E.B. Castle, O.U.P., Nairobi.

In his preface, Prof. Castle says, "This brief introduction to the theory and practice of education is intended for students in the teachers' college of Africa. So many English books studied in these colleges lack the necessary emphasis on the African background. Here I have attempted to associate the student's thinking and practice with his own experience and the lives of his pupils."

The book has many merits: it is brief (158 pp., including appendices and index), but the brevity is achieved by succinctness of expression, not by omission of essential matter; it really is what it claims to be, viz. an introduction to the subject, for it assumes no previous special knowledge on the part of the reader; the subject matter is beautifully ordered; and the writer never forgets that his readers are intelligent young men and women who are using English as a second language. Prof. Castle skilfully contrives to avoid the convoluted syntax and clotted lexis which is the course of so much literature on education without ever lapsing into the repetitive inanity of primer prose.

This linguistic tact is one practical outcome of the author's fundamental belief that the centre of the educational process is the learner himself, a belief that is further manifested in the ordering of his topics. "This book," he says, "will leave aims to the end, after we have discovered what children are like and in what circumstances they are to be educated." There is, of course, nothing novel about this belief today, but when practice lags so far behind precept there is a strong case for preaching it. Similarly, there is nothing revolutionary in the view that, since the child is something more than an intellect with a writing instrument attached, education should make provision for the whole child and should include, not as "frills" but as essentials, such activities as art, handicraft and music. But the point still needs to be hammered home.

There is little to quarrel with in the book except, possibly, the assumption forced upon the writer that there exists something called 'the African background'. It is doubtful whether one can generalise more profitably about 'the African background of Debre Berhan and Ouagadougou' than one can about 'the American background' of Illinois and the Upper Amazon. Yet the economics of publishing and education in present-day Africa oblige authors to make this sweeping generalisation in an attempt to make their textbooks acceptable and useful in as many markets as possible.

Not that the generalisation is painfully obtrusive. There are only a few points where the present reviewer, sitting in Addis Ababa some 7500 feet above the heat of the tropics, feels inclined to ask, "What has all this got to do with us?" Moreover, each of the 23 brief chapters is followed by a number of suggestions for observation, practical work, discussion and writing. Clearly, the author has intended his book to serve as a basis for a good deal of follow-up work in the classroom or in tutorial groups. It is assumed that the staffs of teachers' colleges



throughout the Continent will be able to translate the general statements into terms of the local situation and to guide discussion in such a way as to bring out the immediate relevance of what Prof. Castle has to say.

**James McIntosh.**

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