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## INTRODUCTION

by

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A Regional Seminar on Agricultural Curriculum Development was held in Noumea on 10 - 19 January 1972. Eleven Pacific territories were represented. The South Pacific Commission had secured the services of two consultants who have an extensive knowledge of Agricultural Education in the region:

- Mr A. Sutherland, Senior Lecturer in Agriculture, Armidale Teachers' College, New South Wales, Australia.
- Mr G. N. Bamford, Principal, Navuso Agricultural School, Fiji.

The aims of Agricultural Education in the Pacific were considered at great length in order to frame a suitable plan of action adapted to territories' requirements. One of the problems which stood out as the most acute was that of training for young rural school leavers. This period is critical because they are too young to go into agriculture or to take part in adult activities.

Anyway it must be anticipated that everywhere the increase in population and the shortage of employment in the secondary and tertiary sectors for young people will make matters worse.

Mr G.N. Bamford, who is very well aware of these difficulties and deeply concerned for the future of the Islands' rural people, proposes concrete solutions. This is much appreciated.

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TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR OUT OF SCHOOL RURAL YOUTH

by

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A feature of the South Pacific Region is the rapidly increasing number of educated youth seeking to enter the labour market, a result of high population growth (approaching 4% p.a. in some countries) and expanding educational opportunities so that more children can go to school and stay there longer.

A second feature is the inability of the "modern" sector to employ more than a small percentage of these school leavers, even with increased industrialisation, tourism and exploitation of mineral resources. Most will have to be absorbed in the rural sector, particularly in farming and its related services and industries.

A critical period for most rural youth is that immediately following formal schooling when they are too young to farm or establish other rural enterprises - or to be included fully in adult communal activities. Many therefore drift to urban areas, creating serious social problems. While this drift is inevitable, its extent can be reduced by providing satisfying and productive activities for young people in the rural areas. Such activities can enhance personal growth and economic self-sufficiency as well as contributing to community and national development. They can also provide activities for those unemployed youth who eventually return to the village and who otherwise can be a source of trouble. Too often in the past, when Governments have faced this school leaver problem, they have sought a solution by providing an additional 1-2 years of formal schooling, sometimes vocational in nature. This approach has not proved satisfactory since it merely delays the problem and in fact usually adds to it by raising trainees' aspiration for paid employment in the modern sector. Furthermore, it is usually inadequate since the numbers of youth involved soon outstrip the ability of the authorities to provide the facilities and staff required.

A further tendency has been to attack the problem at the urban end through the establishment of urban youth clubs and training programmes, rather than at its source, the village.

The problem therefore much be tackled in the rural areas by providing informal training programmes.

### POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO RURAL YOUTH TRAINING

Some approaches used in developing countries are:-

#### 1. Youth Mobilization Schemes

A number of these have been developed by African countries<sup>1/</sup> patterned on the Ghana Young Pioneers movement which commenced in 1955 and aimed at mobilizing large numbers of youth in training camps for 1-3 years. Here they were taught trade and agricultural skills and also involved in developmental works such as road building and dam construction. Schemes were usually of a para military nature.

In general these schemes have proved costly due to their residential nature and have catered for relatively small numbers. While training has increased the employability of trainees, employment on completing training has still been a problem.

In Ceylon, a two phase scheme was commenced in 1969.

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<sup>1/</sup> Uganda National Union of Youth Organizations  
Kenya National Youth Service  
Malawi Young Pioneers  
Zambia Youth Service  
Tanzania National Service

### Phase 1. National Service Scheme

This aimed at involving youth on a daily basis, in developmental projects in their home locality. Participants were paid a small daily allowance, part of which was retained to form a loan fund to assist them with the establishment of their own enterprises. Attendance also resulted in the awarding of credits which were to enable participants to proceed to:-

Phase 2. Residential Training Scheme - in which vocational skills were to be taught.

Phase 1 was discontinued after 12 months but during that period 40,000 youth were involved with a daily attendance of 25,000. Works valued at Rs.2.9 million were completed.

In Fiji, it has been proposed that youth should be mobilized for developmental projects, particularly reforestation.

It is suggested that while mobilization schemes may have a place in a total training programme, their basic problem is that of employment of trainees, since such schemes usually do not create sufficient jobs.

## 2. Youth Settlement Schemes

A number of African and Asian countries have developed schemes which aim at the settlement of unemployed young men between the age of 17 and 25 years. An example of a successful effort is the Ihala Hewessa Scheme in Ceylon. In this, the land clearing has been performed communally by the 54 settlers but individual title has been granted to each. Management expertise is being provided by a Government Officer for the first 5 years but responsibility is being progressively assumed by the settlers through their co-operative society.

In Pahang State of Malaysia several larger schemes are in operation while in Sarawak one to settle 400 youths is planned. This scheme, based on oil palm production, will eventually be operated as an estate, the settlers being shareholders and also providing the labour.

While sometimes politically attractive there have probably been more failures than successes with this type of settlement. Schemes have required large capital outlay, have catered for limited numbers and have frequently encountered social problems resulting from the establishment of communities of young people away from the constraining influence of adults.

### 3. Mobile Agricultural Training Schools

This is a new approach being developed in Thailand where for the past 11 years, Mobile Trade Schools have been operated by the Ministry of Education. Mobile Agricultural Schools are to be introduced this year. A mobile unit will be established in a rural centre for a 12 month period, trainees being given class instruction for 3-5 hours per week, the remainder of the time being spent in supervised "on farm" practical training.

### 4. An Intensive Extension Approach

This approach was developed in Ceylon in 1964 and is suited to older youth of 18-25 years of age. It involves the placing of an extension worker in a locality where he will be able to give intensive supervision to 30-40 trainees over a period of up to 2 years. The aim is to establish trainees on an economic holding, most time being spent on the farm itself, with the required formal instruction and skill training being given during slack periods in the farming programme. Training is not confined to agriculture but includes other non-specialist skills which the village operator requires. Elaborate facilities are not required for such training, a school room, village meeting house or simple shelter being sufficient.

Either during or following such an intensive extension programme, trainees with special aptitudes or needs can be selected for further short course training at Practical Agricultural Schools.

While such an approach will clearly be limited to fairly intensively populated areas and where socio-economic factors are favourable, it has the advantages of being "in situ" and of low cost.

## 5. Rural Youth Movements

The basic unit of such Movements is the village club, although these may eventually be organized on a district or national basis. In all programmes the involvement of youth in economic projects is central with supplementary cultural and social activities. For boys, while agricultural skills will receive greatest emphasis, others such as craft, small scale village industry skills and literacy will be included. Girls will also be engaged in economic projects, some agricultural but others related to crafts and cottage industries. Homemaking will naturally be an important part of a girl's training.

Programmes must be adapted to the needs of the various age groups. Usually 13-17 year olds prefer group activities while older youth (18-25) are more likely to engage in individual projects.

Leadership of clubs is essentially voluntary although professional youth leaders are required in an advisory capacity.

Such as: - Young Farmers Club Movement of India

4 H. Movement in South Korea

Taruna Bumi section of the Gerakan Pramuka  
Movement in Indonesia.

The advantages of Youth Movements are:-

- i) Training is "in situ", that is, in the village situation. It therefore avoids the removal of youth from their home environment to an institution, a process which, particularly if training is long term, tends to alienate them from the home situation. Village based training also enables youth to "earn while learning" and thus not only assists them in establishing an economic enterprise, but enables them to make a positive contribution to family and community life. Voluntary service projects can also be an important part of club programmes, for example, putting in a village water supply, improving roads, keeping the credit union-books, repairing the school.

- ii) The cost per trainee is low as elaborate facilities and equipment are not required and much of the leadership is voluntary.
- iii) Large numbers of youth can be involved.
- iv) From performance in economic projects and other activities, it is possible to select for further training those who are mature and have the ability and prospects (land, capital, commitment, etc.) to benefit from this.
- v) Responsible decision making and action by youth can be fostered through their participation in planning of programmes and club leadership as well as through the operation of their own projects. Apart from personal development, such training provides the foundation of sound citizenship.
- vi) National Youth Movements may have a valuable unifying effect and assist in the development of a national consciousness, particularly in countries where racial and/or tribal divisions exist.

Two essentials for the success of a Rural Youth Movement are:-

A. Community Support

The backing and involvement of the community is essential in order to:-

- i) Provide adult leadership for groups. It may be difficult to find this initially in the village so that it may have to be provided by the school teacher or a village level extension worker. Adult advisory groups are also a valuable means of involving older people.
- ii) Provide facilities such as land for projects and a meeting place - for example a schoolroom, or village meeting house.



- iii) Prevent the hardening of the generation gap between youth and adults and the fracturing of the community. This is one of the main dangers of youth groups. A feature of existing youth organizations in the Pacific Region is the wide age range of members, adults nearing middle age being still regarded eligible for membership. While adult domination is to be avoided, their presence has some advantages.

B. Government Support

This is required for:-

(a) Training of

- Professional rural youth workers

These will require training in two major fields

- agriculture and youth leadership. (club programming, and organization, group dynamics, sociology, etc.)

It will be the function of such workers to:-

- supervise and advise local clubs;
- conduct training courses for trainees and voluntary leaders;
- organize field days, rallies, competitions - for example  
"The Agricultural Fair" in American Samoa.
- liaise on behalf of clubs with other agencies and Government Departments, for example, the Extension Services, Rural Bank, Marketing authorities, Land Boards, etc.
- co-ordinate club activities at District and National levels as the Movement grows.

- Voluntary Leaders and Club Members

Opportunities for short course training need to be provided for both. To qualify for such training members

must have satisfactorily completed projects and thus shown ability and commitment to farming or some related activity. The Practical Farm Schools must increasingly develop a role of being supportive of activities at the village level. In this way they will be providing training to mature (17-25 years) young people instead of as at present, to school leavers who usually have given little serious thought to the future.

(b) Finance

- Apart from providing or subsidizing training courses and facilities, Government financial support is required as:

- i) Grants to enable the organization of field days, demonstrations, project competitions, etc.
- ii) Subsidized inputs for economic projects or assisting with the establishment of a loan fund.
- iii) Subsidized equipment for club activities.

(c) Personnel Extension workers and specialists need to be available for training courses and for subsequent follow up, as well as in a general advisory role.

(d) Mass Media and Literature Support

There are few villages in the Region without radio and valuable support can be given through this medium, not only by providing instructional material, but also news of outstanding group or individual achievements, by recorded interviews and other features. These all help to give some prestige to members and the Movement as well as raising the status of rural living. The development of Listening/Discussion Groups could be useful.

Publications are valuable for instruction and news and for many youth they can develop, or at least prevent, the loss of literacy skills acquired during primary school.

Whatever approaches are used, they must be adapted to meet local needs and to fit local social and cultural patterns. As most countries in

the region have as yet very limited experience in out-of-school programmes, it is essential that as a first step pilot projects be established in carefully selected areas where community attitudes and socio-economic factors are favourable. For expansion of an approach, the active support of national leaders is essential, not only to ensure adequate budget provision but in moulding public opinion to accept an informal approach to education.

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