



**Governing Council
of the
United Nations
Development Programme**

Distr.
GENERAL

DP/1986/10/Add. 1
16 May 1986

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Thirty-third session
2-27 June 1986, Geneva
Item 3 of the provisional agenda

SUPPORT

**POLICY REVIEW: THE UNIQUE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
AND DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION IN THE 1980s**

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT: ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Addendum

Report of the Tokyo Workshop on Human Resources Development

Summary

The Administrator is making available to the Council, for its information, the report of the Tokyo Workshop on Human Resources Development, held at the Foreign Ministry, Tokyo, 2-5 April 1986.

REPORT OF THE TOKYO WORKSHOP ON HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
HELD AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, TOKYO, 2-5 APRIL 1986

1. In November 1984, the Administrator informed the Second Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations that he intended to assemble a group of eminent persons to explore the many dimensions of the role of human resources in the development process and to advise Governments on the practicability and operational steps that might be taken to promote and implement policies conducive to this end. Accordingly, he decided to organize a workshop to be sponsored by UNDP with the financial support of the Government of Japan. Twenty-three outside experts, representing scholarly and practical development experience in the field of human resources, together with the representatives of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Japan International Co-operation Agency, and UNDP, participated in the Workshop, which was held in Tokyo, 2-5 April 1986. A list of the participants and the terms of reference for the Workshop are attached. This report summarizes the themes of the discussion that took place and provides a useful context within which to consider the operational recommendations contained in DP/1986/10.

2. The Workshop dealt with human resources development in its broadest sense. There was agreement that human resources development is a concept that goes far beyond the conventional skills formation and training practices. Its ultimate purpose was, in the words of the UNDP Administrator, "to enlarge and enrich human lives"; all other factors - education, training, health programmes, etc. - are but means of achieving this end. In short, human resources development should be the central concern of development policy; it should not be considered as the missing component once emphasis has been given to capital and physical resources. That such a concept has proved to be viable can be demonstrated by the history of those countries that have been poorly endowed with natural resources and have nevertheless reached high living standards and have mastered modern technology.

3. Most participants took the view that, while the importance of human resources in the development process has been always recognized, it deserves special attention at this time. Placing human resources at the centre of development is especially urgent in the context of present global conditions, when one can no longer count on the traditional development models which relied on heavy infusions of foreign capital, technology and expertise. Structural adjustment and austerity programmes are placing heavy pressures on social services and human resources sectors generally, a situation which could have a serious effect on the quality of life for generations to come. Under conditions of economic retrenchment, massive unemployment, the marginalization of large segments of the population, the erosion of hope, doubt and uncertainty regarding the future, it was important to rely more on indigenous resources, of which, clearly, the human potential was the most important. In

fact, history has shown that periods of deteriorating economic conditions often produce especially creative new ideas and technologies. At times such as these, the potential for change may be greatest.

4. Several speakers pointed out that it would be a grave mistake to overlook the fact that the critical issues of human resources development are not restricted to the developing countries but are of global concern. Youth unemployment, pessimism regarding a future faced with the possibility of nuclear holocaust, and the failure of the learning process to keep pace with accelerated technological change were cited as issues that affect developing and industrialized nations alike. Also, the internationalization of development arising from modern transport and communications techniques, from the expansion of transnational corporate activity, and from the international trade and monetary system imposes closer interdependence among nations and does not allow the human resources development issue of this or that group of countries to be considered in isolation.

5. On the other hand, the fact that all nations are linked together in the global development process does not warrant the assumption of a universal development model. In fact, stereotype development models, imposing outside concepts of culture and foreign consumption standards, have detracted political energies from maintaining and fostering sustainable local values and goals and have created consumption demands which for most people can never be satisfied. While it is true that certain components of a particular development model may be applicable, each country must in the end create its own development concept based upon its own objectives. Development is an endogenous process that is based on the particular culture of the country, its traditions, natural resource endowments, political values, and stage of development in history. Culture is often interpreted negatively as a conservative force which discourages progress, but in fact, as the Japanese experience demonstrates, village values of an earlier period can be used in a manner conducive to industrial development. Cultural considerations of status, prestige and a sense of participation can serve as incentives to enhance the capacity of people in the development process.

6. Participants at the Workshop thought it essential to build on endogenous resources. There was general criticism of the present bureaucratic and heavy-handed approach to developing human resources: it was considered inefficient, often even stifling people's initiative and creativity. Very often, bureaucracies relied on installed "hardware" (i.e. buildings and luxurious equipment) without giving much thought to "software" (i.e. concepts for use) and to the recurrent financial burdens. In some cases budgetary constraints even prevented the upkeep of hardware. The need was recognized to introduce participatory processes to supplement or even substitute for the bureaucratic model which now characterizes many countries. The bureaucratization of society has also resulted in a loss of confidence in

political institutions. As a minimum, much more co-operation was needed between the private sector and public administration. Many speakers felt that the United Nations system agencies should work more closely with non-governmental organizations.

7. There was general agreement that development has suffered from the passive acceptance of alien development models and value systems. Whole populations are oriented towards the consumption of foreign products and ideas rather than towards production based upon innate skills and locally available resources. This dependence cannot be sustained, especially in periods of economic stagnation, since only a small portion of the population can hope to satisfy its consumption requirements, while the vast majority remains excluded from the modern sector and their skills and energies are not used to enhance the development process. The consequences of this dualism are particularly evident in sub-Saharan Africa, where dependence on economic aid has undermined resourcefulness, where local knowledge and technologies are ignored, and where scientific research is almost non-existent. It was said that a strategy of participation would be best suited to develop creativity based on local competence and on regional or sub-regional relationships (including technical co-operation among developing countries).

8. Yet it must also be recognized that development is not entirely an autonomous act. The external environment of trade, commodity prices, foreign exchange rates, and accessibility to technology have a major impact. Equally important, but given less attention in the international development dialogue, is the willingness of nations and elements of society to fulfill their potential. The absence of political will and of a socio-political environment conducive to development are more serious constraints than insufficient capital and physical resources. With reference to human resources development, the unwillingness of Governments to confront complex and politically sensitive problems such as fertility reduction and educational reform is evidence of this lack of political will. National security is always given higher priority than issues related to human welfare and self-fulfilment.

9. The purpose of education is to elevate the human condition, not merely to prepare people for jobs. Education is therefore a fundamental human right, and to treat human resources development simply as an instrument, in terms of the training and deployment of skills, is to miss the point. Yet this dual challenge to education and training poses an immense task: it means developing human capacities which will energize the development process at all levels, from improving the conditions of the rural poor to working on the frontiers of science and technology. The fact that human needs are so diverse and often can only be dealt with on a small scale at the local level necessitates either a finely tuned and complex set of institutional interventions or a very flexible participatory system.

10. The present challenge to learning systems is accentuated by the rapidity of technological change and the explosion of knowledge. One participant interpreted this as a relatively new psychological phenomenon in the history of mankind, i.e. the dominance of cognitive and discursive thinking over affective and intuitive modes, which led to the development of an operative as opposed to a normative ethos. By contrast, learning systems historically had the function of perpetuating norms and values from one generation to the next and of maintaining socio-cultural and economic arrangements. Under the new conditions, projections of skill requirements and manpower needs are difficult to undertake and they may go out-of-date quickly. It is quite clear that, if a society wants to cope with such a situation, learning systems need to be overhauled to meet the needs of a world where productivity is based on command of knowledge and information and on an ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. As is well known, the question has even been raised whether there is not a need to stress again the normative ethos of maintaining the socio-cultural environment and caring more for values embodied in the traditional institutions.

11. This question aside, it was stressed by many participants that major improvements are required in the development of human resources which can participate in the broad spectrum of the development process and respond to the accelerated pace of technological change. These improvements concern literacy and health at one end of the spectrum, and enhanced national capability to share in a technological future at the other end. If such a policy is pursued, more attention must be given to long-term effects, i.e., to planning which takes into account the explosion of knowledge, its consequences on the organization of work and society, and identifies opportunities arising from technological developments and the potential of knowledge-intensive industries. The coverage of basic education and literacy must be greatly expanded to prepare whole populations for a changing world. At the same time, higher education and research and development cannot be postponed if developing countries are to close the gap that now separates them from the industrialized countries. The Workshop recognized the importance of higher education in this respect, noting too, that it provided the main source of social mobility. Participants also felt that priority should be given to the networking of existing institutions so as to create regional and subregional centres of excellence in particular fields and thereby benefit from economies of scale.

12. Improving the quality of existing educational systems with better trained and better paid teachers, adequate textbooks and materials, was seen as a crucial issue which warranted more emphasis than the "hardware". In fact, economic pressures and problems of financing education at present are such that merely avoiding the deterioration of existing facilities and management systems related to education as well as other human services is already a major concern in many countries. It was stressed that key decisions and

actions should only be taken by the Governments themselves with reference to the particular local conditions and socio-cultural environment. Prescriptions from outside serve only to perpetuate irrelevant or even dangerous models and curricula and undermine the endogenous nature of human resources development.

13. Human resources development, it was felt, is too important a matter to be left to education ministries alone. New structures are needed to deal comprehensively with interrelated issues, such as coping with technological change. There is also a need to harmonize decision-making with regard to education and manpower planning. The recent creation of the Ministry of Human Resources Development in India, which deals concurrently with education, youth and women and related issues such as health, was noted as an example of the institutional changes that should be contemplated by other countries as well.

14. International agencies can assist governments to develop their own planning and management systems to cope with the various aspects of human resources development. Without the capacity to conceptualize, to formulate and, jointly with others, such as non-governmental organizations, to implement human resources policies, many developing countries will remain passive and depend on outside models for their development process. At present, educational planning is often ineffective and deals mainly with aggregated data; human resources planning which takes into account the wider dimensions and inter-sectoral linkages is virtually non-existent. The role of technical co-operation is to help in creating an endogenous capacity to analyse needs, plan programmes, determine investment priorities and, most importantly, to deal with the problems of implementation.

15. The Workshop also considered the need for changes in the content, coverage and modalities of training systems, which tend to be rigid, costly and inefficient, and inappropriate in meeting the real needs of society. Vocational training has to be targeted to the needs of rural populations, women, and the informal urban sector which at present do not benefit. New methodologies are needed to make training more relevant to changing technological conditions and to opportunities for self-employment. The absence of proper remuneration and incentives for trainers (as is equally the case for teachers) again reflects the relatively low priority that is given to human resources development. The private sector can play an important role in the development of human resources, but companies usually operate at arm's length from public programmes. There are business associations and other forms of partnership which offer opportunities to tap new sources of human resources development support; however, governments do not take advantage of the training opportunities which the private sector can provide. The primary aim of international technical co-operation should be, as with education, to create national capacity to plan and co-ordinate training activities within the framework of a wider human resources development strategy. There is also scope for new institutional arrangements among developing countries for the purpose of developing new training modalities and combining skill creation with income generating activities.

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16. An important topic of the Workshop was the role of women in human resources development. Women not only make up roughly one half of the population, they are usually also more subject to cultural norms than men. This is important in devising educational and training programmes and in creating employment opportunities for women. It was found that women are plainly overlooked in the discussion of many issues of human resources development, such as data collection on unemployment, policies for the informal sector, technological choice, migration policy, to give just a few examples. On the other hand, there was a clear need to take the complementarity between men and women into account and to avoid artificial borderlines in human resources developments.

17. When human resources development is considered within a global context, the movement of skills and abilities between countries serves a positive function. A number of participants felt that the present preoccupation with the brain drain is often excessive and is based on a narrow, short-term perspective, especially as regards human flows between developing countries. Without migrants, human resources development would be impossible in many countries. In the Middle East, the migration of labour, particularly from countries that share a common cultural heritage, has contributed to the development of the receiving country and relieved pressures on labour markets in the sending country. There is a common Arab cultural tradition which contributes to an endogenous development.

18. When dealing with human resources development, attention is usually given primarily to enhancing knowledge and skills and increasing the productivity of the population, that is to say, to the supply side of the equation. This can be justified in so far as investing in people is often an important way of improving incomes. The demand side, however, namely employment as a means of improving incomes, is the other main component in a human resources development strategy. The availability of jobs depends largely upon the productive structure of the economy, in which technology is changing rapidly, and appropriate demand, investment and employment policies which stimulate the economy in general. There is a need, however, to assure that whatever structural adjustment may be needed does not have a serious negative effect on employment. Policies pertaining to budget structure, wages, labor legislation, and incentives designed to increase demand for labor in the private sector can have a positive impact on overall employment. Investment strategies should take into account the potential for employment generation and for beneficial transfer of technology. The effects on employment of changes in technology and industrial processes and their structural implications for the economy must be anticipated in order to prepare the labour force through appropriate training and retraining to fill manpower needs. In this connection, the Japanese experience has demonstrated the value of close collaboration between the Government and the private sector, a feature lacking in many countries.

19. The Workshop recognized that problems of scale are important in human resources development and that a certain minimum critical mass is necessary for a human resources strategy as nations move into the twenty-first century. It is impossible for small political units to finance specialized training and research and development, to mobilize the diversity of human resources needed to respond to the full scope of development requirements. Regional groupings that respect diversity will become increasingly important in the future, making it necessary to collaborate more closely in such fields as higher education, data collection and research.

20. International technical co-operation has an important role to play if it can overcome some of its present constraints: aid that is imposed according to the priorities of donors, that places onerous demands on recipients in the form of reports, procedures and counterpart requirements; and that puts too much emphasis on short-run project objectives rather than on patiently developing local planning and implementation capacities. In the view of Workshop participants, the United Nations development system, especially UNDP, has an important responsibility in advocating the primacy of human resources development and in sensitizing economic and sectoral planners to the human resources dimension. Incorporating a "human resources impact analysis" in development programmes would serve to heighten awareness of the importance of the human resources dimension. The United Nations system should concentrate on helping countries develop the statistical and analytical capacity required to undertake comprehensive human resources planning. In developing such capacity, the United Nations development system must not convey the impression that it has the answers to what constitutes an appropriate human resources strategy, which can only evolve within the context of national and regional conditions and objectives. In strengthening analytical capacity, the United Nations development system should not neglect needs at the sub-national and local levels, especially in Africa, where an inventory of human resources in the technologies of the traditional village society would serve as the basis for promoting traditional competencies and thus releasing an endogenous development process.

21. It was also recommended that UNDP concern itself mainly with issues related to human resources development policy and programme implementation, leaving the substantive issues to the United Nations agencies with sectoral competence. For example, UNDP might concentrate on problems dealing with the management and delivery of human services and on improving the data bases upon which policy and aid decisions are based.
