EDUCATION AND NATION BUILDING IN THE THIRD WORLD

ed. J. Lowe et al. **Scottish Academy Press, 1971.**

This book grew out of a conference on Nation Building held in Edinburgh in 1969, and it makes one of the most solid introductions to the topic that is available today. Central to the theme is the concern with the relationship between economics and education which Strumlin of Russia and Schultz of America adumbrated two decades ago, and which Vaizey of Britain was interested in. Vaizey, in parenthesis, to some extent illustrates the cautious economist who retires from the debate because of lack of evidence: and indeed there are so many variables (many unidentified, no doubt) which intervene, that few learned assessors would be prepared to agree that the evidence shows **conclusively** that educational input can be equated with economic growth in a **causal sequence.** On the other hand, the increasing body of **circumstantial** evidence is (who can doubt it?) highly persuasive. It was therefore good to find in this book three chapters touching on this problem, as well as a first-rate resumé of Soviet experience in the economics of nation building.

One hears frequently the demand for more money for African education, the expression of need for more schools, for better equipment, and for a study of school problems such as "drop-out". In South Africa over 2½ million African children attend school: but of these, 4,2% attend secondary school, and according to the 1969 figures, 0,11% complete secondary school. Thus, the supply of Africans capable of maturing into management, professional occupations such as law and education or into top administration, is bottlenecked. And this bottleneck may strangle development even under a government that openly supports vertical development. James Pickett contributes to this book one of the best articles on education and economics in Africa that I have seen recently and he is certainly concerned with very similar problems. Taking the 1966 product per head, he instances: USA $3 839, UK $1 908 and USSR $990. But (if you exclude Gabon, Liberia, Zambia, the Ivory Coast, Mauritius, Rhodesia, Senegal, Algeria, Ghana and Tunisia) the other countries of Africa (33 in all) had a product per head of less than $200 a year — generally below the $300 per head of Latin American countries. As Dr. Pickett remarks, what is not generally well known, is the fact that the developed countries (US, UK, USSR, etc.) started their modern development at a **higher level;** indeed Professor Kuznets has suggested that British product per capital level was probably about $300 (in 1966 values) when Britain began to move into the modern economic age.

All this leads into the problem and nature of economic productivity — how hard people are prepared to word, at what they work, and what they can save by overproduction. A sad reflection is that 13 countries in Africa (22% of the total population of Africa) had a falling **per capita** production between 1960 and 1966. In 17% of the population of Africa, economic growth had been of an order of 1% per annum. In 72% of the population of Africa, economic growth was of an order of 2% or less. All of which expresses the hand-to mouth daily living of millions of people, which economists call a **subsistence economy.** African politicians trying to match reality and utopia, now find that the way to a modern industrial economy lies through a rehabilitation of the traditional African agriculture — which is not likely to be shaken from its centuries-old social setting **without** education. The United Nation report — **A Development Decade** — noticed that in 1960, for instance, there were 24 African countries in which 25% or less children of an age group were at school, 20 more countries in which the enrollment was between 25% and 50% and only 9 African countries where the attendance rose above 50%. The number of African children receiving higher education constituted under 1%.

Education is not just its "content" — skills in adding accounts or assembling a tractor engine (though these are in themselves valuable). As Mydral has commented: "The purpose of education is to rationalise attitudes as well as to impart knowledge and skills". But blind faith that capital investment in education will by mere increase automatically bring about higher levels of living is naive. The careful planning that is required must take into consideration employment opportunities, raw materials that can be developed and markets. Otherwise one may find oneself producing a type of secondary school "arts graduate" who is nearly unemployable and who congregates around urban centres creating in his discontent an increasing political problem.

Written lucidly, without self-conscious jargon, Dr. Pickett's article is informed, evidential and constructive Furthermore it is fairly typical of the standard and tone of the rest of this stimulating book.

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