

## 'A MANPOWER STRATEGY FOR ETHIOPIA'

A summary of the booklet  
by Eli Ginzberg and Herbert A. Smith  
*Ray T. Wilcox*

In 1966, Ginzberg and Smith were employed by USAID to sift information about the requirements and availability of trained manpower in Ethiopia and to make recommendations based upon a critical analysis of the data in the light of present conditions and trends. This information was requested primarily to assist the Haile Sellassie I University in determining the rate and direction of its expansion.

The authors are quick to point out that "the art and science of economic planning is simply too primitive to justify detailed derivations unless they are undertaken for the purpose of establishing parameters against which to check a series of alternative calculations." And yet they justify their study by the observation that while "manpower planning may be treacherous, how can we proceed without it?"

The authors considered three factors as a background for their more sophisticated analysis: (1) the basic geographic, climatic, and historical forces that have helped to shape Ethiopia, (2) the significant changes that have occurred since Liberation which have a direct bearing on the development and utilization of Ethiopia's human resources, and (3) certain key data about the changing economy.

The authors predict that it is likely that by the end of the current century, three-quarters of Ethiopia's labor force will still be in agriculture and that the more dynamic sector of industry, building, and non-agricultural laborers, which today accounts for six per cent of the total labor force, will have risen to only ten per cent. The increase predicted for professional, and clerical workers is from the very low seven-tenths of one per cent today to over two per cent; and a corresponding rise in sales and commercial workers from 2.3 per cent today to 4.6 per cent. However, the authors foresee the expansion of the total labor force from roughly the seven million today to somewhere between fifteen and seventeen million at the end of the century, a sizeable net increase which would imply a substantially enlarged absolute demand for trained manpower.

The following recommendations have been made by the authors as a result of their analysis:

1. **More money should be invested in agriculture** to improve its infrastructure, such as roads and dams, new capital inputs in the form of fertilizer, improved seed and stock, and machinery, and more expert knowledge about the inherent qualities of the soil and the ways of cultivating the land. Although two-thirds of the gross national product originates in agriculture, very little of the governments' past and current expenditures have been invested in agriculture.

2. **A major effort should be made to control malaria and to build roads to the virgin lands in the south.** The extent and speed with which Ethiopia succeeds in expanding its agricultural output may be more closely linked with the settlement of these lands than with an increase in the productivity of the plateau lands.

3. The level of general literacy for the entire country should be raised as quickly as funds and resources permit.

4. Elementary education should be expanded as rapidly as possible. The major keys to development of the whole economy lie in altering the conditions of rural life. If agriculture is to be improved, if debilitating diseases are to be brought under at least partial control, if isolated villages are to be linked with small towns, if people are to learn about personal hygiene and sanitation, if a reasonable level of literacy is to be achieved—in short if they are slowly to develop a new outlook for themselves, their children, and the future, they must have the opportunity for at least an elementary school education. There can be no significant gains in the money economy without simultaneous educational revolution which will provide the foundation and support for these and other changes. The only prospect for a substantial rise in general literacy hinges on the expansion of the school system in rural areas. No matter what additional gains are made in the urban areas, the literacy level for the population as a whole can rise above its present five to seven per cent level only through the successful penetration of education into the countryside. Also, only if the first grades are enlarged will the numbers of qualified entrants to the University be increased.

5. The Government should overlook no resource in strengthening elementary education. There may be more potentiality in Church and Priest's schools, for example, than has yet been considered. A profitable approach might be the upgrading of the teaching staffs of the Church establishment.

6. The curriculum of the elementary school must deal primarily with applications to agriculture and the environment of rural life. In addition, it should attempt to teach the foundations for further learning, primarily in English and mathematics. The elementary school must make a significant contribution to raising the levels of health and sanitation as well as agricultural productivity; otherwise it will have failed in its major task.

7. The curricula of the junior and senior high schools must relate more directly to the needs of agriculture and the activities closely related to agriculture. No government of any developing country can hope to absorb the large numbers of partially educated who would hope to flee from the countryside. A high proportion of students must be encouraged to return to the farm.

8. Attention should be given to rapidly increasing the supply of trained teachers for the secondary schools. The improvement in the quality of teaching in the elementary schools will increase substantially the numbers of students knocking on the door of the junior and senior high schools. There is little or no prospect that the present training structure for preparing secondary school teachers is adequate to the task. One hopeful possibility is that increasing numbers of liberal arts students can be enticed into teaching, since they may not find jobs in governmental agencies as readily as they have in the past. There are indications that the government has begun to be more selective, because of growing budgetary stringency, tension between the older, more highly placed non-college bureaucrats and the newcomers, and the lack of directly usable skills among the newcomers.

9. Consideration should be given to the early establishment of several additional teacher training institutions, especially in provinces which today lack such facilities. An effort should be made to have the U.S. Peace Corps contribute what more it can the interim staffing of these new schools.

10. The high level of teacher turnover should be greatly reduced. Some of the reasons prompting teachers to leave their jobs are the following: administrative

inefficiency, including delays in receiving their salaries; unprofessional working conditions; lack of opportunity for self-improvement; geographic isolation; low prestige of teachers; adverse living conditions, and low salaries.

11. Attention should be given to training a greater number of competent administrators for the school system. There are too many ultra-conservative and poorly qualified persons who are serving as directors and other administrators, with a consequent lessening of rapport and morale among the teachers. Many innovations and needed improvements are short-circuited by these men, and leadership is sadly lacking.

12. The Ministry of Education should develop a career system for teachers, together with firm commitments to put it into effect. Monetary and other incentives should be given to attract teachers to hardship posts, salary increments should be scheduled for all teachers upon demonstration of competence, and young teachers should know that they will be rotated to more favorable locations after a stipulated period of time.

13. The present modest efforts of the government in providing communities with building materials, if the community assumes the responsibility of erecting a school, should become firmly established as a policy as quickly as possible. It is also suggested that priority be given to those communities which are willing to take on some part of the expenses involved in the operation of the new school.

14. The Government should give much more consideration to the potentialities of using radio as an instrument of adult instruction.

15. Health services should be rapidly expanded. There are a great many diseases which take heavy tolls: malaria, intestinal diseases, trachoma, venereal diseases, tuberculosis, nutritional diseases are but a few on a long list that result in excessive mortality and morbidity and a general lowering of physical and mental well-being. The supply of potential candidates for the new medical school is very thin and in any case it takes time to bring a new school into full operation. The system of nurses' training rests on a weak foundation. It lies substantially in the private domain and the responsible groups are hard pressed to find the resources to expand. The Public Health College of the University at Gondar has produced only a modest number of health officers, community nurses, and sanitarians.

16. The ESLC examination should be retained as a screening mechanism by the University until a more adequate instrument has been designed and tested. There are good reasons, however, to supplement it with another examination which could attest to the fact that the student has satisfactorily completed the twelfth grade whether or not he has the qualifications for college entrance.

17. The present attrition rate at the University is so distressingly high that special efforts should be made to reduce it if the University's resources and the nation's manpower are not to be wasted. Some reduction in attrition can undoubtedly be achieved by special efforts to remedy some weaknesses in student preparation in the summer before they begin their studies and by additional efforts during their freshman year. Another clearly desirable approach would be to strengthen the level of instruction in secondary schools but it is unlikely that this step can be taken while competent teachers will continue to be in very short supply. Yet in the face of the very high attrition figures, there is a strong presumption in favour of the University's restricting its intake of students during the next few years in spite of the increased numbers who will probably qualify under the ESLC and other provisions.

18. To up-grade the student body of the University, only 150 students per year should be admitted as a net increase, and these should be the very best of the applicants.

19. The University should refrain from establishing any new schools or major departments in the near future. If particular specialists cannot be trained in Ethiopia under this policy, they should be trained abroad.

20. The University should make an early effort to consolidate its courses. An examination of the University catalogue reveals a proliferation of courses which is further confirmed by a study of enrollment data by course.

21. The University should try to attract and hold for longer periods of time men of recognized academic competence. A smaller staff of able people who serve for longer periods is definitely to be preferred to a larger, more heterogeneous group with short periods of service.

22. Colleges should stress both the general and specialized aspects of education. It is hoped that the engineering student will learn something more than engineering, and so on.

23. Each department should provide a curriculum which is analytically oriented and where the students must demonstrate that they can think and solve problems. The most important challenge that the University faces is to establish and maintain standards which will insure that all of its students demonstrate the ability to deal analytically with problems in their chosen fields.

24. The University should aim to allow maximum freedom of choice to the student. However, this recommendation assumes that strong guidance and counseling services will be made available to the student. Young people differ in interests and capacities; they cannot be treated as homogeneous units. The distribution of students among the various departments and faculties should be determined by the students themselves.

25. The responsible University officials must keep a close and continuing contact with the principal employers in Ethiopia, which obviously must include the Government.

26. The Government should back off from the discriminatory bonding of students of education just as quickly and completely as possible.

27. The Government should not pay all the costs for students admitted to the University. Instead, it should require the students to obtain loans for some part of their collegiate expenses. Once the students begin to earn a salary, the period of payback should be long enough so it will not impoverish the young graduates but it should not be stretched out beyond a decade or so. Also, special consideration might be offered to those who are willing to teach for a stipulated number of years, particularly in outlying areas.

28. Every reasonable effort should be made to broaden the scope of the University programs by offering extension courses in the major centers and by adding to the courses as conditions permit. Where opportunities to enter the University have been exceedingly limited, the availability of another route into higher education is very important.

29. A two-year diploma course for agricultural technicians should be developed at Alemaya, especially in view of the absorptive capacity of the nation for more agricultural specialists.

30. Consideration should be given to establishing a closer relation between Alemaya and the Teacher Training Institute at Harar with an aim of expanding the Institute or developing a junior college, or both. The substantial educational plant at Alemaya

must be reorganized so that it can make a larger contribution to the output of trained manpower, particularly in light of the teacher shortages.

31. There should be consideration given by the Government to substantially reducing the number of students who are sent abroad for foreign study. Often the students are more interested in personal aggrandizement than in their possible contribution to the economy and society in Ethiopia. In any event, the Government should act to tighten controls over those who go abroad, for how long they go, and for what types of study.

32. Instead of sending Ethiopians abroad for training, it might be more practical in a considerable number of cases, to reverse the procedure and bring one or more competent foreigners to Ethiopia for a sufficiently long period so they might help upgrade partially trained Ethiopians. When a man goes abroad he must make two radical adjustments, one to the new environment, and later, when he returns home, to adapting what he has learned to Ethiopia.

33. The Ethiopian Government should continue to expand its role as the principal agent responsible for the expansion of the modern sector. The Government is forced to occupy this position because the small domestic market, the high costs of transportation and power, and the scarcity of skilled labor all restrict the prospects for profitable, private investment in Ethiopia at the present and for the foreseeable future. Consequently, since the private sector will continue to grow at a very modest rate, the single most important determinant of the future demand for trained manpower will be the rate of growth in government expenditures.

34. An effort should be made to more effectively utilize the college graduates in governmental service. Some of the present difficulties which militate against effective utilization are the following: The Governmental department may be short of funds and therefore unable to launch or carry through programs to which the college-trained people could make a contribution. Because of the delicate political balances that must be maintained, many senior officials are loath to delegate very much responsibility to the younger staff members and, consequently, many young people are left for long periods of time with no specific assignment or with assignments which have little significance and less urgency. There must be more attention given by responsible government officials to effective utilization of scarce manpower. Such attention will usually be more profitable than actually increasing the supply.

35. Senior staff members should not be shifted so frequently among the different ministries. Such instability at the top carries a heavy price for the entire organization.

36. Junior staff members should be freer to move to new positions to assure a more effective utilization of the newer men. Despite the relatively frequent changes at the top, current policies look with disfavor upon mobility at the bottom. A man in a lower position can leave only with the express consent of his supervisor, and because the supervisor frequently believes that turnover of his staff will be interpreted as failure on his part, he is usually loath to grant this permission.

37. When considering new projects for Ethiopia, the Government must budget out each program as a whole—not only in terms of capital requirements and materials but also in terms of needed skills. When it is clear that the market does not already have an adequate supply of skills, the planning must include provision for importing, training, and upgrading.

38. All contracts with foreigners authorizing them to work in the country should include a commitment that they will also be required to train an optimal number of Ethiopians as part of their obligation.

39. Early action should be taken to make automatic salary increases independent of the possession of higher degrees, the master's or the doctorate, as is the current practice. Salary scales should be developed for positions requiring different levels of complexity and responsibility. It is the level of work that should determine the wage, not the level of a man's educational background.

40. When the shift from tying wages to educational accomplishment is taken, great care will have to be exercised by the responsible agencies to insure that selection and promotion are based on merit. The performance of individuals in government will continue to be less than effective unless a system is introduced which rewards persons on the basis of their performance.

41. The extremely low salaries for provincial governors and for certain other governmental officials should be increased. The governmental wage scale for these positions is grossly out of line with the opportunities in related fields, thereby discouraging good men from seeking or staying in these positions and perpetuating graft and other unfortunate practices whereby these men can augment their low salaries. It would be better to have fewer officials, with ability and integrity, if a reduction is necessary because of budgetary considerations, than a larger number of mediocre ones who cannot support themselves on their salaries.

42. Steps should be taken to overcome the great difficulties faced by the rural areas in attracting and holding trained people. It would help if service in the countryside were a prerequisite to advanced placement in the cities. Private groups are managing to include a rotation of men from less to more desirable locations and they encounter much less difficulty in assigning new members of their organizations to work in the rural areas. Government should follow these examples.

43. Some attention should be given to ways of employing the rural laborers. A high proportion of the rural population suffers from under-employment in addition to unemployment. Labor which is not used means that goods and services are not produced which could enrich all the members of the nation.

44. The Government should establish a strong Manpower Resources Division in the office of the Minister of National Community Development. A sound mechanism for manpower policy determination can make a significant and on-going contribution to economic development, and, more important, to improving the quality of life of the entire citizenry.