POTENTIALS AND CAUTIONS IN DEVELOPING
PROGRAMS IN AFRICA

by Helen G. Canoyer*

Introduction

I was asked by the committee which planned this excellent conference to speak on the subject, "Potentials and Concerns in Developing Programs in Africa." I do not feel qualified to speak on such a broad topic. I therefore would like to narrow it to Ghana, which is the only African country where we have a project under way. It is, of course, possible to apply a good many of the statements which I shall make regarding Ghana, to other sub-Sahara, English-speaking, African countries. However, each of the African countries has unique characteristics and therefore I would be more comfortable were I to address myself to the topic "Potentials and Cautions in Developing Programs in Ghana."

Background

First of all I should like to give you some background on Ghana as a country, and then on our own project. Ghana has a long educational tradition. European traders and missionary groups established schools in the coastal settlements as long ago as the 17th century. Other educators began working in the first half of the 19th century under the auspices of other missionary groups. Students of the early days in Ghana point out that although British officials were interested in education at the start, it was not until Great Britain formally annexed the Gold Coast (as Ghana was called at that time) in 1874, that this interest became a formal one. The first education ordinance was drawn up in 1882, and this provided for a greater degree of uniformity than had hitherto existed in the management of mission schools. It established a system of government financial assistance, and it provided for inspection of schools to insure compliance with government standards. It is entirely possible that Ghana leads all of the other African countries in its long established interest in education.

Some scholars indicate that there was early recognition by Great Britain that colonies might eventually have some sort of home rule and that this dictated Great Britain's policy in Ghana at an earlier date than that of any other colonial power in Africa. British educational policy nonetheless did not think to educate an African ruling class. The British recognized the chiefs as the ruling class. The efficacy of the chief rested on not bringing him too far, or at least not too rapidly into the modern world. However, once education was introduced into a colonial territory, the process could not be stopped or contained. Even early in the period of British rule there were talented Africans who became truly.

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educated and who appeared to be equally at home in both worlds -- the western
and their own indigenous culture. It was a very small group, of course, and
it was intended to be upper class and aristocratic with ties of kinship to the
ruling chief. These elite chose occupations in commerce and the liberal pro-
fessions, especially law.

These educated Africans gradually came to harbor distinct political ambitions
of their own. They wanted to supplant the chiefs in substance if not in form
and to become the main reliance of the colonial administration and perhaps
eventually to win some degree of home rule.

However, in the 1920's a non-upper class educated and semi-educated
group began to take form. This group was composed mostly of young men
with primary and sometimes middle school education who had gotten far enough
into the modern world to have a sense of their inadequate preparation for it
and of the opportunities that at that time were beyond their grasp. They felt
alienated from their own traditional life and they regarded as backward and too
limiting the role of the "educated." It was this new group with its new vexations
and attitudes which first began to think of a future for their country, radically
different from the past. It was in this group that the idea of African nationalism
began to take shape.

However, historians maintain that it was to the older group that Nkrumah
looked when he returned from London to the Gold Coast in 1947 as secretary
and political organizer. But once Nkrumah was back he quickly realized that
the old leaders were too conservative for him to use for his purposes and
he turned to the young, less well-educated group and built up his personal
following among these young men. This group is called the Convention People's
Party or CPP. There is no question but that this party has enthusiasm for education.
Ghanaian nationalism was in part a revolt for education, and the impressive
progress that has been made in this field testifies both to the genuineness of
the popular demand and to the government's determination to meet that demand.

These credits for progress in educational development should properly be
shared, however, by the present government and its colonial predecessor.
Under the British rule, a tenure plan for education development was introduced
as early as 1946. Beginning in 1951 at the start of the transition to independence,
African political leaders shared power and responsibility and made substantial
contributions to the formulation of the Accellerated Development Plan for
Education. Between the years 1951 and 1959, Ghana spent almost 15 per cent
of its total development expenditure on education, which was second only to
its expenditure on communication. During that period enrollment in all educational
institutions increased almost three-fold -- from 281,000 to 661,000; attendance
in primary, middle, and secondary schools was considerably more than doubled;
enrollment in trade and technical schools increased almost five times, and in
teacher-training colleges considerably more than two times. Ghana acquired
three university colleges after 1948. They are the University of Ghana at Legon
in Accra, the Kwame-Nkrumah University of Science and Technology at Kumasi,
and the University College of Cape Coast. At the other end of the spectrum,
mass-education campaigns have brought literacy to thousands of adults outside the scope of the regular school system. ¹

The Central Government today remains responsible for education. The Ministry of Education is the main government agency and it determines educational policy, sets and enforces curricular and teaching standards, and administers grants to approved schools. The ministry's executive agents in the field are the regional and district education officers who supervise the schools in the administrative region and districts into which the country is divided. However, simultaneously, there are strong de-centralizing trends that work in the day-to-day operations. For example, practically all schools are managed by local authorities, such as local or urban councils, missionary groups or private organizations, or even individuals. All government primary and middle schools were transferred to local authorities in 1956 and the government's policy has been to place increasing responsibility on these local agencies for the educational development of the schools. Capital expenditure on primary and middle schools, for example, is a local matter except in northern regions. Many local authorities face serious financial problems in the educational fields. ²

I think also I should mention that whenever one goes into a country where the British system has been used it is necessary to inform oneself as to what the various education terms mean. The primary schools, for example, offer a six-year course for students of approximately six to 12 years of age. Most primary schools are co-educational. The pupils who successfully complete the primary course and want further schooling go on to what is called the middle school. The middle school is for four years. Most pupils are from 12 to 15 years of age. A student must take two of the four years in order to go on to higher education.

Higher education in Ghana includes secondary grammar or secondary technical schools. A student may study in these schools after two, three or four years in the middle school. However, for university work the student is required to stay for an extra period of two years in higher education schools.

Now I would like to give you a little background on how we happened to become involved in a project in Ghana. This was an outgrowth of my service for the State Department in the spring of 1961, when I joined a group of women educators from the United States to conduct two workshops—one in East Africa and one in West Africa—for African women school teachers on the subject, "Problems of Education of African Women and Girls." The western workshop was held in Nigeria on the Ibadan University College campus; the eastern one was held on the Royal College Campus in Nairobi, Kenya.

²Ibid, page 333.
To these workshops came women educators as delegates from 14 sub-Saharan, English-speaking African countries. At the conclusion of the two workshops, at the request of the State Department, we recommended 20 of the 37 workshop participants who would be invited to the United States for a three-month, all-expense paid study tour of education in the United States. One of the persons whom we recommended and who came was Miss Alberta Addo, who, at that time, was acting head of all women's education in Ghana and who continues in her permanent position in charge of domestic science subjects in primary and middle schools. While Miss Addo was in the United States she become impressed with the potentiality of United States home economics in Ghana. Upon her return home, she asked me to assist them in planning an experimental diploma course at Winneba Teacher Training College, which is 30 miles west of Accra. After a good deal of consideration of the subject and correspondence, we agreed to be of assistance to the extent that available funds and facilities permitted.

Very shortly after we became formally involved in the plans for this program, we were convinced that the only justification for continuing to devote the tremendous amount of time and energy this project required would be if there was evidence that it might lead to the establishment of a university-level degree program in home economics. We were given encouragement by the Ghanaians to work with them in the development of such a program.

At no time has this project had adequate financial support. The only way we could provide professional assistance by our faculty members in Ghana was by attracting those persons who were to be on sabbatical leaves and who received Fulbright fellowships for this purpose. Dr. Kathleen Rhodes was the first full time advisor at Winneba. Dr. Gwendolyn Newkirk and Dr. Harold Feldman have been there during the past year. Dr. Feldman is a professor in our Department of Child Development and Family Relationships and Dr. Newkirk has a Ph. D. from our Department of Home Economics Education and is on leave from her position as Head of Home Economics at North Carolina College, Durham. She will remain in Ghana a second year.

Cautions

From our experience in developing a program in Ghana, these cautions can be expressed:

1. **North American assistance should be wanted and requested by the country.** The request should be supported by not only the minister of education, but also by the officials of the schools or the universities with which you will work. These requirements were met by Ghana with the exception that the principal of Winneba Training Colleges had not been officially involved during the development of the agreement which was drawn up between Cornell University and the Ministry of Education in Ghana. This might well have created problems. It did not because of the very fine persons involved. But this is an example of not being sufficiently acquainted with the official organizational structure to foresee that this should have been done.
2. **The faculty of your college must be interested in such a project.** Also, hopefully, some members should be actually enthusiastic. It is difficult, if not impossible, for a college or school to be of first rate assistance in Africa if only the dean and/or the director and/or one or two faculty members support the project.

3. **The project should not jeopardize your own undergraduate or graduate program.** Under the best of circumstances it should contribute to and be a recipient of the graduate program. Our faculty discussed the project thoroughly and went on record in favor of it, but they were adamant that we should not weaken our own "reason for existence" -- that is, to educate to the best of our ability the undergraduate and graduate students in our own college.

4. **The project should include considerable research, both in the African country and in your own institution.** In the African country, the first job should be to collect the results of research already done and to analyze those results to find out what sort of program is needed. Nothing works by simple transplantation, as AID Director David Bell has said. He points out that assisting in the educational development in a rapidly developing country is a job of invention or at least, major adaptation -- a far more complicated and difficult job than simple transplantation. What is needed are institutions fitted to the history, the culture, and the values of the people of those countries. Research can go a long way toward providing a faculty with knowledge of the history, the culture, and the values of the people of the country.

Then it is necessary to undertake, along with the educational program, needed additional research. We have tried to do this. We have collected data on the family background of students at Winneba and their academic background. Attitude tests and pretests in food and nutrition and textiles and clothing have been administered. Information has been collected on attitudes and knowledge of school children in relation to food and health habits, and employment choices. These are now being analyzed. Dr. Feldman has completed his research report entitled, "The Ghanaian Family in Transition." Although I have not seen it I am sure that it will add greatly to our knowledge of the needs of the Ghanaian student in the area of home economics.

Also some research should be conducted concurrently in your own institution. A basic principle of any project in developing countries should be that the object is not only to give but also to learn.

I should like to quote from the publication, "AID and the Universities:"

If the university is to function abroad as it does at home then it will include research as a normal part of its contract activity. And wherever possible both research and consultant work will be linked to various forms of teaching.3

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5. The project should be adequately funded. I could give you a good many examples of our frustrations due to the inadequacy of funds for our project. Times does not permit me to do this. All I can say is to assure you that all of us connected with this project would be a good deal happier if we had adequate money to do those things we believed needed to be done. The money which has been available has come from various sources, international, federal (both from Ghana and the United States), state, professional and philanthropic groups, and voluntary contributions from our home demonstration membership and other friends.

6. The best arrangement is a university to university agreement. This is more productive of results than a college to college, or African government to college or some other agreement between sub-divisions of the university.

7. All possible circumstances should be anticipated and covered in an acceptable (to both parties) written and signed agreement. The importance of written and signed statements to most Africans is tremendous. It even applies to the individual. I am reminded of a story told to us by a workshop participant from Southern Rhodesia when she was at the college in 1961. She is married, has a large family, and has taught every year of her married life. She said that when she wanted to marry, her father insisted that the husband-to-be sign an agreement that his wife would be permitted to teach whenever she wanted to during her married life. She said she had to pull out this agreement only twice, but each time she has done so, her husband has withdrawn his objections to her teaching. This is much more difficult for a married couple in Africa than in the United States because often an African government will send the husband to one part of the country to teach and the wife to another part.

Even if you have considered all the circumstances which you can anticipate before you become involved in a project (not a part of a formally funded contract) in Africa, you are bound to miss some things which may cause problems. We learned this by experience. I suspect that there are very few persons who could anticipate all eventualities. But the point I am making is that it is important to take time to consider what might happen and try to cover those possibilities in the written agreement.

8. It is not possible to avoid the influence of the political situation. Our program is entirely educational and we have been advised by persons sophisticated in the area of assisting African countries to remain in Ghana until we are asked to leave. Nevertheless, it appeared to us in early June, before Dr. Kathleen Rhodes undertook her recent assignment in Ghana, that unless the government evidenced willingness to permit academic freedom in the development of programs, etc. in the universities and other schools, it would be wiser for us to terminate our present program at the end of the African school year, 1965-66, and wait until the educational climate was more encouraging before we agreed to assist in further development of a home economics degree program at the university level. However, upon Dr. Rhodes' return we learned that the Ghana Ministry of Education enthusiastically supports a university level degree program and that there is every evidence that the university is determined to start a degree program.
Educational programs can be developed and accepted much more rapidly in Ghana than is usually true in the United States. The new nations in Africa (as well as in South America and Asia, I am told).

...are not just determined but almost irrationally determined to accomplish over night the economic, social, and educational progress that has been achieved in Europe and in the United States in 200 years since the Industrial Revolution. In such a climate it is possible to achieve more and faster than it would be in another kind of climate. 4

Economic and other factors may cause unexpected delays in the development of programs in schools and colleges. Frederick Harbison, director of the Industrial Relations Section, Princeton University, has stated:

It is poor policy for any university in America to undertake a project in an underdeveloped country without thoroughly examining the totality of needs in the country and appraising the critical contributions which it may be able to make. 5

Home economics should certainly do more of this. We should obtain and evaluate all the indicators of the socio-economic and physical health of the country about which we are concerned. To take the measure of underdeveloped countries is difficult and involves consideration of many factors. Harbison states that one should pay attention to non-economic facts in such evaluations. I agree. However, our experience in Ghana indicates a significant relationship between the economic health of a country and its educational advancement. The need for money for schools, salaries for teachers, scholarships for students at universities and at teacher's colleges, as well as scholarships for students who go abroad for graduate work is intimately related to the fact that Ghana is having great money trouble at the present time. This is a significant factor with respect to the potential development of a program at the university level in home economics.

Those of us in education have perhaps the central role to play in assisting the newly developing nations in this age of revolution of rising aspirations of the people. In considering the contribution which American education can make, it is important to understand, according to students of Africa, the problems of the newly developing countries and the critical choices which they must make. Unless we do have some understanding of what they face, we may give aid that is harmful rather than beneficial, and in some instances that is exactly

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4From foreign policy briefs of Dept. of State, Vol. XIV, No. 24, June 7, 1965; statement by David E. Bell, administrator of the Agency for International Development.

what is being done. These newly developing countries are aware of the
importance of education for their national development. Their aspirations
are very high, and this is especially true in Ghana. But in order to speed
the economic growth in a race with unemployment and population growth,
most countries have formulated very ambitious development plans. This is
ture in Ghana; this includes roads, ports, dams, factories, schools, etc.
In addition, most west African countries depend on one or two products for
export. Ghana has but one, cocoa, and the world market price for this product
has dropped drastically.

Because many African countries have very ambitious plans for development,
competition for external aid is keen and such aid becomes more and more difficult
to get. With ambitious development plans and lack of funds to carry them out,
the revolution of rising aspirations may turn into a revolution of frustration,
disappointment, and rising resentment. Ghana, for example, is having great
difficulty getting adequate outside financial support. This is one of the problems
which we have had uppermost in our mind as we consider the future of our project.

It is important that we keep in mind and try to understand the critical
choices which developing nations must make. I shall mention only the ones
discussed by Harbison which have had a bearing on our project.

1. The allocation of educational opportunity.

"In Africa the opportunities to acquire higher education are scarce and the
rewards to them who complete a university education are great. But, most
Africans must be supported in universities at government expense. Thus, the
government in effect allocates opportunities for higher education."\(^6\)

Moreover, in awarding scholarships, etc., the government has very important
choices to make - whether it will be on the basis of intellectual capacity or
the manpower needs of the country, or on the basis of regional, tribal, and
political consideration, or on a combination of these."\(^7\)

2. Opportunities for study abroad provided by foreign donors.

"Here the difficult policy issues arise, (such as,) should students be free
to accept offers for study abroad without approval of their home government, or
should they be required to have prior consent. If prior consent is to be required,
what should be the criteria for permission to study abroad?"\(^8\)

\(^6\)Frederick Harbison, "Problems of Developing Higher Education in Newly
Developing Nations," chapter in "Education and the Modernizing of Nations:
Summary of Proceedings of a Conference Sponsored by the Commission on
International Education of the American Council on Education," Wayne
State University, September 1964, pp. 20-21.

\(^7\)Ibid, p. 21.

\(^8\)Ibid, p. 22.
The Nigerian Ambassador to the United Nations, Chief Adebo, spoke on the Cornell campus this year. In answer to a question from the audience following his prepared remarks, he stated that Nigeria and most of the western African countries want their students to go to many different countries for graduate education; he mentioned Russia, the United States, Great Britain, and China. He concluded a rather long discussion by saying that the Africans are convinced that their students will obtain the best from these various kinds of education and that when they get home will be able to meld them into a philosophy which will work for the native country. This appears difficult for many United States citizens to understand and accept.

3. The concept of the role of the university.

"At one extreme the universities may play a very narrow role, limiting themselves to university-level education at high standard,"9 which has been true in the past, or to prepare students for employment rather than to continuing education and to basic research.

"Or they may extend their sphere of influence downward and outward to encompass intermediate education, applied research, extension services, and adult education."10 Here is where Ghana is in the midst of making a decision.

Sir Eric Ashby makes a very cogent comment on this point in his book, African Universities and Western Tradition.11 In essence he says that after all, an African country must build the kind of an educational system that suits its own needs and that those of us in developed countries may be quite unhappy at times with how this educational system is being built. However, we cannot know how well the Africans are building or how well the final result will serve their needs.

As efforts are made to incorporate home economics in university programs in developing countries, and certainly in Ghana, assistance is needed from home economists who: (a) understand the European educational systems, after which the universities of these emerging countries have been patterned; and (b) can think creatively about the problems of developing home economics curricula that are appropriate for such systems. Systematic data gathering in the host country provides sound bases for curriculum planning. This has been a significant part of our Cornell-Ghana Project.

Traditionally the women of Ghana are leaders -- socially, economically, and politically. They are determinedly persuasive. We are convinced that whatever success our project has had is in large measure due to the support of these powerful women both in government and education positions and on community activities.

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9Ibid. p. 22.
10Ibid. p. 22.
There is great enthusiasm for home economics in teachers colleges and considerable support of a degree program at the university level in Ghana. For the first time a well attended conference on home science in Ghana was held in the spring of 1964 in which a number of our faculty members participated and which I had the privilege of keynoting. Also a Ghana Home Economics Association was organized this spring as an outgrowth of that conference.

Conclusion

I conclude with the following quotation:

The character and the outlook of the new African will be shaped in the early years of independence. Assistance from the United States and other developed nations cannot guarantee the emergence of stable, democratic nations moving towards self-support, but without genuine free world interest and help, these nations under great economic and social pressures are more likely to turn to extremist solutions for their problems, with far-reaching, irreversible implications for Africa and for the world.¹²