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CHANGING TRENDS IN TRAINING

Proposed by the Government of New Zealand

New Zealand is a small country and even in times of affluence the resources that can be directed towards helping developing countries are fairly small. In health and related fields it is felt that these limited resources are best used in training or in the export of professional and technical expertise.

Arrangements for training people from abroad in New Zealand are handled by a small section of the head office of the Department of Health in liaison with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and increasing concern is being felt that training programmes are not as effective as they could, and should, be.

Training must be relevant and appropriate to the work trainees will be doing on their return to their own countries. This is a simple and obvious concept but it can be difficult to achieve, implying as it does:

- (1) that the trainees have jobs to return to and that they are able to implement at least part of what they have learned;
- (2) that there is the necessary administrative and staff structure, and equipment, for them to work to some purpose; and
- (3) that there is a need for the additional knowledge and expertise that they will hopefully have acquired.

To achieve better standards along these lines two exercises need to be carried out, namely assessment and evaluation. It is felt that both the country of training and the developing country have obligations in these areas and at present neither is really fulfilling them.

1. ASSESSMENT

The priorities for training must be set by the developing country in accordance with its needs. Similarly it must be responsible for ensuring that the trainee has an appropriate post to return to, and the necessary tools to do the job. However, the country of study must be able to relate these parameters to its own training capacity and if this is not done then irrelevant training can result, e.g. laboratory technologists being trained in automated procedures not available in their own countries. It is therefore essential that when applications for training are made, a complete knowledge of the level of competence of the candidate be provided along with a clearly defined set of objectives for his training. It is suggested that most application forms do not provide for the completion of this information or the information is not necessarily forthcoming.

2. EVALUATION

It is appreciated that evaluation is a difficult exercise to undertake in the field of health, but it must be done. The benefits of training are not always immediately evident and the standard reports on returning home are of limited value. They also tend not to be critical for fear of causing offence. There are positive and negative aspects to performance and these should be communicated to the country of training in an objective way about one to two years later. It is also necessary that evaluation visits be made by appropriate persons to developing countries on a regular basis.

The concerns mentioned apply to training in New Zealand; it must be said that some of the problems are lessened when the training is undertaken in the candidate's region, or an appropriate third country. It is New Zealand's policy to encourage these forms of training where possible.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Regional Director be asked to convene a regional or sub-regional workshop to view present procedures for training in health and health related disciplines and, where practicable, to recommend more effective coordination and evaluation.