Chapter 12

THE OECD MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL PROJECT

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I. INTRODUCTION

It has become increasingly recognized in recent years that policy for human resources development should form an integral part of measures to effect economic and social change. The different elements of human resources policy (formal education, adult education, training, placement, information) should fit into the broader pattern of economic and social policies necessary for national advancement.

The different strands of development policy are closely enmeshed and any attempt to work out requirements for one major element in national progress must inevitably raise the question of whether the other economic and social preconditions for development have been adequately taken care of. For example, in newly developing countries it would seem that a sharp increase in agricultural production is vital in order to permit increased domestic savings and obtain the larger amounts of foreign exchange (more exports and less imports) needed for industrialization. Yet without the necessary measures to create the economic, technical and social conditions for increased agricultural output the rate of growth of savings, industrialization and of total output may be inadequate and may not exceed population growth. It may also be the case that, unless the appropriate fiscal policies are pursued, an increase in total output in a country is used to increase consumption rather than investment. Those examples, and there are many more, indicate the advantages to be derived from comprehensive national planning if the conditions for the effective implementation of plans, with national enthusiasm and understanding combined with competent administrative machinery, can be realized.

Ideally, therefore, educational objectives should form part of a
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balanced series of objectives for national development, in which other social investments such as health or housing are linked with the achievement of a programme of productive investment in agriculture, industry and services. This would imply that the appropriate division of the national product between consumption and investment can be made. But if there are no clearly charted long-term national objectives and shorter term economic plans, and political and social preconditions for national development seem clearly inadequate, is it nevertheless useful to establish a policy framework for the long-term development of education and to follow this up by taking the practical steps to draw up and implement educational plans?

A positive answer would seem to follow from three main considerations. Firstly, with increasing population, and growing prestige for education and the social status which goes with it, the number of children requiring to be educated will increase. It is necessary to provide school buildings, teachers, equipment and the necessary total amount of money to ensure that the growth of school population is adequately received. Secondly, an improved educational system can itself constitute an important step in the direction of national advancement. Even in the absence of an overall plan, it is essential that the distribution of education as between levels, between scientific and technical and other types of education, should be worked out so as to render the maximum services to the country and to the children themselves.

This means taking reasonable account of and stimulating technical progress. It is of little use producing city unemployed, white-collared graduates at the different levels if what is going to count is the intelligent contribution of young people to production. Nor is it useful to produce an excess of university graduates when graduates of technical schools are in greatest demand. This is not an argument against humanist education; it is an argument for balance in the creation of educational facilities in the light of the major imperative of economic growth. Nor should one underestimate the many difficulties, social, administrative, educational and parental, involved in achieving balance in education as a contribution to and stimulus of economic growth; a well-founded approach to the growth of the educational system is essential to cope with these. Thirdly, education is a relatively significant item in national budgets and there are advantages in presenting to governments a view of the necessary trend and distribution of educational expenditures over the longer term, in which objectives following from the best available assessment of the economic, fiscal and social connections of education are set out.