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Higher Education in the Dominican Republic
(June 20, 1969)

I. Background

One of the greatest changes now occurring in this country is the extremely rapid increase in university enrollments. Just prior to the civil disturbances, there were 5,495 students. This past year the figure had risen to over 11,000, and this year will, perhaps, reach 14,500. Since there is a competition in student numbers among the universities, the enrollment figures may be somewhat exaggerated, however.

Quantity-wise higher education is making great strides, but the important considerations are: whether the quality is also improving or under the accelerated growth at least keeping even, and are the students being trained in those areas most significant to national development.

It is very difficult to measure the effectiveness of higher education prior to this period. Certainly the one university, UASD, during that period did not prosper under Trujillo, but even so, perhaps, was about average for the public universities in small Latin American countries which have had somewhat similar histories. The turmoil and changes of government from the fall of Trujillo to the Balaguer government were reflected in major upsets in the university. The one in the fall of 1965 resulted in a faculty split in the UASD which led to the founding of the private institution, UNPHU, the next year.

The founding of the other institutions, UCMH, in 1962, IES (junior college) in 1965, and UNPHU in 1966 led to a competition which, at least in part, is healthy and pushes each school to improve its program and educational standards. Of course, the proliferation of universities and the great increase in number of students has made it very difficult to obtain reasonably qualified professors. All the institutions recognize this problem and are trying to meet it in various ways. One of the brightest notes here is that partly as a result of the political stability, a number of Dominicans educated abroad have returned home to be professors.

Except for the few who have studied abroad, the university professors do not have formal preparation beyond the bachelor's degree since there is no graduate education program.

Another important consideration is whether the increase in quantity is reflected in producing professionals most necessary for development. The universities are making great efforts in this area. Up to 1964, over half of the UASD graduates were in the traditional fields of medicine and law, but today the three universities give little stress to the law faculties. Medicine, however, is still the most popular program in the UASD, and the medical faculty at UNPHU has a sizeable percentage of the enrollments. The UCMH has resisted the pressures on it in the Santiago area to start a medical school.

The UASD has broadened its offerings on the line of what it considers to be national priorities. The UNPHU, from its inception, has emphasized secondary teacher preparation. Except for its law faculty, the UCMH has tried to start needed programs that would not compete with those of the other institutions, such as mechanical/electrical engineering, nursing education, and social work. The junior college was started to develop the technicians needed for commerce and business.

It is in the new areas that the shortage of qualified professors is most acute, and the institutions have not the teachers yet in some of these areas to make it really feasible to offer the programs.

II. The USAID Program

The basic aims of the USAID program have been to help the institutions to modernize, to improve their standards, and to develop the programs most suitable to national needs. The means of achieving these have been to provide long and short-term consultants who can offer suggestions to the institutions as to how they can achieve the goals, to send faculty members abroad for advanced educational opportunities, and to provide the equipment most needed for improving the instruction.

A. Junior College (IES)

Both USAID and the Ford Foundation recognized the value of a junior college to develop technicians and made contracts with Bryant College (Providence, R.I.) to provide the technical assistance necessary to get the institution started. The USAID Contract terminated in June, 1968, but the technicians completed their work in January, 1968. The junior college still has problems but is a viable institution and is making a significant educational contribution. Its sponsoring organization, APEC (Acción Pro-Educación y Cultura), a group of public spirited professionals and businessmen, recently decided that it was strong enough to stand by itself, and has made it a semi-autonomous institution governed by its own board. The Higher Education Advisor spends three hours a week at the college advising its staff and board.

Investment Agreement No. 11 under the local currency program provided RD\$50,000 to help APEC complete the second floor classroom building for the college. Another investment agreement is pending which will make it possible to complete the third story.

The junior college will be able to broaden its program to develop technicians in other important fields. The college administrators are studying the situation here and have visited U.S. junior colleges to get a broader vision of what the college can do for this community.

B. Catholic University "Madre y Maestra"

When it seemed apparent that the UCMM had the potential and the desire to provide high quality education if it received technical assistance and might serve as a model, USAID developed a program to help the university. A contract was being negotiated with California State College in late 1965, but when it believed it could not recruit personnel and withdrew from the negotiations, USAID turned to St. Louis University.

A contract was signed in the Spring of 1966 which provided for \$750,000 in funds for the first two years of the operation of a five year contract. The project was to emphasize the social sciences education, languages, library development, and administrative assistance. It was amended in 1967 to include assistance for campus and building planning.

Through an investment agreement, AID provided \$225,000 to construct a social science-language classroom building which was inaugurated January 26, 1968.

The technical assistance program started slowly. In the 1966-67 school year there were four technicians, but one of these resigned after two months. For 1967-68 the program was almost up to full strength with eight technicians and three research or teaching assistants. For the 1968-69 school year there were six technicians and two assistants: A Chief-of-Party/Language Technician, an Education Technician, an Economist, a Political Scientist, an Architect, and a Library Advisor. The assistants were in English.

The program has been very successful in developing an English Department, Educational Programs, and Campus and Building Planning. It has been moderately successful in developing the library, public relations programs, and a social science department, and in improving the faculty research potentialities.

Present plans are to phase out the St. Louis University Contract as of December 31, 1970, and for the 1969-70 school year, the team will have a Chief-of-Party who will advise the administration and the English Department, a Library Advisor, and an Architect advisor. There will be also two research or teaching assistants.

✓ C. Autonomous University of Santo Domingo

The technical assistance programs to both the UASD and UNPHU, the two universities in the capital, have been under AID Contract la-407 with the American Institutes for Research. The program started in the summer of 1966 with exploratory visits by nine scholars from the U.S. to determine the needs of the institutions. These visitors after their return to the U.S. decided to form an advisory committee to advise the universities under the AIR program. Five of the visitors have returned for short periods as technical consultants and AIR has sent an additional 17 short-term consultants. The bulk of these has been in science and engineering, on which the programs have focussed.

For the past school year, three long-term technicians furnished technical assistance in Biology, Chemistry, and Engineering. The Chemistry technician left in October, the Biology technician left near the end of January, and the Engineering technician in March. Under the contract, the UASD has received \$38,500 worth of equipment for its science program.

The AIR consultants and technicians have worked for the most part in the Autonomous University, but they have also been charged with assisting UNPHU as much as possible. In October, it became apparent that the UASD could not guarantee the personal security of the technicians on campus so that they were moved to an office in the Banco Agricola. After that time they gave emphasis to their assistance to UNPHU.

✓ D. National University Pedro Henríquez Ureña (UNPHU)

The A.I.R. Contract had the provision that the assistance should be for both Santo Domingo universities, but since UNPHU just opened classes in November, 1966, it had to develop minimal institutional structures before it was ready to receive any major help. The growth of the university, however, exceeded all expectations. It took the former Geriatric Hospital and converted it into a reasonable college facility, and from about 500 students in its opening semester it grew to some 2,800 by its sixth semester.

Since the UNPHU from its inception gave top priority to Education and Teacher Training, and since this is the priority in the Mission's objectives, plans were made under the Educational Sector Loan to devote substantial funds for technical assistance and instructional facilities for the UNPHU Educational Faculty. After UNPHU decided to emphasize Animal Production in its Agricultural Faculty, funds under the loan were also earmarked for the Agricultural Faculty.

The A.I.R. team concentrated its efforts on the UNPHU after September, 1968, and worked to develop the basic science programs needed to develop secondary school science teachers as well as to provide the basic programs for several of the other professional courses.

During the first half of 1969, A.I.R. sent two experts in Educational Administration to assist the UNPHU administrators and the Planning Committee and an A.I.R. Educational Consultant has advised the Educational Faculty. These three were all short-time consultants who visited for less than two weeks each.

After classes are over July 20, two of the A.I.R. technicians will return as short-term consultants to help in a professors' in-service training seminar.

Beside the A.I.R. Contract, USAID has an RTAC Textbook Rental Library at UNPHU, and the USAID Higher Education Advisor has taught the Anthropology program.

Until funds can be provided to continue the work in the basic departments, teacher training and administration, plans are to continue the A.I.R. Contract to help in these areas.

E. Foundation for Educational Credit

To make it possible for students to continue their education abroad in those areas most important for this country, in 1964, the Instituto Dominicano de Crédito Educativo was created as an entity under the Ministry of Education to grant such student loans. This institute never performed as desired, and in 1967, APEC formed the Fundación de Crédito Educativo, and the GODR turned its student loan program over to the new institution. USAID granted the GODR an educational credit loan of \$1.4 million to help provide capital for the new foundation.

The Fundación has operated for a school year. It has apparently satisfied the GODR in the loan projects that it took over for it. It operates special loan programs for the IES (junior college), the UCMM, the UNPHU, as well as several smaller loan programs. It has already paid out about one-half of the \$1.4 Educational Credit Loan. In order to make additional loans the next school year, the Fundación must have additional capital. It is proposed that local currency funds be provided the Fundación under an Investment Agreement to pay the local peso loans so that the dollars can be reserved for the loans to study abroad. A USAID grant to provide special loans to some of the students in undergraduate programs abroad will also free some of the loan dollars which were earmarked for them.