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Development Studies
Paper Series

**Donors, Institution Building,
and a Sense of Strategy:
A Concept of Augmented Staffing**

John J. Waelti

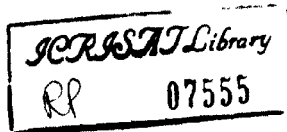
Winrock International
Institute for Agricultural Development

June 1991

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Institute for Agricultural Development
Route 3, Box 376
Morrilton, Arkansas 72110-9537, USA

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ISBN 0-933595-52-2

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Preface

In the summer of 1988, as an associate of Winrock International Institute for Agricultural Development, supported by a Ford Foundation grant to the Rural Social Science Program, I was completing a 2-year assignment as Visiting Professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of Nairobi. As I had participated in all phases of university activity there, including undergraduate teaching and committee assignments, this position afforded a rare opportunity to gain a first-hand perspective of problems faced by the university. These problems, to the best of my knowledge and judgment, are typical of problems faced by African and third world universities in general.

My dominant impression of that period was the overwhelming magnitude of the teaching task facing a diminished number of faculty. Undergraduates and attendant teaching loads have increased sharply during the last several years. That trend is projected to continue. The numbers of students desiring graduate training is also increasing. At the same time, the number of faculty is not keeping pace, as experienced faculty and Africans with new doctorates are attracted to higher-paying posts in government agencies and international organizations.

The Rockefeller program of the 1960s and 1970s was instrumental in staffing scores of social science positions in East Africa with indigenous personnel who had studied in North America. However, this much-heralded and successful program has long since ended. Departing faculty are not being replaced, nor are existing posts being filled as rapidly as necessary to meet demands for teaching and research. Of particular concern is the inability of academic departments to implement ongoing research programs, which are necessary to maintain the intellectual viability of academic departments and to provide a reservoir of knowledge and ideas that can contribute to national economic development. In my judgment, it is not exaggerating to assert that a crisis in African higher education is at hand.

In June 1988, Paul Perrault, then Winrock's associate based at National University, Côte d'Ivoire, visited Nairobi to consider possible directions for donor assistance for institution building in the rural social sciences. After consulting with a number of individuals representing donor organizations, the University of Nairobi, and Egerton University, we concluded that a plan was needed to assist universities in meeting this educational crisis. Out of this exercise emerged a proposal that included a *Young Professionals Program*.

The essence of the Young Professionals Program was to augment the existing staff in rural social sciences to meet this crisis of higher education in Africa. This paper provides further background for and justification of this concept, which I call an *augmented staffing program*. Although key individuals in the development of this idea included A. C. Ackello-Ogutu of the University of Nairobi, E. K. Ileri of Egerton University, and Paul Perrault, none of these individuals nor the institutions with

which they are affiliated should be held accountable for any shortcomings of this paper nor necessarily for viewpoints or opinions expressed here. This paper reflects my own perspectives and opinions regarding the justification and the merits of the concept of augmented staffing.

I hope that this paper stimulates discussion and eventually leads to greater interest and action on what I consider to be a pragmatic way in which to contribute to long-run development of institutions that are necessary for economic development.

Donors, Institution Building, and a Sense of Strategy: A Concept of Augmented Staffing

Economic development is a process. While it is sometimes useful to separate nations into broad categories of *developing* and *developed*, nations actually fall on a continuum that ranges from early stages of development to more advanced stages.

Moving toward development requires a sense of strategy – some essentials for development need to be in place before further development can occur. Among those essentials are institutions for governance and economic organization. Basic institutions are necessary to implement sound policy for macroeconomic management, agricultural development, and physical infrastructure and to create and maintain a legal and administrative framework conducive to modern commerce. Educational institutions are among those that are basic to modern society.

Without sound institutions, infusions of capital not only yield disappointing results but may even be counterproductive. That is, constraints to development must be removed before further development can occur. A sense of strategy is required.

However fundamental this may appear, it is often overlooked that institution building is itself a process that also requires a sense of strategy. Constraints must be removed if an educational institution, for example, is to fulfill its role in research and instruction. This paper addresses constraints to building educational institutions in developing nations, with a focus on Africa, and proposes an approach for dealing with these constraints.

An Example from the American Experience

In his treatise on economic development, John Kenneth Galbraith (1964) illustrates the importance of strategy:

In the early part of the nineteenth century, the United States, depending on the limited potential of lands east of the Appalachians, suffered periodic food shortages and chronic uncertainty of supply. A plan for development along modern lines would have included a long list of requirements such as land-grant colleges, veterinary services, and home economics, communication, and marketing-advisory services. Transportation undoubtedly would have been included on the list. However, such lists, which are designed to be all inclusive, practically guarantee that the most important item will be obscured.

In the early 1800s a canal was built that connected the food-short east with the productive American heartland. The food shortages promptly disappeared and, as Calbraith reminds us, there has been no sign of their recurrence.

The lesson is that the primary constraint, transportation, was dealt with, and further agricultural and economic development naturally followed. A corollary is that it is essential not to confuse factors that enable or promote economic development with factors that naturally result from or follow development.

The Role of Third World Educational Institutions

The economic development of sparsely populated lands, as were the American territories in the 1800s, is much simpler than development of the densely populated third world nations of today. However, the complexity of third world development reinforces the point that a sense of strategy is required. The most pressing constraints must be relieved before further development can occur. This important elementary principle can be applied to educational institutions in the third world.

Similar to their counterparts elsewhere, universities in the third world are responsible for education, research, and extension. This includes providing undergraduate and, in some cases, graduate instruction. As do counterparts in the more developed world, their faculties have the mission of producing new knowledge -- research. This may include adapting existing knowledge to local conditions. In some cases, extension of that knowledge may be carried out directly by university personnel. In other cases, universities may support extension services provided by other government agencies. In developing nations, the mission of universities considers that research contributing to sound economic development policy is the single overriding need.

A related role for African institutions of higher learning is to develop the nation's (and continent's) intellectual leaders. In areas such as plant and animal breeding, economic policy, and resource conservation, which relate to economic development, indigenous expertise is needed. If this intellectual leadership is not developed and retained in these universities, whence will it come?

Education involves an element of consumption and an element of investment in what has come to be called *human capital*. Since most third world students' educations are subsidized by their governments, which have limited resources, it seems justifiable to train these students in the disciplines required for economic development.

It also is proper for research in third world countries to focus on what, conceivably, will contribute to economic development. Such research is largely *applied* and involves problems having a relatively short-term focus, such as adapting varieties of crops to local conditions and experimenting with practices suitable for small farms under local conditions. In the economic-policy arena, research is properly focused on

