

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL.

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH.

ADVANCED SOCIAL RESEARCH TRAINING PROJECT.

PROGRESS REPORT 31/8/57.

INTRODUCTION:

I append my predecessor's report to Sponsors for the year 1956 (Annexure A) because it forms a useful background for my own assessment of the Institute's present position in relation to the Training Project.

The Institute for Social Research was established by the University of Natal in 1954 for the purpose of doing and stimulating research in the wide and varied field of the Social Sciences. It set upon its task with a dual emphasis : (a) interdisciplinary approach to and execution of research projects ; (b) the training of young graduates and their development into experienced and qualified research workers.

It was enabled to do so through the generosity of three main sponsors :

Ford Foundation, Carnegie Foundation, National Council for Social Research. The latter awarded a grant of £10,500 over three years (of which £9,000 derived from Carnegie funds) to cover the cost of six scholarships at £500 per annum each, plus £1,500 towards administrative and secretarial expenses at £500 per annum. All this money concerned the undermentioned Training scheme and Community Studies.

For the ensuing years the Institute's active research programme centred upon a boldly conceived project involving four Community Studies (N. C. S. R. ad hoc Grants in brackets for each study.)

African Community (£795)
Coloured Community (£605)
Indian Community (£530)
European Community, including :
 (a) Afrikaans-speaking;
 (b) English speaking;
 (c) Culturally mixed neighbourhood
 (£600) .

These studies were designed for the primary purpose of training research workers; the production of publishable scientific results, although important, took second place. The principle of interdisciplinary training was further expressed by the engagement (with American funds) of at least four prominent American scholars as 'Consultants' in various disciplines.

I am stressing this principle because it must be taken into consideration in order to arrive at a fair assessment of the Institute's performance to date. Further evidence of the pursuance of this aim were the very great number of seminars attended by academic staff and scholars of different disciplines in the University, and especially, the two Social Sciences conferences (1954 and 1956) which were organised by the Institute on a national scale. Here again, the dominant idea was

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the critical and constructive exchange of views, and personal consultations on matters relating to research orientation and methods, with the publications of Reports containing the prepared addresses and relevant discussions, a gratifying but incidental result.

As far as the dissemination of interdisciplinary understanding of research problems is concerned and the appreciation of research requirements and possibilities, the Institute has undoubtedly made a major effort.

2. THE TRAINING AND RESEARCH PROJECT.

This project fared as follows :

(a) AFRICAN COMMUNITY STUDY (1954 - 1955)

This became a study of Baumannville location in Durban, conducted by six trainee-scholars, supervised by academic staff and three successive American Consultants.

There was a heavy emphasis on interdisciplinary training and action at all stages : preparatory planning, designing of research methods, numerous seminars, field work, analysis of data, writing up.

The resulting 'Baumannville Report' may not rank as the finest study of its kind - although it has drawn very favourable press reviews - ; but it is evidence of a bold experiment in research training and executions which, in spite of many difficulties, was duly completed, as planned.

An abbreviated version of the report (by Mrs. A. M. Cowley) is in the Press as a joint publication of the Institute and the Natal Regional Survey.

(b) COLOURED COMMUNITY STUDY (1955 -)

Initially intended to be carried out on similar lines as the Baumannville survey, the interdisciplinary aspect of this study had to be modified because of the lack of suitable research scholars. Of the original team there was only one survivor (a social psychologist). The others had left, or were leaving the Institute, in most cases as the very result of the training they had received, which made them eligible for vastly better remunerated employment elsewhere. After considerable searching one more suitable scholar (sociologist) was found and the Sparks Estate Study was planned as a two-man effort, concentrating on what appeared to be the dominant problem in this coloured community, that of 'Marginal Status' (Sociological) and 'Marginal personality' (Psychological). The principle of interdisciplinary approach and training was maintained, but its field of application both narrowed and deepened. While the Baumannville survey was largely a 'surface' analysis, the Sparks Estate study aimed at deeper penetration of social attitudes and behaviour within a restricted frame of reference. Joint efforts persisted throughout planning and field work, which was completed in 1956. Then the Sociologist (Dickie-Clark) was given leave by the Minister to accept an academic appointment on the conditions that he would finalize his study in due course. The psychologist, Mann, finished the writing up of his part in August, 1957. His report (260 odd pages typescript) was cyclostyled in the form of a Ph. D. thesis, copies of which have been sent to N. C. S. R. A summary of 30 pages has been prepared for journal publications. (The still outstanding sociological part will, it is hoped, be completed by the end of 1958.) For this reason specific authority is now requested to carry the balance of the funds allocated for this study (this includes the remaining balance of the Baumannville study, previously authorized to be used for the Coloured and Indian Community studies) over into the financial year 1958-59.

(c) INDIAN COMMUNITY STUDY (1956 -)

Lack of suitable research scholars again prevented a broad interdisciplinary team effort. Preliminary work (mostly on literature) was done by one scholar (political sociology) for six months, until he had to resign from the Institute. Although he was made to collate his information, the resulting effort (nearly 200 pages typescript) was not suitable for publication in any form without further considerable effort which, unfortunately, never materialized.

For this reason the Institute, with the concurrence of Dr. Olckers, N.C.S.R. representative, cut its losses in this respect and transferred the balance of allocational funds for this Community Study, to a study of certain aspects of scholastic performance by Indian School children. The choice of subject was realistically based on the special qualifications and experience of C. Ramphal, an Indian teacher who started his preparatory work in July, 1956, and finished his field work a year later. The quality of his work is good, and has been favourably commented on by such an expert as Dr. Biesheuvel of the N.I.P.R.

A small section has been written up as a paper delivered at a conference of the Natal Indian Teachers (copies will be sent to N.C.S.R. in due course). The further analysis and writing up has naturally been slowed down since his resumption of teaching duties. It is expected that a first-rate study will emerge and completed by the end of 1958.

In consultation with Dr. Biesheuvel, it has been arranged for Ramphal to spend some time during September or October at N.I.P.R. headquarters in Johannesburg with regard to the statistical analysis of some of his data. Specific authority is hereby requested to carry the balance of the funds allocated to this study over into the financial year 1958 - 59.

Mr. Ramphal's progress report, reflecting the position at the end of August, 1957, follows :-

"The research was divided into the following three projects :-

- (1) The influence of familiarity with and efficiency in English on intelligence and scholastic tests at the Standard VI level.
- (2) A comparative study of morning and afternoon performance of a group of afternoon school pupils on intelligence and scholastic tests.
- (3) The effects of late entry into school on the intellectual and scholastic attainments of children.

The first project involved 1,052 pupils. Most of the data has already been transferred to punch-cards and analysis is proceeding.

The second project involved 144 pupils. All the scripts have been scored and questionnaires analysed. A paper describing this project and outlining the main findings was presented to the conference of Natal Indian teachers held in July last and was well received. It is being rewritten to comply with the requirements of the University.

The third project involved 1,700 pupils ranging from Standard II to VI. Scoring of the scripts is proceeding. The questionnaires that formed part of the project have all been edited and the data are now being processed for transfer to punch-cards."

(d) EUROPEAN COMMUNITY STUDY.

As originally planned, this would involve three parallel studies of (a) an Afrikaans speaking community; (b) English speaking community and (c) a culturally mixed neighbourhood. Only one research scholar, (Miss Phillips, a sociologist) was available, who began preparatory work in July, 1956. Efforts to carry the interdisciplinary approach (present at the planning stage) into active field work failed, partly because the N. C. S. R. was unable to grant an application for a complementary psychological study. The proposal to begin the study with its third aspect (culturally mixed neighbourhood - mentioned in the Institute's progress report of August, 1956) was carried out. Intensive fieldwork (with the help of research assistants) began after careful preparations, followed by an extensive sample survey, and will probably be completed by the middle of December, 1957.

It has become clear, however, that the satisfactory completion of the study of this neighbourhood alone, will take the scholar considerably longer than was originally anticipated for the three-fold community study by a research team. Under the circumstances, I therefore consider it unrealistic even to contemplate the undertaking of the remaining aspects of the original plan (i. e. the Afrikaans and English speaking communities). Moreover, in order to ensure concrete results it will be necessary to extend Miss Phillips' scholarship for another six months (until the end of 1958).

This involves in the first place the carrying over of the balance of the funds under this ad hoc grant, as available at 31/12/58, into the next financial year. Secondly, the allocation of an additional £250 for Miss Phillips' personal emoluments for July - December, 1958, if the extension of her scholarship is approved. I suggest that the latter amount be met from the unspent balance of the Carnegie funds allotted to the Training Project.

Application for the Minister's approval of these proposals is hereby made. Miss Phillips' own progress report (dated 19th September, 1957) follows :-

"Schedule study of sample population (180 persons) now nearing completion. Approximately 40 interviews still to be made. This section of fieldwork should finally be completed by the end of October.

Intensive studies of three small areas within the neighbourhood will involve group interviews with children and adolescents - and will be made in October and November.

All fieldwork is expected to be finally completed by mid-December. Tabulation and sorting which are being carried out concurrently with fieldwork should be finally completed by February - March.

Final analysis and writing up will probably take between six and eight months."

(e) ADMINISTRATION:

In view of the fact that the Project will not be completed until the end of 1958, an extension of the grant of £1,500 contributing towards administrative and secretarial assistance, (which has been constantly and fully engaged in connection with the project) is likewise required, and application to this effect is hereby made.

This will probably not involve funds additional to those originally approved, as the £1,500 allocated for this purpose is unlikely to have been fully committed by 30th June, 1958 (see letter No. 777/R/29/1 of 4/6/1957).

3. SUMMARY:

No meeting of the University's ad hoc committee together with Dr. Olckers, N. C. S. R. representative, was held this year. Instead the Executive Committee of the Institute met several times, and the Director of the Institute met Dr. Olckers in Pretoria in July for a full and frank discussion, which the latter considered adequate. Dr. Olckers agreed that every effort should be made to wind up the project as satisfactorily as possible and within the narrower limits into which circumstance (mainly staff turnover and shortage) had forced the Institute, and to concentrate on concrete and publishable results.

I have tried to assess the over-all position realistically and find that, with the exception of the Indian and European 'community' studies, the programme will be completed substantially in the form it had originally been set out. With regard to the latter two studies: the first one of these has seen a complete change of plans, the second a narrower focus and concentration on the most important of its three original aspects. In both these cases, however, (as well as the remaining part of the Coloured Community study), concrete and important results will materialize, provided the time and funds allocated to the project are extended until the end of 1958.

It cannot be denied that the realization of the project is falling short of its original expectations. So far the Institute has been 'short' on concrete (i. e. published or publishable) results; but it is considerably 'longer' on intangible achievements (training etc) than superficial knowledge of its activities might indicate - the extremely high turn-over of research workers is, in a perverse sense, evidence of the truth of this statement.

In its circular letter E. 777/R/10/1 of June, 1956, the N. C. S. R. stated :
.....! the Committee was again impressed by the necessity for the establishment of permanent, full-time research institutes, where trained research workers could find a career, and where long-term research programmes could be drawn up and carried out over a number of years. (My italics)

At the present day there is a serious shortage of good and potentially good research personnel in the Social Sciences. The University of Natal did establish a permanent and full-time research institute and recently appointed a full-time Director to direct its activities. But its experience has made it abundantly clear that long-term research programmes are a hazardous undertaking unless the continuity of research personnel can be ensured, Academic staff is unfortunately not yet in a position actively to participate in full-time research for more than a strictly limited period at a time; and good (or potentially good) research personnel can hardly be expected to make research their career, unless they are paid on a competitive basis. It is in this respect, that the N. C. S. R., by liberalizing its scholarship emoluments could vastly increase the chances that its invaluable contributions to Social Research and the training of career research workers, would indeed lead to concrete results.

A financial statement is attached to this report (Annexure B).

J. F. Holleman.
Director.

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH.

25th September, 1957.
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