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THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

COMMUNICATING WITH
PEASANTS AND PRINCES

by

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and

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PERGAMON PRESS

The International Education of the Development Consultant

Communicating with
Peasants and Princes

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and

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Introduction to Series

The Comparative and International Education Series is dedicated to inquiry and analysis on educational issues in an interdisciplinary cross-national framework. As education affects larger populations and educational issues are increasingly complex and, at the same time, international in scope, this series presents research and analysis aimed at understanding contemporary educational issues. The series brings the best scholarship to topics which have direct relevance to educators, policymakers and scholars, in a format that stresses the international links among educational issues. Comparative education not only focuses on the development of educational systems and policies around the world, but also stresses the relevance of an international understanding of the particular problems and dilemmas that face educational systems in individual countries.

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PHILIP G. ALTBACH

Foreword

Technical assistance cannot be exported; it can only be imported

In a single sentence Paul Hoffman, the man who converted the Marshall Plan from a good idea into a huge success and later served as first administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, thus captured the essence of international consulting.

Clarence Thurber and Gerald Fry rightly describe it as an art. They should know. As reflective practitioners they have learned from their own experience, and as scholars of practice they have studied cross-cultural advising and learned much from the experience of others.

In four decades of postwar trial and error we have all learned that the transfer of technology is not the efficient delivery of magic machines, or even the successful transmission of useful facts and ideas. It's a meeting of minds. This wise and comprehensive book is about that encounter—a daily experience for one-third of a million men and women who visit, live and work away from their own homes, trying to stir together the insights of science and technology with the workways of several hundred local cultures around the world.

US readers may be surprised, as I was, to learn from this book that only 10 percent of the advisers and consultants working in other people's countries are from the United States. Professors Thurber and Fry have wisely chosen to study the whole canvas, not just the US corner of it. In doing so they reveal that the cross-cultural complexities of international consulting are common to the human race, and that we all have much to learn from our common experience.

The dilemma of this ubiquitous encounter is all too clear. Consultants think they know what others need to know, and that the problem is to get it across by breaking down barriers of ignorance and apathy. But the people who need that special knowledge know much more about their own special conditions and traditions than the hired or volunteer visitors can ever learn.

Although I have managed programs of technical aid and advice, I have learned most about consulting from being a client, a consumer of advice from consultants. Few of the consultants I have worked with in my executive life came to me saying, 'Let's start with the proposition that you know more than I do about what puzzles you or holds you back from what you want to do.' If they had, I would have hired them on the spot.

Usually, consultants have tried to convince me that they have a corner on some snake oil with mysterious properties, that they have mastered some arcane discipline that is plainly beyond my depth, that they have invented a tested all-purpose formula, developed a canned training format, written a solvent piece of computer software that I couldn't possibly decipher by myself, so I need help.

The French, as usual, have a succinct way to describe such behavior: *épater les paysans* (or, in American slang, 'snow the peasants').

But what I've learned as a client is that you never get out more than you, the client, put into the consultant. The information you put into the consulting machine is processed with a new perspective combined with different knowledge to produce a uniquely appropriate idea about what you (not the consultant, who will soon be gone) should do next.

Whether this mutual meeting of minds is valuable, to you as the receiver of outside advice, depends on whether the minds really do meet. If the visiting adviser comes up with some prefabricated strategy, designed to fit some superficially similar case, send the visitor quietly away. A fresh angle of vision, a new insight, an innovative use of appropriate technology, applied to a problem you have been living with for too long, can be worth a hundred times what you (or an aid agency or corporation or World Bank) paid for it. But only if the outside consultant has taken the trouble to understand your special cultural context and is working on your unique perplexity.

The outsiders also have to do something even more difficult: refrain from taking credit for what the insiders have been able to accomplish with outside help. Technology transfer works best when it doesn't show—and especially when it doesn't show off.

The errors of theory and practice from which we have learned run like a *leit-motif* through this scholarly yet readable book. The errors are inherent in this most difficult of human relationships: in the 1960s I studied the Soviets' experience with bilateral 'foreign aid,' and found that they made the same mistakes our US programs made, in the same order in which we had made them.

Three of these mistakes stand out: the temptation to push economic growth without worrying enough about fairness, the narrow compartmentalization of knowledge transferred, and the too-chronic failures of cultural empathy.

In every developing country the burgeoning beginnings of modernization have produced a triple collision in which the imperatives of economic growth collide simultaneously with resentments about fairness and resentments about the perceived rape of cultural identity. Consultants and advisers who enter this conflictual arena need to take all three forces into account. If they measure their success only by calculating the changes in per capita gross

national product—a measure which teaches us that an increase in food production and an increase in drug addiction both are positive signs—they are bound to be misled, as the generation preceding them were misled, by mistaking economics for society.

Scholars and scientists are catching on to what development practitioners have long known by instinct: that no real-world problem can be tackled by one or another discipline. But the disciplines into which we have divided the life of the mind need to be melded into interdisciplinary wisdom as a basis for policy decisions about what to do next. In the sixth century BC Lao Tse said it: 'To pretend to know what you do not is a disease.'

A wider view of development, and a broader sense of the interconnections among the formal fields of knowledge, are teachable skills. And so is cultural empathy—a 'feel' for cultural difference, a preference for cultural diversity, a willingness to mingle as equals with people who wouldn't feel comfortable in the 'golden ghettos' in which too many international advisers and consultants have dwelt.

Early in my life, when working in Southeast Asia, I heard a story which helped me cope with diversity. An old Malay and a British colonial administrator named Sir Hugh Clifford were arguing about whether it was best to eat with one's fingers or with Western knives, forks, and spoons. The old Malay ended the conversation with an unanswerable comment: 'What you don't understand, Sir Hugh,' he said, 'is that my fingers haven't been in anybody else's mouth, but I'm not so sure about your spoons.'

The authors of this book make a strong case for a mode of international consultation that promotes 'creativity, respect, cooperation and harmony.' We have tried everything else. We would do well to take their advice for the 1990s and beyond.

HARLAN CLEVELAND

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August 1988*

Preface

This book is the product of many journeys. It is about those who travel beyond their own national borders to share their skills, thoughts, and energies with others who are working to liberate themselves from poverty, hunger, and disease. A special concern is the nature of their cross-cultural encounters and their 'cultural collisions.'

The title of our book is somewhat reminiscent of *The Education of Henry Adams*, probably the best known autobiography ever written in the English language. After he graduated from Harvard in 1858, Adams took the 'grand tour' of Europe and experienced the joys of inter-cultural exploration. In European culture he found a whole new world out there. In the middle of the 20th century, large numbers of American and other western technical consultants 'discovered' the Third World. Many of them claimed that the experience fundamentally changed their lives and their world views. Adams' book might be considered an exemplar of what today we call both experiential education and lifelong education. The ability to engage in both are essential qualities for the successful technical assistant. Thus, Adams' life may be seen to carry important lessons for the modern development consultant.

It would probably be a mistake to draw the parallels too closely. Many would consider Adams a somewhat effete intellectual who rejected his own youthful and turbulent culture in favor of an older, more stable, and perhaps a more cynical one. Still there are some striking similarities. In *The Education*, Adams as a historian of the medieval period, tried to come to understand and cope with the explosion of science and technology that occurred in the 20th century. This created a pluralistic, or as he might have written, a multiplistic society. In this, as opposed to the unified vision of medieval religion, Adams saw a new Godhead: the dynamics of modern individualistic values and energies. Here, relative value instead of ancient verities predominate. In a somewhat analogous manner, modern development consultants are engaged in assisting Third World nations to make the transition into a rapidly changing information age where the benefits of science and technology can be made more widely available. Both Adams and the development consultant have tended to be concerned with, if not obsessed by, the processes of change. Adams in the end came to believe that society as a whole had retrogressed, i.e., that the accumulation of changes had been for the worse. On the contrary, development consultants probably remain optimistic that change is necessary, desirable, and can be progressive.

During the past three decades perhaps as many as several million individuals have worked in foreign countries as development assistance personnel; serving as administrators, advisers, consultants, experts, and volunteers. As indicated by our bibliography, there is an extensive literature on the experiences of such individuals, including both empirical surveys and popular novels. Drawing on the literature this research, experience, and conferences represent, we feel that it is an appropriate time to reflect on the important and changing process of cross-cultural advising and consulting. We are interested in both notable successes and the undoubted failures; as well as in future trends, such as the increased emphasis on technical cooperation among developing countries.

In a type of qualitative 'metaresearch' we draw heavily on the extensive and diverse existing literature on technical assistance personnel overseas. This research began approximately 35 years ago with Sayre and Thurber's *Training for Specialized Mission Personnel*, to be followed by Harlan Cleveland's important book, *The Overseas Americans*. We have since then had countless discussions, both formal and informal, in various nations about the work of development assistance personnel. We ourselves have served as consultants and advisers in a number of diverse cultural settings. Thus, in approaching our topic, we rely on *multiple* sources of data, such as documents, various surveys, and our own extensive participant observation and interviews.

One major gap in the literature remains unfilled. To our knowledge, there has not been a rigorous quantitative study of the correlates of successful international advising and consulting which would identify clearly the key background factors accounting for success in these types of roles. Given the importance of context and the complex interaction between varying contexts and individual traits and capacities, such a study would be extremely difficult and costly. For those interested in such a challenge, our study may help to define the key variables essential for such analyses.

Given the extensive literature concerning technical assistance work abroad, some may see our study as *deja vu*. We, however, feel that our book presents a new perspective on 'old issues' in several respects. Unlike most of the literature which views this topic from the perspective of a single nation-state, we take an international perspective with concern for the overseas technical assistance personnel of all nations, including socialist societies such as China. We also draw on a wide range of international research sources.

An interdisciplinary approach also characterizes our work on international advising and consulting. In our analyses we draw on perspectives from disciplines such as political science, public administration, sociology, anthropology, economics, and also the humanities.

Unlike much of the literature which tends to be rather reductionist in

overstressing the traits of the single individual, we attempt to utilize an ecological perspective that reflects the interaction between context and the individual personality.

We have tried as well to identify as explicitly as possible criteria for judging success in international advising and consulting. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we postulate the knowledge base and ethical foundations to define a profession for international advisers and development assistance personnel.

Central to our approach is an emphasis on communication and a participative orientation towards development. This perspective is reflected in our subtitle: 'Communicating with Peasants and Princes.' We see such communication, particularly a genuine dialogue with peasants, as central to the development process.

Unlike most of the existing literature which sees advising as a one-way process, we view advising and consulting as a two-way or three-way process. We view returned overseas technical assistance personnel as potentially influential educational, cultural, and political forces in the rich industrial societies.

The basic assumption underlying our book is that the human being will continue to be central to the process of intellectual exchange and technology transfer. We anticipate that the process of international advising and consulting will become even more diverse and international. Thus, we hope that our study may be helpful to the following groups of individuals:

1. Professionals sent abroad by international organizations, bilateral technical assistance agencies, private voluntary organizations, and non-governmental organizations.
2. Volunteers sent abroad under various bilateral, international, or private auspices.
3. Private businessmen and government officials with short-term or long-term assignments abroad.
4. Those engaged in technical cooperation among developing countries.
5. Those working with minorities within a single nation-state.

With reference to the development process, our focus on international consultants and advisers in this volume could be misinterpreted. Our view is that all external aid is and must be marginal to efforts made internally, and this includes expert advisers. We see international advisers and related technical assistance as only one of *many* factors involved in the development process. Obviously both important internal and external forces are at work that determine developmental prospects and results. However, in this volume we limit our focus to one important dimension of external forces: the role of international advisers and consultants.

The Scope of the Study

This study is comprised of six parts. Part I provides background for the study, including a statement of research objectives and methodology used. Part II consists of five chapters which cover the following major issues: the multiple roles of advisers, the use and abuse of foreign languages, the political role of advisers, the economic role of advisers, and in-service local training. In Part III we present specific criteria for assessing the effectiveness of international advisers and consultants. Part IV consists of case studies, both exemplary and anonymous, of individual advisers having served overseas. Included are both notable successes and distinctive failures, from which we hope important lessons may be learned. Part V presents issues related to the question of professionalism in international advising and consulting. Foundations for a profession are made explicit, including a code of ethics (included as an appendix) and a specific knowledge base. In Part VI future trends in advising and consulting are considered with special emphasis on the internationalization of the advising and consulting profession. This is followed by an appendix which provides a detailed statistical profile of international advisers and consultants. This profile presents information on the numbers of advisers, where they come from, where they go, and what they do. The final part of the study is an extensive analytical bibliography on international advising and consulting, which we hope will prove useful to other scholars and practitioners concerned with improving the practice and conduct of international advising and consulting.

Value Premises Underlying the Study

Gunnar Myrdal in his important but, we think, neglected work, *Objectivity in Social Research*, argues that it is naive to think that the social sciences are value-free. All social science research is influenced by underlying but often unstated value premises. Myrdal, thus advocates that social scientists state in the very beginning their basic values which influence their research and thinking. In an attempt to be responsive to Myrdal's concerns, we will make explicit the basic value premises underlying this study. They can be briefly summarized as follows:

1. We believe in the fundamental worth and value of cultural, scientific, technical and educational exchanges. Overall we feel that such movement of individuals across national boundaries has helped to improve the human condition and prospects for peace and international understanding. There have been, to be sure, some notable failures and some adverse effects associated with such activities, and these are discussed in this volume. But also described are many examples of technical assistance provided by international advisers that have resulted in positive enhancements of the human condition. We believe that consultants who describe and analyze their experiences in writing contribute to the educational process by which some of the former (failures) may be transformed into some of the latter (successes). We also believe that technical assistance represents an important element in the development process.
2. Since we believe that the social sciences are inherently value-laden, we also view the international advising process as inherently political. The term, 'technical' assistance was apparently invented to mask this underlying reality. In Chapter 4 we discuss the political dimensions of international advising and consulting. In that chapter we present two opposing views with respect to the politics of advising. From the perspective of the individual consultant, the most political aspect of advising is the initial decision to accept an assignment to assist a given government. That decision should be based on a match of values between the host government and the potential adviser. Once the decision has been made to advise a government or ministry, our basic orientation stresses that advisers should adopt a service role and not try to impose their own personal values and solutions on a host government. Instead they should dedicate themselves to helping their hosts achieve

the goals they have determined for themselves. Often, helping the host government or agency better to define the problem, so that alternative solutions are clarified, is the most important contribution an adviser can make. Among the competing loyalties faced by consultants we believe that the commitment to helping the host agency is foremost. Thus, we postulate the ideal of the consultant who accepts the limited advisory role and deplores direct political interventions which may impinge on other nations' basic sovereignty.

3. The international consulting process involves important ethical and normative dimensions. There are ambiguities and difficulties inherent in such activities. Unfortunately, violations of professional standards have occurred and will probably continue to occur. For these reasons we include a special appendix which includes an explicit statement of professional standards for international advising and consulting. In many ways this statement, we recognize, also reflects values that we share.
4. Although much of the literature portrays advising as a one-way process involving individuals from 'rich' countries going to help those in 'poor' nations, we view the advising process as more complex, exemplifying a two-dimensional or even a three- or four-dimensional phenomenon. Thus we consider advising that takes place under the auspices of technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) as particularly important, because the context of development in both the donor and the host may be similar, and progress in the one may more easily be transferred to the other. Such South-South exchanges have considerable potential.
5. We also believe that the international advising and consulting process has had important consequences in terms of reverse communications for the rich nations. The experiences of international advisers has provided, for example, a rich knowledge base for international development. Sir Arthur Lewis, the Nobel laureate in development economics from Saint Lucia, certainly enriched his understanding of development problems while serving in advisory capacities in Africa; and this is but one of many such examples. International advising and consulting represents an important form of life-long learning and an important presence in the field of development education. For example, the presence of former Peace Corps volunteers from the Philippines in the US polity no doubt helped the US to understand the change from Marcos to Aquino.
6. International consulting and advising is thus an important form of international communication by which we have learned much about the syndrome of development problems associated with what we now characterize as the 'Third World.' But as L. S. Stavrianos so graphically illustrates in his major work, *Global Rift*, the industrialized countries are now coming to recognize that the 'Third World' exists at home as well as abroad.

7. Throughout this work, we have an important concern for *praxis*. Since a significant portion of technical assistance involves advising and consulting, it is important to evaluate rigorously the effectiveness of such individuals as well as the organizational contexts which condition their opportunities for both success and failure. The formulation of relevant criteria for such evaluations is an important task. This type of evaluation is essential if we are to improve the practice of international advising and consulting. In this sense our book perhaps fits the genre of what Chris Argyris terms action science in his work on methodology, *The Inner Contradictions of Rigorous Research*. Thus, it is our goal in this work to link scholarly research and analysis with practical concerns related to improving the quality of international advising so as to enhance its role in improving the human condition.
8. While material changes are an inevitable part of the development process, human beings must be central and represent the first priority in terms of development strategies. Basic human needs, individual empowerment, human rights, self-fulfillment, and reverence for life are fundamental values integral to humanistic development.
9. Despite our stress in this volume on international advising and consulting, we recognize that outside aid is *marginal* to the development process. Development can be assisted, but it cannot be produced, as if by injection, from abroad.
10. We believe that much can be learned from both success and failure. We also feel that too much of social science is preoccupied with discovering the representative case. Anomalies and extreme cases can contribute significantly to the development of insight and understanding. Much of the development literature tends to be too optimistic or too pessimistic. By examining both successes and failures, we hope to present a balanced perspective.

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This work, a genuinely collaborative effort dating back to 1969, has our names as authors listed alphabetically. It is our hope that the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts we have contributed. Without such collaboration the blend of qualitative and quantitative research approaches used would not have been possible. Each author has influenced the other in ways too numerous to mention, critically assessing the role of advisers and consultants.

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GERALD W. FRY
CLARENCE E. THURBER

Eugene, Oregon
August 1988

Glossary of Acronyms

ADAB	Australian Development Assistance Bureau (Canberra)
AID	(US) Agency for International Development
AIT	Asian Institute of Technology (Thailand)
ANU	The Australian National University
Aramco	Arabian American Oil Company
ASPA	American Society for Public Administration
AUFS	American Universities Field Staff
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIASP	Conference on Inter-American Student Projects (Cuernavaca, Mexico)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency (Ottawa)
CIMMYT	Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maize y Trigo (International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center), (Mexico)
CIP	International Potato Centre (Lima, Peru)
CUSO	Canadian University Service Overseas
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of OECD
DTCP	Development Training and Communication Planning (UN)
ECDC	Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok)
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (Rome)
GVS	German Voluntary Service
HIID	Harvard Institute for International Development
ICA	Institute of Cultural Affairs (Chicago)
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICARDA	International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (Aleppo, Syria)
ICRISAT	International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (Hyderabad, India)
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Ottawa, Canada)
IESC	International Executive Service Corps
IHB	International Health Board
IIE	Institute of International Education (New York)
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning (Paris)