The Problem of Surplus and Shortage of Manpower in Developing Countries

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1. Introduction

If you wish to plan for a year sow seeds ...
If you wish to plan for ten years plant trees...
If you wish to plan for a life time develop men ...
(Kuan Chung Tzu)

(1.1) Development as a term is still vague to all those who deal with it. And because of that it does have more than one definition. The improvement in living standards of the people, the increase in G.N.P., the quest for a peaceful, stable life and many others are offered as definitions of development. A unique answer can be found in different places and different times and for different purposes. In general, the term `developing countries', can then be used to describe all countries because each one of them is still developing itself in one way or another.

But as this term has been used by the U.N. agencies to describe those countries of the southern part of the world like those of Asia, Africa, Latin America and some other countries. We will continue describing those countries as `developing countries' and describe the more advanced countries as `developed countries'.

(1.2) By labour force we mean `the number of people capable of work and among those, those willing to work'\(^{(1)}\). So those between the age of 16 and 59 years, capable and willing to work, will be under our examination, and those not capable and/or unwilling to work will be excluded.

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Labour force can be skilled, semi-skilled or non-skilled. The advancement of any nation is dependent on the structure of its labour force skills and their relevancy to the country's needs and objectives. The more the skilled labour in the country, the more advanced that country. The U.S.A., Germany, Japan and the U.K. are some examples of the advanced-developed-countries, while India, Zambia, Iraq and Colombia are some examples of developing countries.

(1.3) Smith has defined planning as "a process for providing a frequently updated framework of information for decision making, with the object of improving the utilization of resources"(2). So manpower planning is the process of collecting data about manpower, analyzing it to help the decision makers to take more rational and applicable decisions. The data or 'information' to be collected is usually about the supply sources of manpower as well as the demands or requirements of manpower, which is the most important and lasting element in the production process. And because of the changing nature of this resource, the manpower planner deals with the unseen, uncertain future, so the risk of this future can be decreased or eliminated through susceptibility to unexpected situations. Bartholomew has agree with that in saying that "the organization which has effective planning procedures can adapt more quickly to new circumstances as they arise"(3).

(1.4) The probable future risk of having either surpluses or shortages, or both, in particular kinds of manpower skills, can then be reduced by good planning so the balance between demand and supply can be achieved and then maintained through continuous readjustments and reassessment of both demand and supply sources. Having defined and explained 'briefly' the elements of the question of the essay, I will examine the problem 'in general' depending on some relevant fields which determine the size of the problem, and will bring some examples whenever that is needed. But because of the limits of time and space, some of the less important fields will be excluded, and because each individual developing country has its unique situation and unique answers to such problems, the essay will be general rather than specific.

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(3) Ibid.