
DEVTECH Sphere

DEVTECH SYSTEMS, INC.
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THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

At this summer's Conference on Human Capacity Development, U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Brian Atwood announced USAID's intention to make education and training an official Agency goal (see story on page 2).

Those of us who have worked in the development field for any length of time warmly welcome this announcement. We have known for decades that education and training are key to ensuring meaningful and sustainable economic growth and improvements in quality of life. The cover story in this issue of the *Sphere* illustrates how sharing best practices in education can have dramatic impact.

— Jorge A. Sanguinety
President and CEO
DEVTECH SYSTEMS, INC.

QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION MAKING A LASTING CONTRIBUTION

How do you make a lasting contribution to the quality of graduate education? How can reforms be put on a long-lasting basis? How do you know if the programs are having an impact on the country concerned? Those are some of the questions raised in a recent university project evaluation conducted by DEVTECH in Bolivia.

The Catholic University in Bolivia has set about to introduce basic reforms in its graduate education program. With the assistance of the Harvard Institute for International Development, the University is working on change through several complementary strategies, including:

- ◆ A full-time, qualified faculty,
- ◆ Participatory student-centered learning systems,
- ◆ A highly select student body,
- ◆ Tuition related to real costs of the program,
- ◆ A serious classroom culture, and
- ◆ Programs related to priority national needs.

FACULTY REFORM

University faculties in Latin America are typically made up of part-time, "moonlighting" professionals. They have other, principal jobs that take up most of their time and energies. They seldom have time to adequately prepare for their classes or to give informal guidance to students at other times.

In contrast, the Catholic University has determined to staff its graduate program with *full-time, qualified faculty*. Full-time means that the faculty members are paid enough to dedicate their full energies to their teaching duties. Qualified means that, if possible, the instructor is an experienced professional with a Ph.D. in his or her field, plus skills as an effective teacher. For many fields, this means sending prospective faculty members abroad for doctoral studies. This is expensive and time consuming, but is considered a basic need if the program is to meet international standards and constantly move toward quality improvement.

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EDUCATION IN DEVELOPMENT

REPORT ON THE USAID HCD CONFERENCE

Human capacity, as defined in a draft document of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) goals, is “the ability to perform tasks, to survive and prosper, to access opportunities, to realize innate potential, permitting all people to participate in matters which affect their lives.”

International human capacity development has made outstanding progress on several fronts, as shown at the *Conference on USAID Human Capacity Development for the 21st Century: Reaping the Results of Investment and Experience*, held this summer in Washington, D.C. The conference was sponsored by the USAID Global Bureau Human Capacity Development Center in cooperation with the Global Bureau Office of Women in Development.

The biggest news at the conference, made official in USAID Administrator J. Brian Atwood’s speech to the conference, is USAID’s intentions to make education and training an official Agency goal, along with democracy, economic growth, population/health, and environment. The new goal will be called “Building Human Capacity Through Education and Training.”

At the same time, Mr. Atwood announced that he will also elevate agricultural development to a major goal. Given the dependency of most developing countries on agriculture, it was, like education, conspicuously absent as an Agency goal.

Mr. Atwood also announced the expansion of the Agency’s successful higher education partnership program, involving 60 U.S. colleges and univer-

sities in partnerships with higher education institutions in 29 countries; the increased use of new information technology, e.g., for bringing Internet connectivity to sub-Saharan Africa; and the initiation of a new five-year International Development Partnerships program to more thoroughly engage America’s historically black colleges and universities.

Some presentations made at the conference offered interpretations of human capacity development that contrast with the views of USAID. For example, Stephen Heyneman, Chief of the Human Resources and Social Policy Division in the Technical Department of the Europe and Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa regions of the World Bank, argued against supporting basic education as USAID traditionally has. Among other things, he concluded that USAID needs to shift its strategy from humanitarian motives as a basis for supplying aid to more utilitarian motives.

Other speakers at the conference discussed such issues as gender equity in education, workforce development, and successful and not-so-successful education projects.

The bottom line: USAID’s increased focus on education — with knowledge based on years of experience and sharing of best practices — can only serve to help ensure long-term and sustainable improvements in quality of life. ♦

— Stephen A. Tournas

RELATED INTERNET SITES

These sites provide information about international education and link with other pertinent sites.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

<http://www.ed.gov> — *information about U.S. education practices and programs and links to numerous related sites and directories*

SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION

<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/multicultural/edusa> — *information on the process of transformation in South African education, with links to the South African Ministry of Education and other relevant sites.*

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION FORUM

<http://www.uta.fi/FAST/Forum> — *links to international education organizations*

HIGHER EDUCATION

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PARTICIPATORY LEARNING

Too often, educational patterns develop in which the student is seen as an empty object to be filled from an external source — the teacher as lecturer. The learner has a passive role of absorbing as much of the material as he or she can.

In contrast, the Catholic University is seeking to turn the situation around and make the student an active learner. The methodology depends heavily on the case-method of instruction. Through analysis and discussion of real-life case studies, the student comes to grip with the key ideas and issues of the course. And,

THROUGH ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF REAL-LIFE CASE STUDIES, THE STUDENT COMES TO GRIP WITH THE KEY IDEAS AND ISSUES OF THE COURSE.

of greater importance, the student is actively involved in the learning process. The search for cases relevant to Bolivian views and values is not easy, however. Clearly, more needs to be done to develop country-specific cases that speak to the kinds of problems that Bolivian public- and private-sector organizations face today.

A SELECT STUDENT BODY

It is often noted that enrollment of good students is more than half the battle of any educational program. From the beginning, the Catholic University has set its sights high. Luckily, and partly because of the cachet of the Harvard connection, the university has been able to attract experienced, capable students

and to select the best for admission. Participatory learning depends heavily on students with actual work experience who bring to the classroom the kinds of ideas that enrich the discussion. They help to create a situation where the students learn as much from each other as from their teachers.

TUITION THAT COVERS COSTS

The Catholic University has had the good fortune of receiving its physical plant on a grant basis from the US-AID program. This has given the University a running start. But from the beginning, the University has set tuition rates at a level that covers operating costs. In Latin America, where subsidized higher education is the rule, this is a major breakthrough. The other side of the coin, of course, is that this relatively higher tuition tends to limit the student body to the elite. To offset this, a scholarship program to encourage and facilitate the participation of qualified students from less-privileged backgrounds is seen as an important part of the program now and in the future.

CLASSROOM CULTURE

The Catholic University program has emphasized the importance of the seriousness of the educational enterprise. The calendar and the clock are respected. While many universities find that their students spend major portions of their time in political and non-university activities, the Catholic University's "nose to the grindstone" approach is noteworthy. Classes start

on time and students are given a full measure of classroom time and outside advisory time in exchange for their tuition. They clearly are getting value for their investment of time and money.



NATIONAL NEEDS

From the outset, the graduate program has attempted to deal with key issues in Bolivian development today, including:

- ◆ Transparency in government.
- ◆ Financial responsibility.
- ◆ Social development needs in a pluralistic society.
- ◆ Productivity concerns in both the public and private sectors.
- ◆ Entrepreneurship in business and in solving national problems.
- ◆ Economic growth coupled with environmental and quality of life concerns.

These are all larger issues that go beyond the classroom, but the program is setting about to train the public- and private-sector leaders of tomorrow who will be dealing with these problems and others yet to be encountered in the century ahead. ◆

—David L. Jickling

TRAVELERS' TIPS: PHOTO ISSUES

Those of us who reside in Washington, D.C., know that the tourist's trademark is the camera hanging around his neck — no trip will go undocumented. In some other countries, however, the shutter bug risks having his camera confiscated or, worse, may find himself arrested.

In Ghana, for example, carrying a camera is considered suspicious and travelers have been arrested for taking photographs near sensitive installations, including government build-

ings and airports. Similarly, in many countries in Latin America, photographs are discouraged. In Slovenia, a traveler is at risk of being arrested for taking any photographs at all — it is absolutely prohibited.

Therefore, check your destination's regulations before packing your camera; you may want to leave it at home. And always ask if you're in doubt about whether photographs are permitted. ♦

—*Tina-Marie Platt*

DEVTECH is always interested in new ideas and new people. If you would like to comment on this publication, or if you would like more information about the firm, career opportunities, consulting positions, or our summer internship program, please contact our Washington office.

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