

# International Educational Programs

American higher education's commitment to world education is one of our most important undertakings.

Frank Bowles

**The World Role of Universities** by Edward W. Weidner (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1962. 378 pp. \$6.95) is the end product of an ambitious undertaking, begun in 1957 with the support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, to study the international exchange programs of American universities. The study, administered by Michigan State University through an Institute of Research on Overseas Programs (which was established specifically to provide a base for this project), has spread over 5 years and 40 countries. It has produced an introductory volume entitled *The International Programs of American Universities*, which was published in 1958; eight studies of the operation of American exchange programs within geographical areas, six of which have been published; and finally, this volume which presents an interpretation of the data from all regions, a general summary, and conclusions.

The purpose of the entire study is stated in the following terms: "The fundamental objective of the present research project was to examine the impacts university programs have on institutions and individuals abroad, and also the impacts they have on institutions and individuals at home. Impacts were to be examined as to their extent, the factors or variables related to them, and the criteria or sets of criteria that could be and are used to assess them." This statement of purpose may be taken as a declaration of intention to evaluate the international programs of American universities, and indeed, the discussion of definitions, research model, and procedures bears out such an intention.

However, after reading *The World Role of Universities*, I am forced to the conclusion that the book is in fact directed to an examination of the opera-

tional problems of these programs, a purpose related to, but different from, the one originally established. The point of difference between the announced purpose of the study and the book which is the end result of the study is not one to be stressed, for it actually rests largely on interpretation and opinion. What is important is that the project as a whole has produced data and findings which Weidner has assembled into a useful and valuable book. Actually this volume had to be written before evaluations of overseas programs could be undertaken, for it deals with organizations, structures, and operations—the facts that control programs and determine results. In its internal structure the book has been shaped by the fact that it deals with three separate sets of educational operations that are linked together only by a relationship to the international programs of American universities.

## Educational Systems Abroad

The first area discussed (after a brief opening chapter "The dimensions of the problem"), deals with the educational structures and the student-professor relationships in the other countries of the world. This is in many ways the most difficult task that the author has undertaken, for the problem of isolating and stating the educational philosophies of other nations is one which up until now has eluded most Americans who have undertaken it. The reasons for this are difficult to determine, although clearly one of the most important rests on the extent to which most analysts have been first attracted to, and then have finally bogged down in, the problems of differ-

ences in methods and attitudes. In his efforts to establish a base of understanding on which a discussion of the operations of American international programs can be placed, the author has managed to avoid this pitfall and to discuss educational purposes and their relationships to organization and structure. The result is an interesting and useful treatment, but one that stops short of certain broad statements and generalizations which would have added greatly to the strength of the entire section. For example, one looks in vain for a statement such as the one recently made by the Brazilian educator Anísio Teixeira in which he pointed out the striking resemblance between educational programs, student-professor relationships, and the products of the educational systems in many countries that emphasize what he terms "education for consumption" and the sharp contrasts between this form of education and "education for production" which is emphasized in the United States and several other countries. Even the obvious fact that nine-tenths of all higher education outside of the United States is directly supported by, and in the final analysis controlled by, national governments is not directly stated in this section, although, as many Americans have discovered, it is of major importance.

The second major section of the book deals with various forms of student-abroad programs administered directly by American colleges and universities for groups of their students. This section, carefully done, has obviously drawn heavily upon the area monographs already completed; the result is a disturbingly clear presentation of the inadequacies of these programs. Most of the points are already well known to the relatively small number of American educators who have taken the trouble to become familiar with programs of this type. However, for the majority who have accepted the programs at their face value as though they were automatically of high quality because of their relationship to foreign universities, many comments will come as something of a shock. Certainly it is too true that the past difficulties in the planning of programs, lack of care in the selection of students, and the use of inexperienced administrators and supervisors, and an attitude towards students,

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on the part of host institutions, which often borders on the cavalier—all points that are mentioned and documented in the presentation—have damaged not only the standing of student-abroad programs but the general overseas reputation of American higher education. These are all points which should be made, but it should also be said that in making them the author has failed to make certain other points which would have formed a logical part of the chapter.

One all too obvious point, at least for American educators living abroad, is the existence of what might be termed semilegitimate student-abroad programs, promoted by private individuals or groups for their own profit, not connected with any recognized American institutions but given a loose cover of academic respectability by utilizing instructional programs offered by European institutions, supplemented by lecture series, theatre and music subscriptions, and other cultural-cum-educational activities. Such programs, which each year draw a sizable number of American students, are at best an opportunity to spend an expensive and chaperoned year abroad and at worst actually dangerous for the students in them.

Another point, which appears worthy of some consideration, is the scant attention paid to the possible use of student-abroad programs for the purpose of educating American students for overseas assignments. Certainly it is an odd and interesting fact that the need for such education is barely touched on in the book, although the work of the project has shown clearly that the lack of Americans with competences for overseas work is one of the principal deficiencies of our entire overseas effort. It is understandable that a discussion of this nature might have been considered as out of place in a book dealing primarily with program operations, but there still remains a valid question about why education in this area has received so little attention.

### Technical Assistance

The third major section of the book (and judging by the space devoted to it, the one considered by the author to be the most important) deals with the types of American programs that are concerned with technical assistance. Such programs embrace a large number of contracts by which American univer-

sities supply specific types of instruction that forms a part of the educational programs offered in foreign countries; there is another group of arrangements under which foreign students study at American universities in order to achieve a specific technical or professional qualification. These programs, supported either by foundations or by governments, utilize American colleges as contractors who supply services that are directed toward specific goals. According to the examples given, the extent of the services vary all the way from programs for the training of tractor drivers and service men to the development of professional schools, and from 1- or 2-year contracts to programs planned on a long-term basis.

There can be no doubt about the importance of these programs, for in fact the commitment, through programs of this type, which American higher education has made to world education (as distinct from the commitment of American higher education to American education) has become so large that it constitutes, in and of itself, one of the world's larger systems of higher education. When it is viewed as a system, which is what is done in *The World Role of Universities*, it becomes clear that it is piecemeal, widely scattered, often staffed and administered on an ad hoc basis, sometimes poorly planned, and at present probably unduly expensive in terms of provable results. But it is also clear that this program, with all its faults, is one of the most important undertakings of our time. It is building institutions, developing methods, establishing programs, training teachers as well as technicians and specialists, and introducing ideas on a scale that no other single program approaches. It is an undertaking which commands attention, and which, in commanding attention, has, in a sense, forced *The World Role of Universities* into a form clearly different from the one intended.

In praising what the author (who was also director of the entire project) has accomplished, it is not out of place to express a tempered regret over the superabundance of the material that has been drawn into the book. The repetition of examples bearing on the same point and the reuse of the same example to prove different points make for heavy reading—for example, a program of veterinary medicine in Mexico, which involves the University of Pennsylvania, is mentioned in different contexts on pages 121, 123, 124,

174, and 200. The use of a style that involves many different points, some of which are fairly minor, buttressed by repeated examples, operates to smother findings, evaluations, and suggested criteria. Further, the facts are so omnipresent that they prevent detachment or generalization—I found myself repeatedly wishing the author had winnowed his facts down to two or three of major importance and had undertaken to show their relationship to one another. Admittedly the decision to do so is difficult when, as in the case of all writings dealing with international problems, the facts are so hard to come by in the first place that their sacrifice becomes an almost unbearable act.

In coming to the end of *The World Role of Universities*, and particularly in reading the careful and detailed final chapters entitled "An agenda for American universities" and "An agenda for foundations and governments," the reader is left with the strong impression that Weidner has exercised too much restraint in writing his report—that he has avoided generalizations to stay close to documented facts, that analyses and insights have been left unwritten—in short, that he has more to say than he has said. We may hope that this is so, for, while we need the facts and findings with which he has presented us, we have even greater need of the judgments and observations that he is so obviously and so well prepared to give us.

### Ornithology

**Handbook of North American Birds.**  
vol. 1, *Loons Through Flamingos*.  
Ralph S. Palmer, Ed. Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1962.  
xx + 567 pp. Illus. Plates. \$15.

This handbook was planned to fill the need in North America for a compendium of information on the species of birds that occur entirely or in part in the New World north of Mexico. An immense effort has been expended by the editor and his many collaborators in assembling information. The general subjects dealt with are systematic categories and their characterizations, plumages, distribution, geographic variation, field identification, voice, habitat, migration, reproduction, habits, and food. Other topics are covered where appropriate to the species concerned, although items on special struc-