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720
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JUN -8 1959

March 10, 1944

Dr. Roger Evans
Rockefeller Foundation
49 West 49th Street
New York, New York

Dear Roger:

I hope the enclosed memorandum which I am transmitting
for Donald Young and myself will cover the ground which we
discussed at lunch last Friday.

Sincerely yours,

Paul
Paul Webbink

Enclosure

PW:zd

*Lets confer
on your
return*

*have you
conferred?*

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SOCIAL SCIENCE CONSIDERATIONS IN THE PLANNING OF
REGIONAL SPECIALIZATION IN
HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

World War II, through the activities of American troops and civilian agencies overseas in all parts of the globe, has exposed the provincial orientation of the higher educational institutions of the United States. The number of competent students of other world areas has been found inadequate for even the most essential of national war purposes. Pre-war research had not provided an informed basis for foreign operations. Teachers and teaching materials for the training of needed personnel were lacking. After several years of war and preparation for war, the situation is still far from satisfactory.

The Army, the Navy and numerous civilian war agencies have spent millions of dollars in mobilizing educational and research resources to aid them in their work abroad. The development of university centers for area and language study under the ASTP has been one of the most important of these activities. The co-operation of universities and their faculties in this work has been wholehearted. The resulting interest, experience and enthusiasm concerning training and research in the problems of specific foreign areas is healthy and deserves to be guided into productive and continuing channels.

There are, however, understandably wide differences of opinion concerning the next steps to be taken in areal education and research and also about the goals to be achieved. It would be surprising if at this stage of development there were not disagreement about both the objectives to be served and the means by which these objectives may best be attained. One approach to area studies emphasizes almost exclusively instruction in the language of the regions in question. A second approach is based on a conviction that the Army's experience with its area and language program has developed a pattern which, with some modifications, should be continued by universities as the most effective feasible procedure. Thirdly, there are those who place great emphasis on the relation of

regional specialization to future prospective needs for especially trained men and to the structure of higher education as a whole and who consequently are convinced that it is necessary to envision the basic problem in terms which are broader in scope either than the linguistic or the Army program approaches. A fourth school of thought might be added were it not that fortunately it seems as yet to have virtually no proponents in influential circles in the United States. Its objective would be the fostering of the type of nationalistically inspired institutes combining intensive instruction, research and national propaganda which was characteristic of much of German regional specialization.

Purposes to be Served by the Regional Approach:

Realistic thinking concerning the advisability of expending the funds of universities and foundations and of drawing heavily upon the services of those competent to participate in an areal program must be based upon an evaluation of the purposes which may be served.

First, there can be little doubt that in the future a much larger number of regional experts will be needed than has been the case in the past. Some will be needed to staff international agencies and offices and missions of our own government. Some may well be desired by particular foreign governments, as advisers, liaison men, technicians or teachers. Presumably a larger number of such persons than before the war will also be sought by commercial concerns, financial institutions, air lines, press associations, etc. Men of high competence will be required to train the personnel for these positions, and also to conduct the research necessary to provide the knowledge essential as a basis for such work.

For the most part, however, the men falling within this general category will have to be both regional and subject-matter specialists. The experience of the present war has shown that it is not enough to have men who know the language, general culture or even the geography of a region of operation. It has been

extraordinarily difficult to find economists, sociologists, political scientists, police experts, dieticians, engineers or doctors with any relevant preparation for dealing with the specific tasks confronting military, diplomatic, trade or civil government officials with respect to the French, Italian, Moslem, Japanese and other peoples. Similarly, when one looks to the future it is certain that if the governments of China or Iran or Egypt or Poland ask Americans to assist in programs of reconstruction or of development, they will be looking for technicians in one or another of the fields of the social sciences, the natural sciences or education, and they will have little interest - save perhaps for their tourist bureaus - in persons having only a generalized regional training.

Second, a related but separate category will consist of persons who are called upon to spend one, two, or three years abroad in a country whose people differ substantially in culture and language from the United States. There will be engineers sent abroad by petroleum or construction companies, health officers, economists engaged in studies of transportation or banking problems, soil experts to rehabilitate war-destroyed or long disused lands. Their assignments will be briefer in duration and narrower in scope than those within the first category. They will need a knowledge of the general social, economic, and political characteristics of the country in which they are to work, a working knowledge of its language, and an awareness of the need of putting aside any feelings of superiority or amusement or of missionary zeal with respect to the customs and traits of the people among whom they temporarily will live. They will not, however, have the time or the need for as much training as those in the first category.

Third, the possible use of the areal approach as a basis for general or liberal education requires consideration quite separate from the need for regional experts in each of the various fields bearing upon international relations or the interchange of technical knowledges and services, and from the cultural and

linguistic training of technicians or scientists going abroad for limited spans of time.

There is much to be said for this use of the areal approach. It is essentially the approach formerly employed by the British universities when they used the literature, history, culture, and language of Greece and Rome as a means of, on the one hand, enriching and, on the other, setting up contrasts to their students' own cultural experience. A well educated person must have acquired somehow an awareness of the vicissitudes endured and the contributions made by peoples or nations whose cultural patterns, economic and social circumstances, and values differ from those with which he has or will have direct experience in the course of his own life. Giving undergraduates in at least some colleges and universities an opportunity to acquire an insight into the culture and values of the Chinese or Moslem or Russian worlds, in contrast to the usual instruction based solely upon ideas and materials drawn from western European civilization, should have definite value.

However, except for those who already intend to specialize in graduate or professional training the areal approach can not be pushed very far among American undergraduates. Admittedly much will depend upon future American attitudes, among both students and parents, toward the desirability or usefulness of understanding foreign cultures. There will always be a danger in any case that intensive undergraduate instruction in cultures quite alien to their own will instead of enriching the educational process result in discontentment and disassociation from conventional patterns without providing an adequate substitute, thereby creating a number of culturally dispossessed and generally maladjusted human beings.

Looking at the problem more pragmatically, there is real doubt concerning the number of parents and students who may be willing to have their money and time expended upon the intensive study of Chinese or Italian or Russian civilization

in substitution for the more conventional and generally accepted types of college majors and minors. It is questionable, for instance, whether even a single university could muster the sixty intensive students of Turkish apparently needed to justify financially the type of curriculum suggested by those who believe that intensive language training should serve as the core of areal specialization. Perhaps a somewhat larger constituency might be found for intensive instruction in Chinese, French, or Russian but it is still highly debatable whether there would be a sufficient number of multiples of sixty to permit every institution of university grade to offer work of that kind for these areas or for the others which have been suggested.

This is not said out of a conviction that pre-war undergraduate curricula had reached perfection and that college curricula should not be reoriented both generally and in terms of specialized experimentation at particular institutions. In choosing the particular type of reorientation to be attempted the institutions will, however, have to judge suggested innovations both in relation to the overall purposes of their institutions and in the light of prospective demands for particular types of training.

Fourth, the social sciences have an especially strong reason for viewing sympathetically any increased emphasis upon areal studies, inasmuch as they are materially limited by the fact that they are based almost wholly upon ideas, materials and research relating to the civilizations and experience of the western European and North American world. Useful correctives to many generalizations based upon western European civilization should result from greater attention to the cultures and data of other areas. The European and American cultural provincialism of the social sciences needs to be overcome. What is needed is not a substitute for work on American problems and materials, but rather additional work in widely different foreign areas so that better perspective may be gained.

A fifth major purpose will be served by the development of area studies if

the specialization of particular institutions can be keyed in with the anticipated entry into the United States of large numbers of students from all over the world. The function in this case, of course, will not be to give instruction in the students' native languages or cultures, but to provide centers where they may most understandingly be given the distinctive educational contributions of this country for effective utilization upon their return home. If the number of foreign students coming to this country were to remain at about the pre-war figure, this purpose of areal studies would not be of too great importance. Informed people, however, believe that there will be a great increase in number, and estimates have been made ranging into the tens of thousands.

Limitations of the Linguistic and Army Approaches:

It has been noted that our institutions of higher education failed to have ready the persons with a wide but thorough knowledge of foreign countries and cultures which war-time necessities required. The deficiencies have had to be remedied as well as possible through hasty improvisations. The improvisation has been brilliant in some directions but far from satisfactory in others.

If the specific purposes to be served have been correctly stated above, curricula constructed around a core of linguistic study which perforce shuts out thorough education in other disciplines will fail as completely as did the pre-war curricula. There is no question about the feasibility of constructing a standardized curriculum which will give any person of normal intelligence a sufficient working knowledge of the language, customs and outstanding points of interest of a foreign area so that he can conduct himself with decorum and some profit if his interest is only that of the tourist or if his relations with the people with whom he deals are of some other transitory and superficial character. A knowledge of the language has not, however, guaranteed effective relationships and functioning among some of the Americans sent to Great Britain. Also,

professors of English literature in this country, who commonly have a wider and deeper knowledge of American culture than can ordinarily be given in the course of undergraduate instruction, may hardly be said to be in general equipped for work in their own country parallel to most of the tasks suggested by the list of purposes attributed above to areal studies.

Knowledge of the language of the country in which one is working is most important, but except for ~~teachers~~ of language it is rarely an end in itself. Broad, general understanding, and appreciation of the culture of the country in which one is working is also most important, but again this is seldom enough if there is a specific job to be done. In some way, linguistic training and general cultural appreciation need to be linked with rigorous specialized education in some other field for most people who expect to work abroad or in this country on some foreign area problem.

Evidence is not yet available to justify the conviction that the area and language courses given for the Army during the past year or so have established a usable pattern for the future. Indeed, there are many protests from faculty members who have taught in the Army program that their own work was unavoidably unsatisfactory. Some of these protests blame the allegedly unsatisfactory work on conditions for which the Army had responsibility; others stress the poverty of materials and the scarcity of properly prepared teachers; many cite both types of factors. Save for the Army students who entered these programs with extensive prior training or experience, it is doubtful whether many acquired adequate understanding of the economic, social, and political problems which they were to be prepared to face. The training was too superficial on the social science side. There was too little advance planning of the social science content and materials. Instruction was often given by men who, even if taken from the social sciences, had hastily switched from some domestic study to the German economic system, or to some totally new field of

specialization. In any case, the evidence is not yet in hand.

The conviction of those who emphasize the linguistic or the Army area-and-language approaches that they have found a key to a more significant regrouping of college curricula, and their opinion that these proposals will best serve our future needs for regionally trained personnel, is genuine and sincere. It may not be amiss, however, to note a warning that attempts will be made no doubt to exploit for other ends their enthusiasm or that of still other schools of thought. Institutions which fear that they will be disadvantaged in the competition for students at some future date, or institutions which in the present curtailed state of university instruction wish to find profitable occupation for their faculties, or others which try to ride along on any current enthusiasm which promises to enjoy some measure of foundation or other outside support, will unquestionably seek financial advantage out of the area and language idea. In some institutions it is almost certain to be perverted into narrowly vocational lines. Educational institutions, especially the weaker ones and those whose trustees and executives lack any particular sense of direction, are not infrequently subject to band-wagon climbing impulses. It will be amazing if one or more institutions do not engage in proselytizing teachers and students with the bait that a tremendously exciting and profitable field of employment is opening up and that their particular variety of streamlined training will provide the graduate with exceptional equipment for a speedy access to an interesting and well-paid job.

No honest and informed person can reasonably estimate how many careers can be built upon area-and-language specialization in the post-war years. We all think that there will be more than before the war; yet, that is in no sense assured. At all events it behooves everyone who is sincerely anxious to make the best possible application of the current interest, and of the limited experience which we have acquired, to discourage systematically all efforts to

promise too much. Otherwise that which might prove to be sound will be discredited along with the cases of charlatanism.

If particular branches of the governmental service of this or other countries have special needs which can only be served by special curricula, there is no reason why the universities and others who are interested should not cooperate fully. An effort should, however, be made to integrate these special interests with those which can reasonably be expected to be relatively more permanent. In any case it would be well to make sure that the governmental agencies are genuinely interested, that they have carefully considered the nature and requirements of their interest, and that their requests are thoughtfully evaluated by the universities to which they may turn. And, it is not unreasonable to insist that, before assumptions based upon what others think that the governmental agencies ought to want are translated into curricular implementation, the agencies concerned show some genuine initiative on their part. Similarly there is no reason for proceeding on the basis of speculative assumptions concerning the prospective needs of commercial and industrial employers for areally trained personnel. Some tangible initiative on the part of these employers, too, should be in evidence before curricular adjustments are begun on a purely speculative basis.

The Necessary Content of Regional Specialization:

Turning to the content of regional or areal specialization, the persons whose prospective careers or whose research interests require a rather full understanding of the culture and institutions of a particular area can achieve this only by some combination or other of training in:

- a. History
- b. Geography
- c. Social relationships and customs
- d. Government
- e. Economic characteristics and systems
- f. Language

Inevitably the precise nature of the man's interests and also the opportunities open at the institution which he is attending will determine the proportionate importance of these fields in his individual training. No one whose prospective career or interests call for a rounded understanding and appreciation of the country or group of countries with which the plans to be concerned can fully equip himself without some measure of serious instruction in each of these fields.

For most of the men with a definite regional interest, a substantial part of the training needed falls within the social science fields. With this will have to be combined a working knowledge, or a better than working knowledge, of the language or languages which he will have to use. Furthermore, depending partly upon the exact nature of his interests, it will be desirable that he do as much as he can in other branches of the humanities pertaining to the culture with which he is concerned.

It is highly doubtful whether any standardized curricular pattern yielding all round competence can be constructed. Certainly none has yet been constructed. Not only the man's own field of specialization but the relative competence of the man in the other fields will have to determine this very largely.

While a standard pattern will not fit the specialist's needs, some degree of standardization at particular institutions will no doubt be necessary if the needs of other groups are to be met. It should be feasible, after some experimentation, to evolve a fairly satisfactory grouping of offerings which will within approximately a year impart at least the essentials needed by an engineer, a geologist, a doctor, or an economist regarding the social institutions, commerce, government, and external relationships of a particular area to which a man may be going on a fairly narrow and specific assignment. Within this time he should also be able to acquire some knowledge of the language, though whether

there will be sufficient time to enable him to acquire an effective working mastery of the language will no doubt depend partly upon his prior linguistic training.

For either thorough training or for the intensive work which may be possible for special purposes within a single year or so scrupulous care must be exercised to make certain that the curriculum offerings will be competently taught. Even if it follows that some of the specialization which we regard as necessary must be postponed until competent teachers can be trained, it will be better to wait than to engage in sloppy teaching which can only serve to multiply incompetence and misunderstanding.

Few economists, sociologists, or historians are competent to teach Chinese, Arabic, or Russian - or to teach the subject matter of their disciplines in these or any other foreign tongue. If by accident some of them have had actual experience in linguistic teaching, it is unlikely that they will have kept abreast of the developments in language instruction of the past few years. Similarly few language teachers, if any, are competent to give instruction in the economics of China, the race relations problems of the Balkans, or Soviet administrative methods and procedures. Only rarely will the student of Italian history be equally competent in the economics of Italy, or the student of Indian economics competent to teach with respect to the social customs and caste structure of India.

The temptation to improvise knowledge, with the aid of such reference works, of whatever date, as may happen to be available in the University library, will be great in those institutions which wish to rush headlong into areal or regional specialization. There are indications that the Army's area and language courses suffered from insufficient resistance to this temptation.

No doubt there are some historians, economists, anthropologists, archeologists, curators, or linguists whose lack of specific knowledge of the content of other

disciplines leaves them with an impression that they are omniscient in all aspects of the life of the country or culture with which they have been dealing. The experiences of the State Department, of O.S.S., and of the Army generally have fully demonstrated that this sort of omniscience is rare, if not nonexistent. It is certainly not generally available enough to provide a sound basis for the development of university areal curricula. If universities neglect or do not wish to exercise discrimination in their curricular offerings in terms of the competent teaching staff available, the life-expectancy of their regional curricula will be very short indeed.

The special teaching competence required and the uncertainties concerning the number of interested students make it all the more obvious that this is not something on which universities or foundations can afford to gamble their resources beyond the encouragement of a carefully selected number of experiments. If further argument on that point is required it is only necessary to recall that in the half dozen years immediately after the war several other major problems will have to be met by the universities. For example, they will face a prospective educational overload of returning veterans and of civilians whose education was interrupted by war employment. Also, there is the problem of overcoming the unbalance created by war-time needs between the natural sciences on the one side and the social sciences and the humanities on the other. A third example is the as yet unforeseeable but certain problem of readjustment within our society and economy which will throw a number of special strains and burdens upon the universities. Plans for the development of regional studies can not be formulated successfully without full regard for the other demands which will be thrust upon educational and research institutions and personnel.

Opportunities for the Development of Work on Foreign Regions:

The major elements of a program of guidance and stimulation of areal studies for the next few years here suggested are the following:

1. By all means encourage further development and experimentation in linguistics along the lines which have been developed in the past few years. This may be done most effectively in terms of their value as a means of facilitating rapid mastery of languages, not as an approach or as the approach to the problem of areal or regional specialization.

2. Select from among the institutions which profess a continuing interest in areal work a few which have special teaching equipment in terms of staff and materials, and after consideration of the particular regions in which they wish to specialize, give them sufficient support for a few years to permit effective experimentation.

3. The selection of universities should not be made in terms of their conformity to a particular pattern. Rather an effort should be made to pick up institutions which propose to work along quite different lines in order that the fullest advantage may be gained from their individual experimentation.

4. Avoid in any one university or in any group of universities an effort to cover all possible areas and all types of specialization, unless this evolves quite unforced.

5. Recognize at the outset that the principal guidance and direction will come in individual institutions from persons from any one of a variety of departments, depending upon individual talents and relationships. Avoid any assumption that the "key" man must be in any one particular discipline.

6. Make sure that the institutions understand that it is better to leave out some areas of knowledge than ostensibly to cover all at the cost of shoddy teaching. Better no instruction in Chinese economics than instruction given by a man whose actual knowledge is limited to American economics and who imparts to his students a mixture of misapplied American analogies and second-hand information from books or other sources whose objectivity and competence he is not competent to judge.

7. While the imposition of a fixed pattern or set of standards should be avoided, support might reasonably be restricted to institutions whose programs are intended to serve at least two or more of the following general objectives:

- (a) Some inter-departmental combination of opportunities for intensive work for those who wish to develop real specialization concerning one or more phases of the culture, institutions, or government of a particular nation or area, with a view toward teaching, research, governmental service or private employment;
- (b) The provision of more intensive short-run (one year or summer session) courses for engineers, doctors, natural scientists, social scientists, or others whose primary lines of activity or research lead into a need for spending some years abroad.
- (c) The development at the institution of something in the nature of a research center or clearing point for knowledge, library resources, or other materials, and for visiting scholars or students. ✓
- (d) Facilities for the training in the United States of groups of foreign students from the area in which the institution wishes to specialize.
- (e) The use of the area of specialization as a part of the liberal arts curriculum for undergraduates.

8. Whether or not the institution's specialized interest leads to the establishment of some sort of institute is of secondary importance. What is important is that there be, through formal or informal arrangements, a definite understanding among competent persons in several disciplines, including the relevant languages, that there will be a cooperative pooling of interests and

of curriculum building, to the end that competition or overlapping between departments will be avoided, that decent teaching or research standards will be maintained, and the institution's total contribution will be somewhat larger than would flow from the autonomous activities of each of the departments acting independently.

By request.

2/10/44