

Agricultural training – how has it changed?

“Preferential investments in equitable development (e.g. literacy, education and training) that contribute to reducing ethnic, gender, and other inequities would advance development goals” (World Agriculture Report 2008). Unfortunately this is not entirely true of agricultural personnel training and development in the last decade of development. Paradigm shifts in development policy have also constantly reinvented the demands made on InWEnt’s agricultural training programmes. How have they evolved?

Traditionally, agricultural personnel training within German development cooperation was closely linked to the expectation of making a positive difference to the living conditions of rural people. While in the past it was mostly agricultural technicians from public administrations and research institutions who underwent training – in the hope that they would implement

What is InWEnt?

InWEnt – Capacity Building International, Germany, is active worldwide in human resource development, advanced training and dialogue, and builds networks for international cooperation. InWEnt works together with people in key positions, assisting them in shaping processes of change in their own countries. Its capacity building programmes are designed for experts and executives from politics, administrations, the business community and civil society. InWEnt qualifies people to pass on their knowledge to others and effect long-term structural changes.

More information: www.inwent.org

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innovative techniques in the agricultural landscape of their home countries – today there are instead modular training programmes for the leadership elite from agricultural administrations, NGOs or private consultancies. So advanced training programmes today do not just target a different clientele, but also aim through human resource development to have a positive influence on the organisational development of the partner institutions in which the executives are employed.

What was advanced agricultural training like before?

In the past the long-term agricultural training at InWEnt had an interdisciplinary and multicultural approach. The one-year individual training programme was not only relevant to experts in one particular field, but also brought together people from different parts of the world working in fields as diverse as horticulture, soil protection, plant protection and irrigation. The interdisciplinary approach was shaped by the intercultural learning and working environment of the participants, with their wide range of languages, cultures and agricultural knowledge of the climatic conditions of their home countries. The proportion of women on these courses was

higher than it is today. The language of work and communication among course members was exclusively German; this helped with communication during work experience placements at the numerous German businesses and state colleges. The practical training lasting up to seven months afforded the participants an in-depth insight into the procedures, practices and organisation of the German workplace. There was not only general expertise to be gained here, but also solutions to specific agronomic problems in participants’ home regions. The participants’ stay in Germany further included various training seminars in which practical questions were discussed.

It was found to be almost impossible to measure the success of knowledge transfer of this sort. It undoubtedly contributed to the subject knowledge of those who completed the courses, but it was impossible to establish whether it resulted in definite developmental progress for the institutions who sent them from their home countries.

How has advanced agricultural training changed?

From individual expertise to capacity building. In modern development cooperation, with its many partners



and actors, the individual development of expertise of the past is being replaced in today's advanced training by capacity building. Experts and executives are helped particularly to develop their proactive management capability and their ability to transfer the skills acquired in the context of their own work situation. For several years InWEnt has been running practice-oriented advanced training in Germany through its International Leadership Training (ILT), which every year equips up to 400 young executives to perform their role as technical experts and socially responsible individuals.

From subject specialist to change agent. Today's International Leadership Training is a response to new demands arising from development policy criteria. As a result, assembling groups of participants from different regions can no longer be contemplated, because development policy now specifies that cooperation should target particular regions. The broad exchange of information by agricultural experts from similar climatic regions with different approaches to solving similar farming problems will therefore become a thing of the past.

However, experience of training measures in the past has also shown

International Leadership Training (ILT) in West Africa

The courses devised for agriculture for West Africa since 2005 have been developed specially for the new generation of executives from selected organisations and institutions in the partner countries of international and German cooperation. In all, fifty-three young executives from Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, Mali and Chad took part in the ILT courses "Sustainable agriculture and food production" and "Regional management for rural West Africa". The participants were trained as "change agents" for their organisations, in order to pass on the practical and theoretical knowledge gained and implement relevant changes and innovations in their institutions, organisations and companies, appropriate to the specific establishment and location.

- The participants in the 2005/2006 ILT "**Sustainable agriculture and food production**" course received training in the theory and practice of horticulture, natural plant protection, post-harvest technology and land management. In addition they acquired methodological competencies as disseminators to pass on this expertise. This process can take place at employer level as part of colleague training, or through organised training schemes for people or institutions in the context of the individual's professional work.
- The participants in the 2007/2008 ILT "**Regional management in West Africa**" course gained basic skills in communication, facilitation and consultation from the executive training in Germany. The prospective "African regional managers" acquired further competencies in the fields of organisational development, decentralised management of natural resources, and poverty reduction and food security through decentralised support for the business sector and value chains in agriculture.

that instructing disseminators in technical innovation is not enough on its own to increase the potential for development among the rural population. In modern staff and organisational development, which is supported by the ILT programme, an executive's technical competency cannot be separated from his intercultural management competency and socially responsible behaviour. In this way a very much stronger impetus for development can be gained, both for the participant's home organisation and for the target groups in rural areas. On completion of the training the agricultural expert immediately becomes a change agent for his

employer. Today, the ability to apply what he has learned can be gauged by the actual implementation of individual "transfer projects" planned as part of the course. In this way it is possible to measure and evaluate investment in advanced training.

Neglect of advanced agricultural training

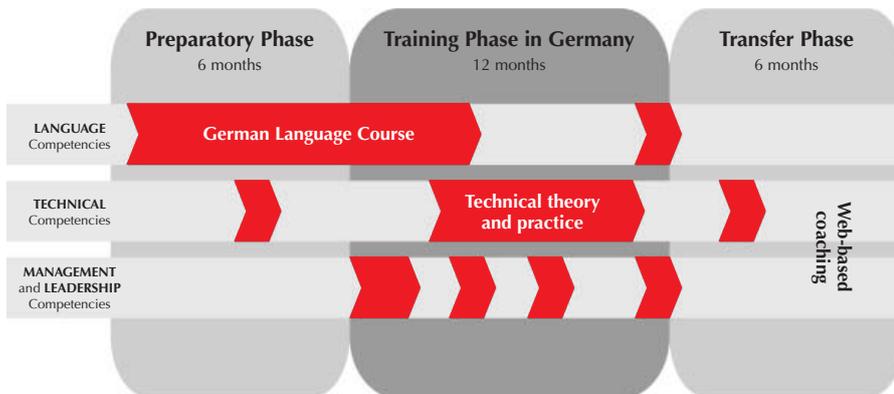
The neglect of the agricultural sector by development cooperation in recent years has also had an adverse effect on personnel training and development in the sector. Structural adjustment, declining prices for agricultural products, and a fall in external funding for agriculture and rural areas are certainly some of the reasons for this neglect on the part of both donors and recipients. The current food crises in many developing countries – driven by the high prices of foods and raw materials – are now shifting the spotlight back to agriculture. National poverty reduction strategies, market globalisation, privatisation and decentralisation are, for many countries, further incentives to focus more attention on rural areas.



Photo: Baumgart

Young executives from West African countries participating in an International Leadership Training programme.

Format of the ILT with learning aims and course structure



ILT – advanced training with an original profile

Every year InWEnt offers more than twenty different sector- and country-specific ILT courses. At its “learning centre” in Germany, InWEnt draws on the expertise of German organisations and businesses which, as part of their work experience, provide the participants with an insight into work structure and give them access to cutting-edge knowledge. The partner institutions of development cooperation suggest potential projects for change and put applicants forward. This strengthens cooperation and boosts the sustainability of the programme (Tracer study, ZEM 2008).

ILT courses consist of core modules such as one on international proactive management, in combination with flexible components specifically tailored to sectors and regions (see figure).

In the present ILT courses participants must undertake a transfer project. It is an important element in ascertaining the effect and sustainability of the ILT and is planned and carried out using the full project management toolbox.

Every ILT course has its own homepage and closed virtual classrooms on the InWEnt learning platform Global Campus 21® (www.gc21.de). The virtual classrooms each correspond to a phase of the course and document information including the progress of individual transfer projects during the training phase in Germany. Working together in a group encourages networking and leads to “colleague-to-colleague consultancy” among ILT graduates. In the virtual alumni realm, old-fashioned aftercare is transformed into collaboration in both specialist and interdisciplinary matters, which with the help of electronic media can achieve wide distri-

bution across all continents as well as high interactivity.

The preparatory phase for a new ILT course on regional management in West Africa (see also box, page 13) began in the spring of 2009 and is promoting value chains in rural areas in line with the strategic priorities of German development cooperation on agriculture and rural development. The programme to qualify participants in value chains in West Africa is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and clearly confirms that, at the end of the day, sustainability and development targets can only be achieved by acknowledging complexity and diversity in agriculture.

Further reading

- Summary of the World Agriculture Report (International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, IAASTD), 2008, Paris
- InWEnt ILT brochure: Regional management in West Africa 2007–2008, Bonn
- ILT documentation: Spécialistes de la Gestion du Développement régional, 2009, Bonn
- ILT tracer study 2008, Center for Evaluation and Methods, University of Bonn, 2008, Bonn
- Further information on International Leadership Training is available at www.inwent.org/ilt

Zusammenfassung

Die landwirtschaftliche Aus- und Weiterbildung ist ein zentrales Anliegen der deutschen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit. Landwirtschaftliche Weiterbildungsprogramme von InWEnt wurden stets an die Bedürfnisse der Partnerländer und die Anforderungen der Entwicklungspolitik angepasst. Individuell zugeschnittene Programme für Fach- und Führungskräfte früherer Zeiten haben sich zu modular aufgebauten Trainingsmaßnahmen einer modernen Personal- und Organisations-

entwicklung weiterentwickelt. Das Konzept des International Leadership Training wird beispielhaft am Agrarsektor in Westafrika vorgestellt.

Resumen

La formación y capacitación en temas agrícolas son una preocupación central de la cooperación alemana para el desarrollo. Los programas de capacitación agrícola de InWEnt han sido adaptados continuamente a los requerimientos de los países contraparte y las necesidades

de la política de desarrollo. Los programas hechos a medida para personal técnico y directivo de tiempos pasados han sido modificados para convertirse en ofertas de capacitación modulares y modernas, apropiadas para la actualización profesional del personal y el desarrollo organizacional. La estrategia de la Capacitación Internacional de Liderazgo (*International Leadership Training*) es presentada aquí con la ayuda del ejemplo del sector agrícola en África Occidental.

The Alumniportal Deutschland: Information, Networking and Expertise

The Alumniportal Deutschland is an international platform for information and contacts for Germany-Alumni and for organisations and businesses which have an interest in co-operating and networking with Germany-Alumni worldwide. It is arranged across organisations and disciplines.

The Alumniportal Deutschland is the place for people from abroad who have completed their studies or advanced educational or vocational trainings in Germany. The potential of these so-called Germany-Alumni is huge: As they spent some time in Germany, they are acquainted with German culture, the German mentality and work methods. Many of them have a good grasp of the German language. They are highly qualified and several of them hold key posts in their native countries, in the fields of economy, administration or in the civil sector. So they are competent contacts for other alumni and for economic, political and cultural institutions.

Alumniportal Deutschland offers professional content, contacts and exchange functions. It is conceived as a Social Network, based on the principles of Web 2.0. Its functions include an international job and tender exchange, an extensive pool of advanced training, an event calendar, assistance with learning German and planning a career as well as comprehensive information about Germany.

The Portal is made up of five organisations with extensive experience in international co-operation: InWEnt, DAAD, Goethe-Institute, ZAV and AGEF, further institutions support it. They all provide their particular expertise and instruments as well as their worldwide structure to the Portal.

A new and worldwide Alumni-Community

The Alumniportal Deutschland was officially launched in Berlin on Sep-

tember 11, 2008. In October 2008, a large-scale Alumni-Fair in Johannesburg introduced more than 500 participants to this new dimension in social networking. Soon it will be the turn of Asia, followed by Latin America and Europe. Of course, Germany-Alumni from everywhere can already use the Portal and have started making it their own by forming groups based on common aims and interests.

In the Alumniportal Deutschland, the alumni can

- get in touch with businesses, associations, organisations and institutions;
- establish and maintain expert and regional contacts through other alumni;
- find vacancies and tenders in an international Job Exchange;
- register as an applicant, offer their expertise;
- utilise opportunities for further advancement training;
- see announcements for events in their region;
- exchange experience with others and have professional discussions;
- practise the German language;
- receive specific information from various areas of expertise and countries by entering a profile of interests.

In the Alumniportal Deutschland companies, organisations and institutions can

- get to know alumni and set up contacts;
- find personnel, experts and counterparts in key positions;
- insert advertisements for jobs and tenders abroad;
- apply for events;
- obtain information on the activities of other players and alumni networks in individual countries of interest;
- introduce themselves via a personal online profile;
- announce worldwide projects and activities;
- initiate co-operation between the economy, civil society, international organisations of development cooperation and alumni;
- regain contact with alumni and improve their alumni relations generally.

The use of the Alumniportal Deutschland is free of charge and the security of users' data is guaranteed.

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The "Alumniportal Deutschland" offers a wide range of information and interaction between Alumni worldwide and German organisations and business.

Photos: InWEnt