

# Learning funds help vocational trainees

by A Special Correspondent

VOCATIONAL training is considered to be a productive alternative to formal education which only provides white-collar jobs now scarce. Learning fund programme in vogue in some developing countries is unique in the sense that its educational purpose is to provide skilled persons who are employed or under-employed with opportunities to learn how to organise and small business in order to market their skills.

The learners are able to purchase tools and materials with the learning funds and establish or expand small enterprises. This provides the learners with real experiences which are the basis of learning. The enterprises which are begun or expanded with the learning funds motivate the learners to experiment with the new methods and materials; the purpose of this experimentation is to allow the learners to develop

problem-solving skills which are relevant to learners' immediate needs.

THE Indonesia Learning Fund Programme (LFP) provides funds of approximately US-Dollar 250 in the form of capital or equipment to groups of skilled or semi-skilled persons to start or expand small scale enterprises. The target population includes unemployed or underemployed persons between the ages of 12 and 45. By working in the business and participating in its management learners gain experiences through which they can acquire management and administration skills and upgrade vocational skills. These experiences should be processed in discussion with resource persons, and basic skills such as book-keeping should be taught as part of the learning process. This learning component is an unique feature of the LFP in comparison with

other income generating group activities. The LFP is carried out by the Directorate of Community Education (Penmas) within the Directorate General Out-of-School Education Youth and Sports, Department of Education and Culture.

THE overall goal of the LFP is to promote the growth of entrepreneurship and increase managerial skills especially in rural areas. The growth of this sector, which is relatively undeveloped for certain historical and cultural reasons is a high priority in Indonesia's socio-economic development plans. The development of small scale enterprises can be considered an 'intermediate phase industry and services' sector and as such is one immediate response to Indonesia's unemployment problems. Examples of enterprises developed during the project include cotton

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textile industries such as sewing, weaving and food processing and skilled trades such as welding and motor cycle repair, as well as agricultural projects such as net making for local fishery and the inland raising of carp, according to an Indonesian spokesman Maryun Gandaermaya.

Both historical and cultural factors are responsible for the low level of managerial skills and spirit of entrepreneurship in Indonesia. Historically Indonesia is an agrarian feudal society which was bypassed by the industrial revolution that gave rise to an entrepreneurial middle class in the west. The ancient feudal pattern served the interests of the colonialists who became like feudal lords. Raw materials were needed to serve the machines and factories of the colonialists; thus it was to their advantage to prevent the introduction of new technology in Indonesia which would have resulted in a more modern social system. In a technological social system managerial skills are needed at several levels from the cooperative president down to the shop foreman. However technology has only recently been introduced to Indonesia, with the result that the management skills which technology demands have not yet reached the grass roots level, said Maryun Gandaermaya.

Learning is intended to take place in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain. The group members are supposed to learn basic administrative skills such as book keeping, keeping stock inventories etc. The members of the group who are illiterate must also learn literacy and arithmetic skills which enable them to carry out the administrative tasks. In addition more complex problem solving skills might be learned in the LFP. For example because the additional learning fund capital allows for the production of new models group members have to research potential markets for those new products and calculate profits by comparing market potential

costs of raw materials, time etc. Cognitive learning takes place through the processing of experience and the application of marketing and administrative skills described above, opined Maryun Gandaermaya.

In the affective domain the learners gain self confidence and a new sense of responsibility that comes with added capital. One of the main objectives of LFP is to develop this sense of entrepreneurship. The learners also learn to leave to old habits and practices for new ones that may be more economical. For example, those who previously worked alone may have spent all of their profits on personal or family needs. However, because the group is required to save a certain amount of their profits the habit of savings may be acquired by members of learning group. In the psychomotor domain the learners often have to develop new skills to use new more efficient tools that they may purchase with the LFP capital. With the expanded business they also have to learn to make new models employing new production techniques etc, said Maryun.

The social goal of the LFP can be viewed in terms of the individual and society as a whole. The learners are able to immediately increase their income and thereby increase their standard of living by using the learning funds to begin or to increase production. Since this is primarily intended to be a learning process the skills learned in this process should enable the learners to increase production continuously. As the small businesses which are developed in the LFP expand more learners are able to enter the learning groups and thereby gain employment. From the point of view of society the goal of the LFP is to increase the level of entrepreneurship in Indonesia.

This will open new employment opportunities and provide better goods and services for consumers. Increased entrepreneurship is also necessary for the development of the nation's natural resources by Indonesians themselves, felt Maryun Gandaermaya.