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**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
TECHNICAL REPORT SERIES**

No. 186

# **APPRAISAL OF FELLOWSHIPS**

## **Report of a Study Group**

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**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**

PALAIS DES NATIONS

GENEVA

1960

## STUDY GROUP ON APPRAISAL OF FELLOWSHIPS

Geneva, 6-10 July 1959

### Members :

- Professor Paulo C. A. Antunes, Emeritus Professor and former Director, School of Hygiene and Public Health, University of São Paulo, Brazil  
(*Chairman*)
- Dr V. M. Coppleson, Honorary Director, The Post-Graduate Committee in Medicine, University of Sydney, Australia
- Mr L. Farrer-Brown, Director, The Nuffield Foundation, London, England  
(*Vice-Chairman*)
- Dr R. H. Hazemann, Inspecteur général, Ministère de la Santé publique et de la Population, Paris, France
- Dr N. Jungalwalla, Director, All-India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Calcutta, India
- Dr H. W. Kumm, Associate Director, The Rockefeller Foundation, New York, USA (*Rapporteur*)
- Dr B. Petrović, Secretary, Commission for the Co-operation with International Health Organizations, Belgrade, Yugoslavia

### Representatives of United Nations Agencies :

- Mr S. B. Bapat, Director, Office for Public Administration, UN
- Mr H. Brixel, Field Services Division, ILO
- Mr H. Daniel, Deputy Chief, Technical Assistance Office, European Office, UN
- Mr A. Elliott, Head, Clearing House and Advisory Services, Exchange of Persons Service, UNESCO
- Mr J. de Martini, Chief, Training and Fellowships Branch, FAO

### Secretariat :

- Dr M. Charnes, Fellowships Branch, Pan American Sanitary Bureau (WHO Regional Office for the Americas), Washington, D.C., USA
- Miss L. M. Creelman, Chief, Nursing, Division of Organization of Public Health Services, WHO
- Dr W. Hobson, Regional Adviser on Education and Training, WHO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen
- Dr Howard M. Kline, Chief, Education and Training Branch, Division of International Health, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D.C., USA (*Consultant*)
- Dr D. A. Messinezy, Chief, Fellowships, Division of Education and Training, WHO (*Secretary*)

This report was originally issued as mimeographed document MHO/PA/221.59.

## APPRAISAL OF FELLOWSHIPS

### Report of a Study Group

#### Introduction

The Study Group on Appraisal of Fellowships met in Geneva from 6 to 10 July 1959. Dr P. Dorolle, Deputy Director-General, opened the meeting with a short statement defining the purposes for which the meeting was called and the expectations placed on it. Dr Paulo C. A. Antunes was elected Chairman, Mr. L. Farrer-Brown, Vice-Chairman, and Dr H. W. Kumm, Rapporteur.

The holding of the Study Group was approved by the Eleventh World Health Assembly,<sup>1</sup> in order that a review might be made of experiences on the appraisal of fellowships. The Assembly had received a "Report on a Review and Appraisal of WHO Fellowships, 1947-1957".<sup>2</sup> Although the terms of reference of the Study Group were not limited to WHO fellowships, it was the Assembly's intention that the basic material for the Study Group should include this report, the comments of the countries from which the fellows originated and the countries in which they had studied, "together with contributions from some United Nations and other Agencies".<sup>1</sup>

At the conclusion of its discussions, the Assembly passed a resolution<sup>3</sup> in which *inter alia*, it expressed "its satisfaction with the efforts to keep the fellowships under constant review and to develop simple methods of appraisal, with a view to further improvement of the programme" and invited "the attention of all Member States to the need for further improvements in the planning of requests, the selection of candidates, and the proper employment and full utilization of fellows on return".

The Study Group was convened to exchange knowledge and experiences acquired with different fellowship programmes in various parts of the world, to review developments in the appraisal of fellowships, and to draw its conclusions with due regard to existing gaps in knowledge, techniques of appraisal, and problems in the application of such techniques. The present report summarizes the essential elements of the deliberations.

<sup>1</sup> *Off. Rec. Wld Hlth Org.*, 1958, **81**, 50

<sup>2</sup> *Off. Rec. Wld Hlth Org.*, 1958, **87**, 434

<sup>3</sup> Resolution WHA 11.37, *Off. Rec. Wld Hlth Org.*, 1958, **87**, 33

### 1. General Considerations

The history of the movement of students and scholars across national boundaries is a long one, but organized programmes of international and inter-governmental education to advance mutually agreed objectives are, as Brewster Smith calls them, a "social novelty".<sup>1</sup> Since the second World War, there has been a vast expansion in such programmes and in the numbers of individuals involved. The pre-war programmes, largely sponsored by private initiative (foundations, commercial groups, etc.) have been continued—even expanded—and significant new programmes have been launched by the United Nations and its several specialized agencies, including the World Health Organization, and by national governments. This expansion has involved a tremendous increase in the application of time, energy, men, materials,<sup>2</sup> thought and study to the development of these programmes.

One publication<sup>3</sup> lists over 75 000 fellowships for studies abroad as being available in 1958-59. The United Nations agencies<sup>4</sup> alone gave 3538 fellowships in 1958. Much effort and money have been devoted to these fellowships. The enterprise is an extensive one and, for its success, demands wide co-operation—the co-operation of the countries and institutions which propose and select candidates, of the agencies planning and supervising the individual fellowships, and, perhaps most important of all, of the countries and institutions providing the training. Obviously, the individual's own effort is also important.

These attempts, by fellowships schemes, to achieve the humanitarian objectives of technical assistance programmes, to improve cultural relations, and to enlarge areas of understanding between nations have been brought under increasing scrutiny, not as to the objectives *per se*, but as to whether the specific measures do, in fact, accomplish those objectives, and to what extent. The questions to which answers have been sought include: what collateral, unexpected results are also involved; if the effects are unfavourable, what changes might eliminate or minimize them; what are the short-term or long-term effects on the individuals involved, on developments within their home country, on the institutions at which they study or visit, on the institutions in which they serve on return; how may each link in the entire chain of the programme be objectively studied and improved so that the end-result will accomplish the pre-determined objectives?

<sup>1</sup> Smith, M. B. (1955) *Research in the field of international education*. In: *Handbook on International Study*, New York, Institute of International Education

<sup>2</sup> Klineberg, O. (1955) *The problem of evaluation*. In: *International Social Science Bulletin*, Vol. VII, No. 3

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (1958) *Study abroad, 1958-59*, Paris

<sup>4</sup> United Nations, Technical Assistance Committee (1959) *Annual Report of the Technical Assistance Board for 1958*, New York (Documents E/3226 & E/TAC/REF/143)

Not all programme administrators are equally interested in or are under similar compulsion to evaluate the results of their work, to give unmistakable evidence of progress, or to prove that at least minimum goals are being accomplished. Those administrators who must answer to public appropriating bodies seem to feel rather keenly the need for such proof or support. Indeed, they have been asked the equivalent of "What are you really accomplishing?" and then, "How do you know?" Accordingly, various efforts have been made to appraise or evaluate the effectiveness of fellowship programmes.

In spite of the relative novelty of the topic, there already exist a number of references and published reports relevant to the appraisal of fellowships. Other material in unpublished form is available from many of the agencies with fellowship programmes. Some type of review and appraisal of fellowship has been attempted by most of them.

It was felt by the Study Group that it would be desirable at the outset to clarify the meaning of the word "fellowship". The Study Group agreed that, for its purposes, a fellowship might be defined as a method of assisting an appropriately qualified individual, within a definite period of time, to acquire or exchange knowledge and skills, through study, training or observation so as to fulfil a specified objective.

Attention was drawn to the diversity of meaning which nowadays is being given to the term "fellowship". Some awards might be better described as travel grants, training grants, bursaries, or scholarships. It was the opinion of the Study Group that more precise terminology in the description of awards might lead to clearer thinking and better understanding of the function and objectives of awards and so contribute to a better solution of many of the problems of appraisal.

Although the definition adopted covers fellowships for studies both at home and abroad, the Study Group directed its attention mainly to fellowships involving study abroad; it did not confine its discussions to conditions governing any particular agencies or regulations.

Such a broad definition was adopted because of the wide divergencies in origins, types, and objectives of fellowships; the methods employed for appraisal in one scheme may not be applicable to another. Some fellowships aim at promoting the increase of knowledge by, for instance, giving assistance to an established research worker or providing facilities for the maturing of a potential research worker. Other fellowships aim at the promotion of better understanding between people. Still others have had their origin in specific projects of social, educational, and economic development, such as a project for the control of a particular disease, or a scheme for the introduction of a new industrial process or of better farming methods.

## 2. Objectives of Fellowship Appraisal

Experience has shown conclusively that every effort must be made to attempt appraisal of fellowship schemes. Given the wide variation among the objectives of fellowships, the approach and methods of appraisal must also vary. In making an appraisal of a fellowship, the following aspects are significant :

- (a) the administration or operation of the fellowship—this includes such aspects as the selection, planning and arrangement of courses of study ;
- (b) the educational opportunities provided for the fellow—that is to say the content of his courses of study and his academic achievements ;
- (c) the subsequent utilization of the fellow—whether he is employed in a capacity appropriate to the studies which he has completed ;
- (d) the impact of the fellowship upon the fellow's own country and his own organization ;
- (e) any other collateral results or by-products of the fellowship which did not form a specific part of the original purpose for which it was awarded.

## 3. Planning for an Appraisal

The problems surrounding the planning of fellowship appraisals are concerned primarily with the machinery of evaluation—whether satisfactory appraisal is possible at all and how much should be invested in the attempt.

It is particularly important to recognize that the further one moves from a simple inquiry about a particular feature of a fellowship scheme—for example, what proportion of fellows failed to return to their countries of origin on the completion of their fellowships—the more involved and extensive the procedures become. In all but the simplest inquiries, success depends a great deal upon the participation of a statistician who is expert in social inquiries. He should be brought in at the beginning of the study and not, as has sometimes happened, merely when the data are being analysed. If available at the outset, his advice can help to ensure that the questions asked will yield the desired information, and that essential questions are not overlooked or recognized only when the material is being analysed and it is too late to ask them. A statistician can often simplify the procedure by indicating when reliance can safely be placed upon "sampling". Later, during the analysis of the data, his expert knowledge may be required in assessing the validity of the evidence and the weight which may properly be placed upon particular items.

An appraisal of the kind which the Study Group has in mind when considering the need for expert help is an operation not to be undertaken

lightly. It is an extensive and expensive undertaking and one which makes heavy demands on the time and energies of those who plan and conduct it.

Because of the cost and, since the staffs responsible for the administration of fellowship schemes are, as a rule, barely sufficient to fulfil the heavy tasks of daily administration, it is unlikely that large-scale appraisals of any particular fellowship scheme will be made frequently. Anything in the nature of a continuing appraisal on this scale seems out of the question unless funds and staff are specially appropriated for the task.

On the other hand, there are many inquiries directed particularly to questions concerned with the better functioning of fellowship schemes, which can and should be made on a continuing basis. The more that the day-to-day procedures necessary for the proper administration of a fellowship scheme can be utilized to yield the desired data, the more sensible and practical will be the arrangements; the critical self-examination which this entails can have a useful influence on the efficiency of the administration. The appraisal is not then an occasional review of past activities, but becomes more of a daily guide to aspects of the scheme which may require some attention or change.

The Study Group had to bear in mind that appraisals may vary widely in their scope; the sections of this report that follow are concerned primarily with appraisals of the broadest possible kind. Administrators interested in appraisals of more limited scope can select those comments and suggestions that are relevant to their problem.

#### 4. Criteria for Appraisal

The Study Group explored which criteria have been used in, or might be applied to, some or all of the objectives mentioned in section 2. In its choice, the Study Group was guided not only by the importance of the particular subject about which information is needed for appraisal, but also by whether such information could be obtained factually.

The Study Group, before outlining any criteria, wished to emphasize that no appraisal is possible unless the objectives of a fellowship are precisely stated at the outset. Improvements in this respect could with advantage be introduced into the statement of the objectives used in some existing schemes, particularly with respect to the subject of study and the utilization of the fellow on completion of his fellowship.

Note was taken of the procedure adopted by several private foundations whose fellowships are awarded by their governing boards on the recommendation of staff members who are personally acquainted with each applicant and have interviewed him on one or more occasions. Such an interview provides an excellent opportunity to determine whether the prospective fellow understands clearly the objectives of his fellowship, whether he is in accord with them, is psychologically ready to undertake

the programme of study contemplated, and has the necessary language ability.

The Study Group considered various criteria for appraisal during the pre-fellowship, fellowship and post-fellowship periods and these are listed in the Annex (page 14).

Sometimes more can be learned from failures than from fellowship successes. Causes of fellowship failures that merit careful consideration include : inappropriate fellowship projects ; faulty selection of the candidate ; an unsatisfactory study programme ; and inadequate duration of the fellowship. Other failures may be due to a wrong choice of host country ; inadequacy of the fellow himself ; errors in administration of the fellowship ; unsatisfactory arrangements for return of the fellow to his country ; and the non-utilization of the fellow on his return home.

It is well to bear in mind that, as a general rule, failures or successes are relative, and that a large degree of subjective judgement is often involved in distinguishing between them.

If an appraisal is to be made of a fellowship scheme, or of some aspect of such a scheme, first of all the questions on which light is desired must be precisely formulated and then a search made for " facts " (information) which will either themselves give the answers to the questions, or provide indications of what the answers may be.

So far as possible, the questions should be so chosen and formulated as to give the answers directly and without the introduction of subjective judgements. But the subjective element cannot be completely avoided. Indeed, to some extent such bias is always present, even in the choice of the questions designed to provide objective information and in the choice of methods for obtaining this information. But there are many questions of a qualitative nature which cannot be answered completely, if at all, without involving subjective judgements or assessments by a qualified person.

Often the person appraising fellowships, must of necessity, act much like a physician applying his own tutored judgement to the data obtained objectively from laboratory and other tests—checking his own judgements against the logic of such data—but on occasion having to carry his conclusions beyond the point to which the objective data has brought him. Subjectively obtained " facts " should not be undervalued. Indeed, much of human action must be based upon them. But when attempting appraisals of fellowships every endeavour should be made to gather all relevant objective facts that have validity, and to know the measure of their validity to a degree that is reasonable, having regard to the purposes for which they will be used. When subjective elements have to be introduced into the appraisal, it is important to recognize clearly the implications of this change in the nature of the evidence and to seek to check the subjective conclusion—so far as such checking is possible—by objectively obtained data.

Two points should be borne in mind by those requesting appraisals and those planning and conducting them. In the first place, the nearer an inquiry approaches the appraisal of the fellowship scheme as a whole, the more complex it becomes and the more there must be an interplay between objective data and subjective valuation. Secondly, each type of evidence has its limitations, which must be clearly appreciated and allowed for if inaccurate or misleading conclusions are to be avoided. Cross-checking of information obtained by various means is therefore essential.

As indicated earlier, there is a wide variation in the duration of fellowships and the educational level of fellows. Obviously the criteria applicable to the appraisal of a two-year fellowship awarded to an established research investigator or to a potential research worker will be very different from those appropriate for appraising a two weeks' travel grant given to a sanitary inspector. In the case of the established research scientist or the potential research worker, his teaching, research or his administrative position ten years after the termination of his fellowship will provide the information desired. Quite different criteria, on the other hand, should be considered in appraising the result of a course of intensive training in techniques of malaria control given to a sanitary inspector.

### 5. Methods of Appraisal

The Study Group also considered several methods for obtaining the information on which to base appraisals. These methods can be classified into three groups as indicated below :

1. Written evidence obtained otherwise than from field visits and personal interviews :
  - (a) dossier data obtained in day-to-day administration as recorded in the fellow's file ;
  - (b) special questionnaire sent by mail ;
  - (c) reports from the fellow himself ;
  - (d) reports from professional supervisors ;
  - (e) reports from expert advisers ;
  - (f) other evidence.
2. Personal interviews of fellows and other persons relevant to the inquiry :
  - (a) unstructured interviews ;
  - (b) interviews based on an organized questionnaire.
3. Field visits by selected persons :
  - (a) administrative staff ;
  - (b) specialists.

An advantage of relying on the data available in the personal dossier of each fellow is that the material does not have to be specially gathered and that it is substantially of the same nature for all fellows under the programme. On the other hand, the material will not be adequate to answer many questions which may be critical to an evaluation. It is likely to be scrappy and seriously deficient with reference to post-fellowship activities.

Mailed questionnaires, as a method of obtaining information essential to evaluation, have certain advantages and disadvantages. They can cover in a limited period of time a larger and more widely dispersed group of fellows than is practical through field visits or personal interviews. When skilfully prepared and pre-tested, questionnaires may provide for some degree of internal validation of the returns, but offer only a limited opportunity to check the accuracy of the information supplied. On the other hand, in the final analysis, the questionnaire is a crude tool and is unsuited to measure quality. A fairly high non-response rate may make for a somewhat biased and expensive return.

The number and format of the reports required by different agencies during the fellowship varies widely. Some ask for monthly reports; others feel that quarterly reports are sufficient. In some instances, reports are forwarded to officials in the country of origin, and in others they are retained in central or regional files. Almost all agencies require some form of final report, but make quite different uses of them. Some agencies require one or more follow-up reports a few months to a few years after the end of the fellowship.

While periodic and final reports contain a great deal of useful information, they rarely contain all the data desired. They are often incomplete and not comparable, even when prepared in response to a suggested outline. However, reports from fellows often provide clues for further inquiries which may be missed entirely in reports from other persons.

In studying reports submitted by fellows—whether they are the periodic reports submitted during the course of the fellowship, the final reports made at the end of the fellowship period, or the follow-up reports—recognition must be taken of the fact that some fellows write more effectively than others. Neither the content of a report, nor the clarity and forcefulness of its prose, may be a true mirror of the profit which the fellow has obtained from his studies. This is especially true of candidates who have had limited educational backgrounds.

Interviewing is another key method of collecting data. However, because interviews take time, require trained staff and are therefore costly, they are used primarily to obtain information not available in other ways. The interview is the only satisfactory method of obtaining data on attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, past experiences, expectations and anticipated behaviour. The proper use of the interview involves a number of complex

considerations, such as who and how many to interview, who should do the interviewing, the design and conduct of the interview, and the pre-testing and improvement of techniques before use. Despite the problems and cost involved, the interview is an essential tool for gathering information which may be gained only through direct questions to selected individuals.

Field visits to returned fellows by staff members, special advisers and specialists offer periodic opportunities to appraise the effectiveness and utilization of the fellow in his home environment. For these visits to be helpful in evaluation, it is important that they be planned in advance, that sufficient time be allowed, and that critical interest be shown in the fellow and his environment.

Each method, therefore, has its values and its weaknesses, and it is not possible to recommend that all fellowships should be appraised by the same technique. Fellowship programmes should be kept under constant appraisal at all times and all methods appropriate to the objectives of the appraisal should be employed.

#### **6. Aspects of Appraisal requiring further Investigation**

From a broad review of appraisal of fellowship schemes carried out by various organizations, private and governmental, the Study Group wished to place on record the following observations as a prelude to its suggestions on matters which deserve further study.

Regardless of quality or method, these appraisals have left many questions unanswered. Even the most exhaustive inquiries fail to give more than clues to the long-range/short-range effects of the fellowships studied. Most of the studies have been concerned with more or less immediate effects; only in a few cases can the lapse of time have been sufficient for an appraisal of the results of a fellowship, say, 20 years later.

Questionnaires and personal interviews are favourite tools of evaluators. The studies are not sufficiently conclusive, or not sufficiently detailed as to the methods of testing questionnaires before use and the training of interviewers, to enable fruitful comparisons to be made between different studies. How questions are asked and how responses (especially to "open-end" questions) are recorded is a matter of importance.

Most studies summarize numerous observations about what former fellowship-holders do and think. Relatively few try to delve into "why" former fellows do what they do or how deeply they feel. It is easy to read a "cause-and-effect" relationship into changes of information or attitudes on the part of those who held fellowships, but most studies stop at the point of recording the fact of change. Unless information about fellows is matched with like information about a comparable group of persons who have not held fellowships, all the changes cannot properly be attributed

to the fellowship experience. Fellowship experiences are not uniformly compatible with or favourable to the objectives of the fellowship, and during the fellowship period the members of the comparable group of non-fellows are also undergoing change. Before accurate conclusions can be reached that changes are the result of a fellowship experience, those making appraisals must establish the fact that changes in the individuals who held fellowships are significantly different from those of comparable non-fellows.

While many forms of appraisal have been carried out by different agencies, and all fellowship-granting bodies recognize the importance of appraisals, it is obvious that certain aspects in the evaluation of fellowships will benefit from further investigation. Accordingly the following topics are recommended for further study.

1. *Development of a series of case-histories as a system of documentation*

The development of a series of documented "successes" or "failures" of individual fellowships, particularly if this could be undertaken co-operatively by the several fellowship-awarding agencies on a standardized basis, would afford opportunity for potentially fruitful comparisons. The case-history approach has already proved its merit in public administration and social welfare studies.

2. *Formulation of specific criteria for each stage of the fellowship process*

The Study Group formulated a number of criteria in rather general terms for the evaluation of various areas of fellowship activity (see Annex, page 14). Further thought and study should be given to refining these criteria and to testing specific objective criteria for each step in the fellowship process, thereby reducing, in so far as possible, the necessity for reliance on subjective judgements.

3. *Evaluation of the fellow in his environment before and after his fellowship*

Consideration and further study should be given to the possibilities of evaluating the fellow in his total environment, both before the fellowship begins and some time after its completion. For example, in evaluating a fellowship for a medical school-teacher, a detailed analysis should be made not only of the fellow's position and teaching role, but of the whole academic environment of his department and his college, both before the fellowship begins and for a number of years after its termination. Thus, some allowance can be made for the fact that the results of many fellowships are influenced by factors beyond the control of the fellow himself and the contributions he subsequently makes may be outside the range of his direct responsibilities. It must be recognized, however, that available resources and existing research tools are probably not adequate for this task.

#### 4. *Placement of fellows*

A study might be made of the placement of fellows from the standpoint of the various parties interested, namely the fellow himself, his home country, the host country and institution, and the granting agency.

#### 5. *Studies of fellowship successes or failures*

Among the factors which might be examined are :

- (a) utilization on return to home country ;
- (b) specific objectives of the fellowship ;
- (c) preparations for reabsorption of the fellow in his home environment ;
- (d) length of fellowship.

#### 6. *Methodology*

Very early in its consideration, the Study Group concluded that there did not at present exist all the research tools or techniques necessary to produce the facts needed for definitive evaluations of either an individual fellowship or a fellowship programme. Encouragement should be given, therefore, to further experimentation, directed toward the development of new techniques and methods, and to further standardization and refinement of existing techniques and methods, directed toward widening their acceptability and reliability.

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**Annex****LIST OF SUGGESTED CRITERIA FOR FELLOWSHIP APPRAISAL****A. Pre-fellowship period**

1. Were the objectives of the fellowship clearly and specifically stated ? Did the candidate conform to the objectives set forth ?
2. Was the fellow physically and mentally able, as well as psychologically ready, to undertake the programme of study outlined ?
3. Did the fellow have, before beginning the fellowship, the language capacity necessary to carry out the programme of study or observation ?
4. Has the process of selection been effective in obtaining applicants fulfilling the requirements of the fellowship programme ?
5. Have the quality and quantity of applicants for fellowships been maintained or improved ?

**B. Fellowship period**

1. Could the studies proposed be undertaken only abroad ? Was the country of study and the locale within that country suitable for the study outlined ?
2. Was the programme of studies and observations appropriate to the needs of the fellow ?
3. Was the fellow academically qualified for his fellowship studies and was he suitably prepared before taking up his fellowship ?
4. Was the period of study adequate for attaining the objective proposed ?
5. Was the academic or training record and the adjustment of the fellow satisfactory ?
6. Did the host institution provide a satisfactory fellowship experience ?
7. Were the administrative arrangements for the fellow satisfactory ?
8. Did the fellow complete the educational programme or research for which the fellowship was awarded ?

**C. Post-fellowship period**

1. Did the fellow return to his own country?
  2. Is the fellow now employed in the field of his fellowship study?
  3. Were the pre-fellowship expectations and plans substantially fulfilled?
  4. Were there identifiable benefits to the host institution or country?
  5. Has the fellow contributed to improving existing services or activities?
  6. Has the fellow introduced new types of organizations, activities or methods?
  7. Has the fellow shared his education or training with others?
  8. Has the fellow carried out any research since returning home?
  9. What are the number and quality of scientific publications produced by the fellow?
  10. Has he obtained any professional honours or recognition?
  11. Has he exerted any appreciable influence on policy or legislation?
  12. Have there been any noticeable changes in his attitude as a result of his fellowship experience?
  13. Have there been any collateral results or by-products of the fellowship?
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