



Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.35/SR.137
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

Seventh Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SEVENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 3 May 1956, at 2.40 p.m.

CONTENTS

Educational conditions in Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/AC.35/L.223)
(continued):

- (b) Eradication of illiteracy (A/AC.35/L.226)
- (c) Provision of reading material for new literates (A/AC.35/L.221)
- (d) Wastage and retardation in primary schools (A/AC.35/L.224)
- (e) Secondary education (A/AC.35/L.225)
- (f) Teacher training and the status of teachers (A/AC.35/L.228,
A/AC.35/L.231)
- (g) Financing of higher education (A/AC.35/L.219)
- (h) Race relations in education (A/AC.35/L.232)
- (i) Other questions relating to educational conditions that may
arise in the course of the discussions

PRESENT:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. ARENALES CATALAN	(Guatemala)
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Mr. VIXSEBOXSE	(Netherlands)
<u>Members:</u>	Mr. CUTTS	Australia
	U MYA SEIN	Burma
	Mr. YANG	China
	Mr. de CAMARET)	France
	Mr. DEBAYLE)	
	Mr. LEMUS-DIMAS	Guatemala
	Mr. RAGHU RAMAIAH	India
	Mr. PACHACHI	Iraq
	Mr. GRADER	Netherlands
	Mr. THORP	New Zealand
	Mr. CALLE y CALLE	Peru
	Mr. GIDDEN)	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mr. WARD)	
	Mr. SEARS)	United States of America
	Mr. HARRIS)	
	Mr. RIVAS	Venezuela

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mr. GAVIN	International Labour Organisation
Miss McNAUGHTON	Food and Agriculture Organization
Mr. DESTOMBES	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Secretariat:

Mr. BENSON	Representative of the Secretary- General
Mr. KUNST	Secretary of the Committee

EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS IN NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (A/AC.35/L.223)
(continued):

- (b) Eradication of illiteracy (A/AC.35/L.226)
- (c) Provision of reading material for new literates (A/AC.35/L.221)
- (d) Wastage and retardation in primary schools (A/AC.35/L.224)
- (e) Secondary education (A/AC.35/L.225)
- (f) Teacher training and the status of teachers (A/AC.35/L.228, A/AC.35/L.231)
- (g) Financing of higher education (A/AC.35/L.219)
- (h) Race relations in education (A/AC.35/L.232)
- (i) Other questions relating to educational conditions that may arise in the course of the discussions

Mr. LEMUS-DIMAS (Guatemala) observed that illiteracy not only raised a serious cultural problem but also had serious consequences in the social field. It was, in fact, a kind of collective deficiency, isolating the individual in time and space. A community of illiterates had no contact with the outside world; it was unable to take part in exchanges of ideas and knowledge among the peoples; it must rely entirely on tradition, since it had no means of learning its own history, and it could have no direct influence on future generations; it could not benefit by the experience gained by other communities. It therefore continued to live anachronistically, out of touch with the trends of the modern world, and formed, so to speak, a social fossil.

Illiteracy in children was different from illiteracy in adults and a different type of campaign was required in each case. Nevertheless the two aspects of the problem were connected and neither should be overlooked; it would be useless to teach only the children and neglect the rest of the population, or to try to eradicate illiteracy in adults and not to realize that each year a number of children were growing up without having learned to read and write. Furthermore, the methods used should vary in urban, semi-urban, or rural areas. Lastly, care should be taken that neither children nor adults should lose interest in what they had learned and relapse into illiteracy. Plans to eradicate illiteracy could succeed only with the full and entire co-operation of the people. The first need, therefore, was to arouse their interest in the undertaking.

There were two main reasons for the poor results sometimes achieved. Conventional lessons in reading and writing did not hold the children's attention; their minds were apt to wander and they might even stop going to school. Those

(Mr. Lemus-Dimas, Guatemala)

subjects should therefore be only one part of a whole programme of varied activities which would be a direct attraction to the children. In some territories the children encountered an additional difficulty because they had to learn to read and write in a foreign language. The languages of the Administering Powers were undoubtedly useful and might seem to be of greater value to the children in the long run. Naturally, however, the children were more interested in the language spoken in their community than in the language of a country situated thousands of miles away, especially since the spelling of such languages was often very different from their pronunciation. Furthermore, the teaching of reading and writing in a foreign language had very serious consequences for the formation of the child's personality and the development of his feelings. The child became aware that the language he spoke in everyday life and which was used by his family and friends was "useless" and was regarded as a lower grade language. The result might be a feeling of rejection or a collective feeling of frustration or inferiority which frequently led to low productivity, alcoholism and bitterness. The delegation of Guatemala therefore felt that there was no justification for the use of the metropolitan languages in the primary education of indigenous inhabitants in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. While it was desirable that one or more foreign languages should have their place in school curricula, nevertheless from both the moral and the legal point of view and in accordance with Article 73 a of the United Nations Charter any community had the right to preserve its own language, which was part of its cultural heritage and an element of its personality.

The foregoing remarks applied also to adults who were to be taught to read and write. If they were to persevere they must see tangible results quickly. The campaign against illiteracy should be linked with programmes of medical assistance and economic and social development throughout the whole territory.

The same criteria applied to measures to avert a relapse into illiteracy; they should awaken the interest of children and adults, be easily understandable, teach by entertaining and in general stimulate the activities of the community. They should not constitute a separate plan but should be an integral part of general development programmes. Every means available to modern man should be employed; wide use should be made of periodicals and of coloured posters which were attractive to the indigenous people and from whose captions they could learn. Films, broadcasts and even radio advertising could also be used. The aim should always be to teach the people concerned and to stimulate their mental development so as to

(Mr. Lemus-Dimas, Guatemala)

inculcate a new mental and emotional attitude, devoid of intolerance or of any tendency to discrimination.

Mr. DEBAYLE (France), Inspector-General of Education, paid a tribute to the objectivity of the UNESCO report on the eradication of illiteracy. He pointed out that whereas the educational budget for France itself amounted to only 9 per cent of the country's non-military expenditure, the proportion of budgetary resources devoted to education was much larger in the Territories administered by France. For example, the proportion was 21.6 per cent in the Sudan, 19.10 per cent in Guinea, 18.6 per cent in Senegal, 17 per cent at Antananarivo, 24.10 per cent in Dahomey and 20.3 per cent in the Middle Congo. Those amounts were for operational expenses only and did not include the cost of building schools, for which the metropolitan country was responsible.

The number of teaching establishments, most of which consisted of several classes, had considerably increased in recent years. In the Territories as a whole, the number of schools had risen from 3,941 on 1 January 1946 to 8,158 on 31 December 1954. On an average 525 schools were built every year; in recent years the number of schools had on an average increased by 15 per cent annually.

He emphasized that the essential thing was to conquer illiteracy, not by trying to find precise definitions of education or illiteracy or by endlessly discussing problems which arose, but by continually establishing new schools, supplying them with teachers and equipment and spending as much as possible on that vital task.

It was clear from the UNESCO document that France had done a great deal of work in connexion with fundamental education. In that connexion he quoted extracts from the document published by UNESCO in September 1954 under the title "Experiments in Fundamental Education in French African Territories". That document stated that all the experiments had been carried out under the heading of education. That statement refuted the claims that had been made that France's educational activities were confined to giving "instruction". He described the activity of the teaching missions which traveled about Africa, carrying with them a large quantity of teaching material and bringing education to great numbers of people. Their work was greatly facilitated by their knowledge of local dialects and the co-operation the indigenous inhabitants gave them. Their educational activities covered all fields: medical, social, agricultural and so on.

(Mr. Debayle, France)

He went on to explain how France looked after the education of the nomadic peoples and he described the methods used in Mauretania, where 400,000 of the 560,000 inhabitants were nomads. The first nomads' school had been established in 1949. There were at present twenty-five or twenty-six. The nomads' school supplemented the older system under which certain pupils attended schools with boarding facilities. At the same time it played an important part in adult education.

Mr. RAGHU PAMALIAH (India) noted that UNESCO's report on reading material for new literates (A/AC.35/L.221) appeared to be an interim report but that in the case of the report on the eradication of illiteracy UNESCO had apparently had inadequate material in certain cases. Furthermore, the documentation was not presented in a coherent manner. That, however, was a defect that could easily be remedied: UNESCO could prepare a special form which would make it possible for all Governments to submit their information in the same way. Another difficulty confronting UNESCO was that of defining illiteracy: in fact, UNESCO gave several definitions. In his view literacy could best be defined as a person's ability to write a simple message and read with understanding. The Committee might prepare directives on that matter which would help the Administering Powers.

A study of the statistics in the UNESCO documents indicated that in very many cases progress was rather slow. A decrease of 10 per cent in the number of illiterates over a period of ten years was not very encouraging. In some United States Territories the rate of progress was fairly good but the same could not be said of several other Territories: in some there was 99 per cent illiteracy, in others 97 per cent and in still others 93 per cent. That was difficult to understand, for the rate of progress varied considerably among Territories where conditions were identical. The Committee did not know exactly what the difficulties confronting the Administering Powers were or how they intended to overcome them. One fact was certain: the figures before the Committee related to the period from 1900 to 1950. Since 1950 important changes had occurred. Many Non-Self-Governing Territories had attained independence and it was becoming increasingly apparent that the colonial peoples were on the eve of freedom. That realization was apparent in French policy, particularly in Africa, in Tunisia and Morocco, and in the policy of the United Kingdom Government in Nigeria. The days of colonialism were obviously numbered, which made it all the more urgent that the problem of illiteracy should be solved.

(Mr. Raghu Ramaiah, India)

The eradication of illiteracy was undoubtedly the safest investment that an Administering Power could make in a Non-Self-Governing Territory, for political institutions could crumble and economic prosperity vanish, but there need be no fear of retrogression once illiteracy had been eradicated.

In view of the fact that the time had come for the various Non-Self-Governing Territories to attain independence, it was obvious that in many Territories more vigorous action must be taken to eradicate illiteracy. That presupposed a time schedule providing for definite stages of progress and time-limits.

It was not really a complex problem. It was no longer a question of how to eradicate illiteracy, for it had already been wholly or partly eradicated in a large number of countries; the question was how long its complete eradication would take. Since 1937 India had made great efforts in adult education. The Indian authorities had realized that it was not enough to teach adults to read and write, and that they soon grew tired of children's books. The new policy recognized that the interests of adults were different and must be catered for separately. India's new policy in fundamental education therefore placed considerable emphasis not only on literacy but also on teaching the rules of health and hygiene, on training for citizenship and on providing essential facilities for recreation. Furthermore, special methods were used for adult education. In that connexion attention should be drawn to the important work carried out in Delhi State by educational caravans consisting of three or four jeeps with trailers, which visited the villages, organizing health exhibitions and agricultural and industrial projects. Teams of approximately thirty teachers then spent five or six weeks in the areas visited by the caravans and conducted intensive anti-illiteracy campaigns. Such methods had yielded excellent results. It was found that the best results were achieved if the adult education centre took on the features of a community centre.

He drew attention to paragraph 27 of document A/AC.35/L.221, which gave a list of the publications put out by the Jamia Millia Islamia. Another organization of the same type had published many pamphlets on various subjects. The Indian Government bore all the cost of their publication. Mention was made in paragraph 38 of the same document of the "literacy workshops" organized by the Indian Government, which had produced excellent results. Since 1954 the Ministry of Education had organized annual competitions with prizes for the authors of the

(Mr. Raghu Ramaiah, India)

best books designed for new literates. In order to prevent new literates from forgetting their newly acquired knowledge the Indian authorities had begun to publish a popular encyclopedia in five volumes; the first volume was already out. Popular low-priced books on subjects of general culture were also being prepared.

Mr. WARD (United Kingdom) said that he entirely agreed with the Indian representative that the eradication of illiteracy went hand in hand with economic and social development in general and with the development of agriculture, health, political institutions and civic awareness. He could not agree, however, that the difficulties in the eradication of illiteracy had been solved and it was only a question of applying enough effort. If illiteracy was to be eradicated the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories must be interested in acquiring greater and greater knowledge. The Administration realized that it was to its own advantage to eliminate illiteracy. When the inhabitants knew how to read and write, they understood the laws better and thus the task of administration became easier. The experiments conducted by the United Kingdom Administration in Eastern Nigeria, Northern Rhodesia and Kenya showed that the results of anti-illiteracy campaigns were often short-lived. What had happened was that the campaign had succeeded until all members of the natural group in which it was run - clan, tribe, mining compound - had become literate; and there it had stopped. The great problem was to induce people of one group to spread literacy into another group. In some countries - the Gold Coast and Nigeria, for example - that problem had apparently been solved, but it was no nearer solution in other cases. Then again, literacy was not always the thing that people most desired. Mr. Chadwick had succeeded in teaching some hundreds of adults in Western Nigeria to read. The Committee could imagine his disappointment when representatives of the same group came to tell him that they were interested not in reading but in obtaining a maternity clinic, the services of a qualified midwife and so on. When those demands had been satisfied, they had asked for other services to which they attached more importance than to the eradication of illiteracy. Even when the people learned to read and write they showed little inclination to pass their knowledge on to their less fortunate neighbours. It took

(Mr. Ward, United Kingdom)

time, devoted teachers and money to disseminate education. It was all a question of social progress. The prerequisites for success were correctly set out in paragraphs 44 to 48 of document A/AC.35/L.226. Nevertheless, there was one danger which must constantly be borne in mind: namely, man's indifference to man. The inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories must be taught that each was his brother's keeper.

Mr. CALLE Y CALLE (Peru) said he appreciated the gravity of the problem of illiteracy in many territories, including his own country. Attempts to solve it met with psychological, technical and financial difficulties which sometimes seemed insuperable. That was why the co-operation of international experts and UNESCO was most valuable. The percentage of illiterates must be even higher than was shown in the statistics, as the questions asked at censuses had been of a somewhat rudimentary character and had referred to different periods. The Committee should therefore recommend that censuses should be taken in all Territories at regular intervals and that UNESCO should develop criteria and standard questionnaires with a view to ensuring that the statistics collected were comparable.

Most of the adolescents and adults living and working in the Non-Self-Governing Territories were illiterate and were thereby denied access to the life and work to which they were entitled. The Peruvian delegation was also deeply concerned at the effect of illiteracy on a people's prospects of attaining self-government, as prescribed in Chapter XI of the Charter. Democracy could be effective only when it was based on a public information system through which the consciousness of the masses could be aroused and they could be prepared in the full exercise of their rights as citizens. The Peruvian delegation felt that the visual symbols adopted by some countries were inadequate. Civic rights could be exercised only by persons who knew how to read and write, and oral tradition did not enable individuals to understand laws or choose between different political doctrines. The problem was particularly serious in the Non-Self-Governing Territories when the inhabitants had to decide upon their future.

(Mr. Calle y Calle, Peru)

The Peruvian delegation appreciated the efforts the Administering Powers were making in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In its opinion, the eradication of illiteracy was only the first step. The next step was to prepare the indigenous inhabitants to exercise their civic rights.

Illiteracy also had many economic and social repercussions. As was rightly pointed out in the UNESCO report (A/AC.35/L.226, paragraph 32), the promotion of literacy was not an end in itself. It was rather an integral part of a broad attack on all the conditions that were detrimental to individual welfare and retarded group progress. The technical and financial assistance provided by international or regional organizations should be reserved for the territories with the highest illiteracy rate and the lowest level of living.

The experiments carried out in Peru, which had two languages, had convinced his delegation that it was impossible to teach children to read and write in a language which was not their own. He therefore fully endorsed the view expressed by the Guatemalan representative.

Mr. GRADER (Netherlands) said that, as the eradication of illiteracy was closely linked to adult and fundamental education, he wished to give his delegation's views on all three subjects at the same time. As he had pointed out in his statement on general developments in education in Netherlands New Guinea, the majority of children of school age had access to education in the most densely populated areas under Netherlands administration. The fact that part of the population was scattered over wide and often isolated areas made it difficult to provide educational facilities for the whole population, as it was not feasible to establish schools for tiny groups. But to eradicate illiteracy, adults also had to be taught to read and write, if they lacked an elementary knowledge of those subjects, and to preserve or improve the knowledge acquired in their youth.

A knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic did not have equal importance in urban and rural communities. In towns, education was primarily of importance on account of the assistance it gave the individual in taking his place in society. In rural areas, it mainly contributed to transforming and raising a primitive society to a higher level. The need for education among the adult inhabitants of large towns had become more apparent since the rural population had begun to move

(Mr. Grader, Netherlands)

to the towns. Illiteracy was not so strongly marked, however, in the urban centres as it was in the rural areas. In urban centres, therefore, the emphasis of adult education should be on the preservation of the knowledge already acquired and on the stimulation of interest in general knowledge.

The preservation of acquired knowledge was important in the rural areas also, particularly as the period of schooling was restricted to three or four years. However, the need for new knowledge made itself felt to a lesser extent in those areas.

Transportation difficulties in the rural areas were a further obstacle to the standardization of educational methods. Attempts were therefore being made in New Guinea to link adult education in rural areas to agricultural development plans, health projects and other similar activities which might stimulate the inhabitants' desire for wider knowledge.

One of the principal aims of adult education was to create opportunities for the older generation to become familiar with new approaches towards further development. In other words, adult education was aimed at narrowing the gap between the older and the younger generations and enlisting the co-operation of both in building a new society. The means for the achievement of these aims included regular courses, the composition and distribution of didactic publications, films, slides and broadcasting.

In the field of adult education in New Guinea, the best results had been obtained through the initiative and efforts of private organizations or individuals. Al Hollandia, an association of Papuans founded in 1952, which had later associated itself with a local branch of the Christian Workers' Association, had played an active part in the organization of literacy campaigns. It organized courses in reading, history, geography and arithmetic. Papuan teachers, who received technical advice from an indigenous inspector of schools, gave courses for illiterates. The Association charged a small fee as a contribution to school costs. The Administration paid the salary of one teacher and provided education appliances. In 1955, after a final examination under the supervision of an officer of the Department of Education, twenty-seven persons had received a certificate which was equivalent of that obtained by the pupils of

(Mr. Grader, Netherlands)

a village school with a four year course. Similar courses were organized in several other places, mostly by missionary societies.

The total population of the areas under Netherlands administration in New Guinea was estimated at 400,000, 300,000 of whom were registered. In computing the percentage of children of school age who actually attended school, it was reasonable to take the registered population as a basis for the simple reason that the areas inhabited by the registered population were the only ones where reasonable educational facilities could be expected to exist. According to international standards, the term "school age" applied to children of from five to twelve years old. Experience showed that, in the Territories of South East Asia and the Pacific, children of school age accounted for about 25 per cent of the population. On that basis, the number of children of school age among the registered population would be 75,000. As about 35,000 Papuan children attended schools including the non-subsidized schools, the percentage of school attendance would be slightly over 46 per cent. It would be much higher in the more densely populated areas.

Document A/AC.35/L.220 dealt in detail with the problem of the uneven distribution of educational facilities in countries with a scattered population. New Guinea provided a typical illustration of that problem. The percentage of school attendance was very high in areas which had come under the influence of the missionary societies.

There were 210,000 persons of the Protestant or Catholic faith, a fact which gave an idea of the spread of literacy. Although it could not be assumed that a person who had a Bible and a church or song book actually knew how to read, it was probable that many adherents of those faiths could read and that the reading habit was very widespread among them.

The mail traffic provided other, very revealing indications of the measure of literacy. The results of a test conducted over a period of a fortnight during the past year indicated that the annual number of postcards and letters addressed exclusively to Papuans was 78,000. In view of the fact that the number of wage-earners involved in Western activities did not exceed 15,000, such use of the postal services could be regarded as proof of a remarkable spread of literacy.

(Mr. Grader, Netherlands)

During the last months of 1954, the Territory had been visited by the Adviser on Literacy of the South Pacific Commission. It was to be hoped that the report on that visit would be published in the near future.

Mr. CUTTS (Australia) congratulated UNESCO on having taken the initiative in drafting a report on the eradication of illiteracy (A/AC.35/L.226). He did not wish to detract from the value of UNESCO's statistical analysis, but he wondered whether the conclusions set out in part II of its document logically followed from the statistics reproduced in tables 1 to 4. In paragraph 14, for example, UNESCO put the number of African Territories with illiteracy rates at or about the average estimated for that continent at eleven. Yet table 1 showed that six Territories had illiteracy rates well above the average, which in the case of Africa was 77 to 81 per cent. As the total number of the Territories shown in table 1 was sixteen, it followed that ten Territories had an illiteracy rate equal to, or lower than, the estimated average.

For North America, the average given in paragraph 13 was 11 to 12 per cent. That relatively low figure was presumably due to the fact that the United States and Canada, in which education was highly developed, had been included in the calculation. It was, however, doubtful whether a percentage figure arrived at by the inclusion of the United States and Canada could properly be compared with the illiteracy rates for the countries listed under the heading of "North America" in table 1 on page 10, particularly as those countries really formed part of Central America. The illiteracy rates of the latter countries should properly be compared with an average calculated for Central America. Also, the figures for Asia and Oceania had been dealt with in a single sentence, although the average shown for each of those continents - 61 to 74 per cent and 12 to 13 per cent respectively - were very far apart. It would certainly have been preferable to indicate that in the case of Asia, five Territories were above the average and three below it. Similarly, for Oceania, it might have been pointed out that in four Territories the illiteracy rate was above the average and in five other Territories, below it. In any case, analysis of the figures for each continent did not appear to bear out the conclusion drawn by UNESCO that the majority of

(Mr. Cutts, Australia)

the Non-Self-Governing Territories had illiteracy rates equal to or higher than, the general average for the continental areas to which they belonged.

Perhaps the representative of UNESCO could explain what criteria had governed the selection of the geographical zones on which the statistics were based. The low percentage for Oceania was no doubt due to the fact that the illiteracy rates for Australia and New Zealand had been included in the calculations. If that were so, it would have been preferable to base the calculation of illiteracy in that part of the world on a region excluding Australia and New Zealand.

Subject to those reservations concerning the compilation of the statistics, the position appeared to be that, as a general rule, illiteracy rates in the Non-Self-Governing Territories compared quite favourably with those of other countries and territories.

He asked the UNESCO representative whether the conclusions presented in paragraph 75 were derived solely from information UNESCO had been able to obtain on the Non-Self-Governing Territories or whether they were based on information for the world as a whole. It would also be interesting to know whether the recommendations of UNESCO were intended for the Non-Self-Governing Territories only or for world-wide application.

His delegation regretted its inability to supply the illiteracy rate for Papua, which was probably very high. It had described the conditions peculiar to the Territory and also the efforts the Administration was making to eradicate illiteracy there. It would follow the discussion in the Committee closely and take note of suggestions which might be of assistance to the Australian Administration in its vigorous campaign against illiteracy in Papua.

Mr. DESTOMBES (UNESCO) pointed out that the UNESCO representative on the Statistical Commission, was at present in New York, and that he would consult him before replying to the questions asked by the Australian representative. He could, however, provide an immediate answer to the last question, which concerned the conclusions presented in paragraph 75. In arriving at those conclusion,

(Mr. Destombes, UNESCO)

UNESCO had used all the information at its disposal, whether it concerned Non-Self-Governing Territories or other countries. As its conclusions were not exclusively based on Non-Self-Governing Territories, UNESCO considered that their validity was not confined to those Territories. They were of world-wide validity and should therefore be universally applied.

The meeting rose at 6.5 p.m.