

UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.35/SR.74
2 September 1953
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

Fourth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SEVENTY-FOURTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 19 August 1953, at 2 p.m.

CONTENTS

Educational conditions in Non-Self-Governing Territories: reports
submitted by the Secretary-General and the specialized agencies
(continued)

PRESENT:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. LOOMES	Australia
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Mrs. MENON	India
<u>Members:</u>	Mr. FRAZAO	Brazil
	Mr. LIU	China
	Miss GARCIA-SIERRA	Cuba
	Mr. BRUN	Denmark
	Mr. PIGNON	France
	Miss RUSAD	Indonesia
	Mr. KHALIDY	Iraq
	Mr. SPITS	Netherlands
	Mr. SCOTT	New Zealand
	Mr. HAMDANI	Pakistan
	Mr. MATHIESON)	United Kingdom of Great Britain
	Mr. WARD)	and Northern Ireland
	Mr. FERNOS-ISERN	United States of America

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mr. GAVIN	International Labour Organisation (ILO)
Mr. VOGEL	Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
Mr. AKRAWI	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Mrs. MEAGHER	World Health Organization (WHO)

Secretariat:

Mr. HOO	Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Trusteeship and Information from the Non-Self-Governing Territories.
Mr. BENSON	Secretary of the Committee

EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS IN NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES: REPORTS SUBMITTED BY
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES (continued)

Mr. MATHIESON (United Kingdom) said that his delegation had made two reference documents available to the Committee. The first was a report submitted to the United Kingdom Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, on the colonies and territories under United Kingdom administration, for 1952-1953; the chapters on education would supplement the statistical and technical data already submitted to the United Nations by the United Kingdom Government. The other was a volume entitled "African Education", which contained very detailed information on education in British African Territories.

He introduced Mr. Ward, educational expert and adviser to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who would present the views of the United Kingdom on item 4 of the agenda.

Mr. WARD (United Kingdom) stated that the problems before the Committee - particularly that of education - were of a long-term character and could not be solved as easily as material problems. The United Kingdom did not lay claim to having solved them, but was endeavouring to do so. He instanced the methods described in the book entitled "African Education", which was the outcome of a collective enterprise. Educational experts had gone to the African territories and had studied the situation there; they had prepared a report which had then been examined by African educators; the following year, both groups had held a conference in England after which the volume in question had been produced.

The United Kingdom was greatly concerned with several problems. He gave three examples. First, there was the financial question, in particular that of primary school teachers' salaries. In the West Indies, the sum of 22,750,000 dollars, or 18.5 per cent of the total yearly revenue, was allocated to education, and 12,250,000 dollars of that amount were spent on teachers' salaries. The number of teachers was still inadequate, and even larger credits should be assigned, but the Government concerned were unable to pay as many teachers as were needed.

Secondly, there was the problem of community development. It was easy enough to open a social centre, to organize reading and writing courses and to have encouraging results at first; but experience showed that such progress seldom spread spontaneously from tribe to tribe, and that each time it was usually necessary to start all over again from scratch.

A third problem was that of equal treatment. It had to be admitted that in one or two territories equality of treatment in education either between Europeans, Africans and Asians, or between men and women had by no means yet been achieved. But the United Kingdom would not relax its efforts to achieve it. The education of women, in view of the part they played in family life was of the greatest importance.

Those were some of the main problems facing the United Kingdom. They were difficult and spectacular progress could not be achieved in three years. The aim of the United Kingdom's educational policy was freedom - to free the people from ignorance, the worst form of slavery.

He hoped the Committee would concentrate on two or three key problems, such as those he had mentioned, and reach conclusions which might serve as guidance. The United Kingdom placed its experience at the Committee's disposal. Like the Indonesian representative, he hoped that non-administering Member States, almost all of which were faced with similar problems, would collaborate in that great common task for the benefit of all mankind.

Mrs. MENON (India) recalled that some Administering Powers wished to restrict the scope of the Committee's work and to prohibit it from making political recommendations. Political, economic, social and educational problems were, however, closely interrelated and the Committee was certainly entitled to emphasize certain conditions necessary for the progress of education.

An analysis of the available information showed that educational policy varied from one territory to another and was often dictated by considerations of expediency. The United Kingdom Government stated explicitly that its goal was the autonomy of its colonies, but other countries were less definite.

The Indian delegation noted, from the documents submitted by the Secretariat that statistical data were in many cases inadequate. It appeared from document A/AC.35/L.123 that there were no common standards by which to compare the respective degrees of illiteracy. She noted, in that connexion, that the figure for India given in UNESCO's annual report on measures for suppressing illiteracy (A/AC.35/L.136) had been taken from the 1931 census, though more recent censuses had been carried out in 1941 and 1951.

While recognizing the positive contribution made by private and philanthropic organizations in Africa in the field of education, the Indian delegation felt that they played too important a part, as the education provided by them had in some instances destroyed the cultural life of the country. The paper on community development (A/AC.35/L.131) stressed the unfortunate consequences of the introduction of an alien culture; the Committee should pay particular attention to that problem. Her delegation did not share the United Kingdom's view that an alien culture could be most successfully propagated by being grafted on to a vigorous native stock (A/AC.35/L.131, paragraph 65).

The development of education could be measured by increases in school enrolment. Greenland headed the list, and the Atlantic and Pacific territories of the United States and the United Kingdom came before some sovereign States. The same could not be said of Africa. Tables III and IV of document A/AC.35/L.12 were highly revealing, showing as they did the marked falling-off in school enrolment. The Sub-Committee and the experts would have to find a remedy for that situation. The reason might be that education, which consisted primarily of learning to read and write, did not arouse the children's interest and did not meet the desires of the communities, almost all of which were rural. In many regions, the language of instruction was not the vernacular, which resulted in tension between the educated and the illiterate and a waste of intellectual capacities. That had happened in China, India, and other countries.

She agreed with the United Kingdom view (A/AC.35/L.131, paragraph 45) that the elimination of illiteracy was a pre-requisite to mass participation in community development. She also agreed with the comments of the British Colonial Office which appeared in document A/AC.35/L.127, paragraph 35, and recommended them to the Committee's attention. She noted with satisfaction that the indigenous population was taking an increasing part in the formulation as well as in the execution of educational policy, and wished that women would be allowed to have a say in the matter.

With reference to document A/AC.35/L.133, she was happy to note that there was increasing recognition that the education of girls was essential to social progress. Prejudice was easily giving way to the needs of the hour, as witnessed by the readiness of backward communities to accept the principle of co-education. The Indian delegation felt that the education of girls needed to be developed at all levels. She drew attention to the difficulties arising out of the fact that higher education was not available except abroad. Very few were able to avail themselves of it, and they were, into the bargain, cut off from the life and aspirations of the masses whom they were later to serve. She was pleased that the need for education for girls was clearly stated in the document on community development.

The Committee should deplore the inequality between various ethnical and religious groups, both as regards their access to education and the budgetary allocations assigned them. That inequality, which applied to all levels of education, gave rise to political tensions. She quoted the example of Africa, and especially of Kenya. While such inequality obtained, it was impossible to establish democracy in the countries concerned. Human nature was extremely sensitive to injustice and it was therefore in the interests of the Administering Powers to avoid the difficulties to which injustice gave rise.

She noted with satisfaction the progress made in expediting training in the French African Territories and the measures taken to secure more advanced vocational training in the British African Territories. Nevertheless, the report did not state whether girls had equal access to such studies. In Morocco, they received domestic instruction only. The example of the Carnegie Trade School established for women in British Guiana should be followed. She drew the Committee's attention to resolution I in annex I to document A/AC.35/L.141, which expressly recommended that women should be given training equal to that of men.

In order to apply the principle of compulsory schooling, it was essential not only to have sufficient funds, but also to be able to recruit the necessary staff, which was often difficult. The principle of universal primary education should be the cornerstone of educational policy, but the regular attendance of the registered pupils must also be ensured; moreover, compulsory schooling should be extended to girls where it now existed for boys. Finally, compulsory schooling was inseparable from free education.

Mr. FAZAO (Brazil) expressed his delegation's satisfaction at the resumption of the three-year cycle of the Committee's work. He recalled preceding sessions and stressed the constructive and practical value of the Committee's work. In connexion with the criticism that had been levelled against the Committee, he recalled the mistrustful and negative attitude of those who used doctrinaire arguments to set the concept of sovereignty above the new obligations which the Charter imposed on colonial powers. He also pointed out that certain attacks against the Administering Powers had been made so systematically that they had lost all their constructive force. In any case, the discussions had produced useful results which justified the Committee's work.

He expressed satisfaction with the documentation submitted by the Secretariat and the specialized agencies and was glad to see that the Administering Powers were providing more and fuller information every year. That proved their anxiety to fulfil the sacred mission assigned to them by the Charter. The documentation they had provided showed that they had endeavoured to raise the educational level of the populations of the Territories they administered. Nevertheless, he warned the Committee against the danger of comparing on the basis of that documentation data which were hardly comparable and drawing therefrom conclusions concerning the superiority of a given system; generalizations in that connexion showed a lack of common sense. He thought it would be preferable to define the objectives of a realistic educational policy by classifying the territories according to their needs and potentialities.

Much remained to be done in the field of combating illiteracy. That was a fundamental problem which had by no means been solved in most countries. It seemed to have priority over the problem of indigenous participation in education; which should, however, be dealt with in certain territories where the level of education was already high, such as Morocco, Tunisia and certain British colonies. For the time being, the Committee should confine its studies to specific problems the solution of which was a matter of urgency, inter alia the problem of measures taken to increase school attendance. It would also be useful if the Administering Powers could provide the Committee with detailed information on the causes of the progress achieved. The territories which were currently least advanced might thus benefit by the experience of colonial territories which had progressed further along the path of educational development.

In that connexion, the Brazilian delegation regretted that the documentation for 1951 and 1952 contained no reference to adult education. He stressed the influence which adult education might have on the effective and increasing participation of the indigenous population in the administration of the territories. The population of a colonial territory could not concern itself with the question of education unless it had itself reached an adequate degree of education. It was a mistake to think that the fact that some tribal

chiefs sat on territorial councils would in itself suffice to safeguard the interests of the population in respect of public education. It could not be said that the question of indigenous participation had progressed if the representatives of non-indigenous educational groups were convened to conferences held in metropolitan countries. He did not underestimate the efforts of certain Administering Powers, especially the United Kingdom and France, to ensure the greater participation of the indigenous inhabitants in education. Although the question of participation was important in certain territories, it was less important in others, where the main question was that of raising the educational level. In that case, the Committee should confine itself to recommending that the Administering Power should increase the number of schools, train teachers, bring basic education within the reach of the masses and encourage adults to participate in the work of parents' associations. That was the best method of achieving the effective participation of the indigenous population in education.

He referred to the measures taken by the Government of the United Kingdom with regard to education in the Federation of Malay States and the progress made in the organization of education in Kenya. On the other hand, it would have been preferable to develop further the secondary education given to the indigenous inhabitants of the Congo or of Madagascar, rather than to set up advisory bodies whose action would undoubtedly be premature in view of the lack of development of education in those countries. In the specialized field of education, certain territories had pressing problems which relegated to the background the advantages of indigenous participation in educational policies. Those advisory bodies could take beneficial action only when basic education was already generalized and when there were groups of indigenous inhabitants capable of participating actively in drawing up and carrying out educational programmes.

In conclusion, he thought it would be useful to ask the Administering Powers to provide details of the costs and financing methods for educational establishments, in accordance with the recommendations of resolution 328 (IV). In that connexion, he pointed out that the figures provided did not seem to indicate equality of treatment between indigenous and European pupils; the bias in favour of European pupils was still appreciable. It was essential to remedy that state of affairs and increase the allocations made for the education of the indigenous masses.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.