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COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

Fourth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Tuesday, 25 August 1953, at 2.10 p.m.

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PRESENT:Chairman:

Mr. LOOMES

Australia

Rapporteur:

Mrs. MENON

India

Members:

Mr. FRAZAO

Brazil

Mr. YANG

China

Miss MANAS

Cuba

Mr. SVEISTRUP

Denmark

Mr. CONCHA

Ecuador

Mr. PIGNON

Mr. CHARTON

France

Miss RUSAD

Indonesia

Mr. KADRY

Iraq

Mr. GRADER

Netherlands

Mr. SCOTT

New Zealand

Mr. PIRACHA

Pakistan

Mr. WARD

United Kingdom of Great  
Britain and Northern Ireland

Mr. BEDELL

Mr. FERNOS-ESERN

United States of America

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mr. CAVIN

International Labour  
Organisation (ILO)

Mr. LAÑOS

Food and Agriculture  
Organization (FAO)

Mr. AKRAWI

United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural  
Organization (UNESCO)

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World Health Organization (WHO)

Secretariat:

Mr. HOO

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from 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):

(a) General developments considered in the light of the views expressed in the 1950 Special Report on Education (A/AC.35/L.123, 125, 127, 130, 136, 139, 140)  
(continued)

Miss RUSAD (Indonesia) thought that a more positive approach was required to the principle that there should be no differentiation between the inhabitants of a country with regard to education, which had been stressed in the 1950 Report. The existence of separate school systems for indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants had an unfortunate psychological effect, which she realized was not normally desired by the Administering Power, although she drew attention to a report on the Belgian Congo stressing "the respect due to missions, European authorities and residents, and property". Respect was due to all races, not only to the "master race". She hoped it would be possible to include the development of mutual sympathy and the feeling of common citizenship as a subject in the curricula of primary schools. Such intangible factors could not be ignored. The "colour bar" was a great hindrance to educational development, particularly in Africa. It set a limit to promotion and ambition.

Referring to the Indian representative's question to the United Kingdom delegation about the closing of certain schools in Kenya, she asked whether those schools had been closed because they were teaching murder and hate or because they were merely teaching nationalism.

Mr. WARD (United Kingdom) agreed with both the spirit and the words of the Indonesian representative's remarks. He gave instances of what the United Kingdom was doing to improve race relationships in schools in Non-Self-Governing Territories.

With regard to the question on schools in Kenya, the Kikuyu independent schools in Kenya had been closed because they were teaching murder and hate, not because they were nationalistic in feeling. The action had been taken reluctantly, as a matter of government policy in a special situation. As the Indonesian representative had said, schools should work for the improvement,

not the worsening, of race relations, and the replacement of bad closed schools by good schools would be welcome. The United Kingdom did not fear nationalism as such, and welcomed it in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Mrs. MENON (India) referred to the remarks of the United Kingdom representative at the previous meeting in reply to her own observations. She had not intended to attack the missions or the United Kingdom Government, but the attitude of the white settlers. The United Kingdom representative's reply had merely confirmed her view by dwelling on the seamy side of Western civilization. Her question whether education councils and committees in the Non-Self-Governing Territories were elective or appointed had been treated lightly by him, but it had been put as a serious question. She was glad that her question about schools in Kenya had now been answered.

The CHAIRMAN stated that the discussion of item 4 (a) was closed.

(b) Compulsory education (A/AC.35/L.128) (continued)

Mrs. MENON (India) agreed in general with document A/AC.35/L.128, but she pointed to two dangers. First, the piecemeal introduction of compulsory education would drive a wedge between the literate and illiterate sections of the population during the transition period. Second, in planning educational policies full allowance should be made for economic and social conditions, otherwise large numbers of educated people might find themselves unemployed or misemployed.

India was in favour of free and compulsory education, but realized that its introduction was not easy, especially when it had to compete with basic needs, such as food and housing; yet the acquisition of knowledge was the first step towards understanding and salvation. The strongest stimulus to education was freedom and it was India's present freedom that had aroused a keen interest among the Indian people in education.

She noted with concern that the British Territories still had provision for the payment of fees, even if they could be remitted in special circumstances, while the French and Belgian African Territories provided not only free education but also assistance in board and lodging. If compulsory education could not be introduced, at least it should be free, particularly as fee-paying affected the opportunities for the education of girls. In Mysore, India, this problem had been tackled by providing free education for girls, while fees had to be paid for boys.

Like other speakers, she was concerned with the wastage shown by the figures in table 3, page 27, of document A/AC.35/L.128. If maximum results were to be achieved, the wastage, which was due to social and economic factors, should be specially studied. India was sceptical about the resolutions on pages 51 and 52. What was needed was monetary assistance, which might perhaps be obtained from the International Bank.

Mr. YANG (China) expressed general satisfaction with the progress shown in the documents prepared by the Secretariat and in the additional information furnished by the Administering Powers. It was regrettable, however, that, owing to the fact that the Secretariat had not had all the necessary data and information at its disposal, the study on compulsory education had been confined to twenty-four Non-Self-Governing Territories. He hoped that, with further co-operation from the Administering Powers, a complete review of the question in all Non-Self-Governing Territories would be possible when the Committee next took up the study.

Free and compulsory education was the ideal to be aimed at, but if it could not be attained immediately, at any rate elementary education should be free, as was laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He considered that free education was a prerequisite for effective compulsory education and, as time went on, that should include, wherever possible, free meals, free transport, free medical services etc.

The problem of financing the introduction of free and compulsory education was complex and difficult, and it was to be hoped that there would be a steady budgetary increase for education. During the UNESCO conferences reference had been made to the question of low-interest international loans to assist in the establishment of free and compulsory education, and he wondered if the UNESCO representative had news of any action taken to implement that idea.

It was distressing that in some countries free education was available to Europeans but not to other inhabitants. That situation should be remedied.

With regard to the terms of reference of the sub-committee which was to draft the report on educational conditions in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, he would like to see the report divided into two parts: (1) a review of progress during the last three years in the light of the 1950 Committee's conclusions, and (2) detailed discussions of special topics, such as compulsory education, which the Brazilian representative had specially commended to the Committee's attention.

Mr. AKRAWI (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) replied to the Brazilian representative's request for UNESCO's views on wastage. It was a difficult problem to study. To compare the figures in the various grades for a single year did not provide an accurate index; it was necessary to take a particular class and follow its progress through the complete course. Using that method, he had found in one country that only 11 per cent reached the sixth grade. Of those 11 per cent only 7 out of 11, or 7 per cent of the original enrolments, actually finished the course. That meant that the average length of schooling for that country was 2 1/2 years out of 6. There was a tendency to revert to illiteracy, though the statistics might seem satisfactory.

Wastage could take the form either of children leaving school altogether, or of children being retarded and remaining in the same grade for more than one year, which swelled the figures for the lower grades. Sometimes parents needed the child's labour and withdrew him from school; sometimes they could not afford to maintain him at school, apart from the cost of fees, books etc. Some countries did not have facilities for a complete course, others appeared to offer a complete

course, but in fact did not offer a full set of classes in certain areas. Some parents might require no more from the child's education than the ability to read and write, especially when education was linked with the government's civil service system and it was not intended that the child should enter it. Some children were admitted to the first grade when they were too young, so that they had to repeat it. In the case of retarded children, parents might withdraw them after several failures to graduate the first time.

The fault could lie with too academic an approach or an excessively high standard, or an overcharged curriculum, which resulted in a high degree of retardation. In some cases, poor teachers and methods might be to blame, owing to the inadequate facilities for training teachers. Conditions at home might not be suitable for study, or not encouraging. Finally, the language of instruction was often not the mother tongue.

He offered some suggestions for tackling the wastage problem. It should be studied scientifically over a number of years. Parents should be asked their reasons for withdrawal. School courses should be made long enough and complete. The aim should be at least six years everywhere. Rural school-teachers should be trained to take several classes simultaneously. Education should be made compulsory wherever possible. Free tuition, books, transport and medical care should be provided. There should be a minimum age for employment which should be agreed on with the labour authorities. Curricula should be simplified and related to the environment, thus making the school more attractive for both children and parents. Better teacher training should be provided. The vernacular should be used as the language of instruction. Finally, promotion should be by age-group at the rate of one year for each class and if there was more than 5-10 per cent retardation, the blame should be laid on educational methods and attitude, not on the unusual stupidity of the pupils.

Mr. WARD (United Kingdom) expressed agreement with almost everything that had been said by the preceding speakers. In particular, he agreed entirely with the Indian representative that the problem of extending compulsory education was essentially an economic one. He was less sure that an international loan, as envisaged by the Chinese representative, would be really helpful; it could be used for capital outlay, but hardly for the annually recurrent burden of teachers' salaries.

He wholeheartedly agreed with the UNESCO representative that the problems of wastage and retardation should be made the subject of a scientific study. The study should be carried out on a large scale, preferably by a university department of education. He also agreed that teachers should be trained to teach two or more classes simultaneously and to make school more attractive to the children. Drastic reform would be needed in the present policy of teacher training in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Mr. CHARTON (France) said that France had for a long time adhered to the principle of free and compulsory universal education, which was one of the fundamental laws of the French Republic. Laws introducing such education had been implemented in a number of its Non-Self-Governing Territories, such as French West Africa and Madagascar. There were, however, many practical considerations to be taken into account; where there was a lack of teachers, or where the population as a whole was not yet won over to compulsory education, the principle could not be applied. In many territories there was at present a genuine desire for education; every effort was being made to provide it, but the process was one of evolution, which must be sanctioned by legislation.

By way of example, he referred to the situation in the countries of French Equatorial Africa which had previously been most backward in that respect. It was a vast region with a small and scattered population, and in the last ten or fifteen years considerable progress towards compulsory education had been made. Thus, in the Gaboon some 42 per cent of children of school age attended school, while in the Middle Congo the figure was 54 per cent. That had been achieved by establishing a number of new schools, not only in the populated centres, but in the bush, with the co-operation of private education.

In so far as France was concerned, compulsory education, of course, implied free education. The French Government had always applied that principle, to the extent of providing not only schooling, but school supplies, text-books, and frequently school meals, free of charge. Another condition of successful education was that the school should be a permanent institution, able to exercise a lasting influence both on the students and on the community. An effort was also being made, through the schools, to foster the local the and indigenous arts and crafts.



The UNESCO representative had mentioned wastage in education, owing to which the school, made to serve the majority, in fact served the minority who were able to absorb the curriculum offered. He agreed that such wastage must be eliminated, but felt that academic standards must be kept up notwithstanding, and that it was normal for a certain percentage of pupils not to continue their schooling until the end of their primary education. The aim in French territories was to provide a six-year primary course in all schools; in French Equatorial Africa, for example, one out of two children attending primary schools went on until the average post-primary grade, which was not an unreasonable proportion. The village schools did not usually offer a complete course.

While he was an ardent supporter of campaigns against illiteracy, he stressed the risks involved in the use of rapid and superficial methods. Audio-visual techniques might be extremely valuable, but if what was learned was not to be forgotten, permanent, influential six-year schools must be provided. The number of such schools should gradually be multiplied, and teachers should be trained both to teach several courses at once. Only in that way could the goal of universal and popular education be attained.

Mr. FRAZAO (Brazil) noted that the UNESCO representative had stressed the need for a scientific study of the pedagogical reasons for retardation. The United Kingdom representative had expressed the view that teacher-training methods should be reformed; and the French representative, who had cited figures on French Equatorial Africa which had not previously been known to the Committee, had also recognized the importance of the problem of retardation, although he had appeared unwilling to relinquish the present methods of selection. All three representatives' statements should be recorded in the report in a summarized form; and, since all under-developed countries were facing essentially similar problems in education calling for similar solutions, it would be very useful for the Committee to receive, in two or three years' time, information on any measures taken in pursuance of those statements.

Mr. AKRAWI (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said, in reply to a question put earlier by the Chinese representative that, in accordance with recommendations adopted at the Bombay and Geneva Conferences, UNESCO had taken several steps. It had approached a committee on non-self-liquidating projects established by the Economic and Social Council, with a view to obtaining low-interest international loans for the promotion of compulsory education. The Committee had replied that there was no question of extending loans in any limited field at the present stage. He had not yet received precise information about the Economic and Social Council's recent decision on the matter. UNESCO had also approached the specialized agencies to see what assistance they could offer, particularly technical assistance, and would continue to press the question. Lastly, UNESCO had requested its members to submit detailed plans and financial estimates for the introduction of free and compulsory education in their countries, no such plans had as yet been submitted. UNESCO was greatly interested in the whole question and would continue its efforts to obtain low-interest financing. In that connexion, financial aid was needed primarily not for recurrent expenditures, such as teachers' salaries, but for new schools, equipment, and the training of teachers and administrators.

The CHAIRMAN stated that the discussion of item 4 (b) of the agenda was closed.

(c) Education of girls (A/AC.35/L.133)

Miss MAÑAS (Cuba) pointed out that the best way of raising the standard of living of a people was to educate that people. Where possible, they should be taught in the vernacular, but they should, in addition, learn another language so as to widen their opportunities. Education was closely connected with economic and social development and any improvement in education would result in raising the economic and social level of the region concerned.

She recalled the interest shown by the Commission on the Status of Women at its seventh session in the education of girls and the special stress the Commission had laid in its resolutions on educational opportunities for girls and women in Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories. She quoted the relevant passages from the Commission's resolutions, which had been approved by the Economic and Social Council at its most recent session.

The United Kingdom representative had stated correctly that to educate women was to educate the home and had acknowledged the importance of the part played by mothers in the education of their children. It was true that the economic and social factors which militated against the advancement of education for girls could not be changed overnight by legislative and administrative methods and that old customs and traditions could not be eliminated by direct and energetic methods without causing serious upheavals. Nevertheless, in some cases persons in positions of authority were intimidated by the apparent insuperability of those difficulties and consequently failed to take action where it would be possible and desirable to do so. Slowness of action might be attributed to unwillingness to interfere with the traditions and prejudices of the people concerned; the progress achieved in countries where strong tradition might be regarded as an obstacle to women's education showed, however, that much could be done by means of vigorous action.

Document A/AC.35/L.133 showed that the education of girls was lagging behind that of boys at every level, especially with regard to secondary schooling. Fortunately, that was not the case in all Territories, but the fact remained that secondary education for girls was being neglected. In the Belgian Congo, for example, there was no secondary education whatsoever for girls and there would be no female candidates for higher education for some time to come. Moreover, discrimination against girls was practised in the primary grades in that Territory, and only boys were admitted to the so-called "selected second degree primary schools".

In other Territories, secondary education for girls was incomplete and was often confined, where it existed, to domestic activities and child care. Although those activities were important, it was essential to provide the

opportunity of a liberal secondary education for girls who were capable of taking advantage of it, so that they might subsequently take positions of responsibility and promote social progress in their country. Such education might be given in new secondary schools or in special sections of existing secondary schools, without neglecting instruction in the domestic arts and child care.

A further problem with regard to the education of girls was the shortage of trained indigenous teachers. It was impossible to increase the number of such teachers if there were not enough candidates for teacher-training schools, and a vicious circle was thus formed. One way of breaking that circle would be to increase the number of schools for girls and to import teachers from abroad; although that was an expensive method, especially in Territories where boarding schools would be necessary, the urgency of the problem called for such a drastic solution. Moreover, boarding schools would have the advantage of bringing together girls from different regions where education was not available.

The concluding note to document A/AC.35/L.133 gave some examples of measures which might be taken to promote the education of girls. It would be extremely useful to the Committee to hear of the experiences of various countries and Territories in taking such measures and extending their application. In that connexion, she wished to know what could be done to make the teaching profession more attractive, what were the advantages and disadvantages of employing married women and married couples as teachers, whether married women were allowed to teach in all the Territories, how adequate education could be ensured for girls in co-educational schools where all the teachers were men, under what conditions compulsory attendance could be introduced, how educational opportunities could be extended for adult women, especially illiterates, by means of correlating community education with campaigns for the education of girls, and what kind of campaign would be the most effective for that purpose.

She paid tribute to the constructive ideas and co-operation of the UNESCO representative and stressed the usefulness of an interchange of ideas and experience among countries and Territories faced with similar problems.

Mr. BEDELL (United States of America) stated that education in all the Territories administered by the United States was similar to that provided in the metropolitan country and that education was consequently available to girls and women on exactly the same grounds as to boys and men. Statistics on attendance showed that girls and women took advantage of the educational facilities to a very great extent. He agreed with the Cuban representative that education reflected social attitudes to women; the United States had made special efforts to ensure respect for women's rights in all its Territories. The guiding principle of United States education was to develop the capacities and abilities of all pupils; no one was excluded or selected with a view to the numbers of people required for positions of leadership, but all were encouraged to continue their education for as long as facilities were available and their capacities permitted.

He quoted some educational statistics from the 1950 census taken in the United States and the Territories under its administration. In Alaska, school attendance of children aged 5 to 6 was 47 per cent; 91 per cent of the children between the ages of 7 and 13 attended school and 78 per cent of the children between 14 and 17. All the figures related to boys and girls and the proportion of the latter was as high as or higher than that of boys in most schools. The average number of school years completed by the adult population, aged 25 and over, was 11.3 years, the average for women being slightly higher than for men.

In Samoa, which was not so advanced as Alaska, 29 per cent of the children between 5 and 6 attended school, 88 per cent of the children between 7 and 13, 89 per cent of the children between 14 and 15 and 74 per cent of the children between 16 and 17. The average number of school years completed by persons aged 25 and over was only 5.3; that situation gave rise to a special problem, which perhaps applied to women more than to men. The adults were not familiar with formal school systems and that absence of experience made them less helpful than they might be in promoting good study habits in their children. The educational authorities were aware of the importance of continuity in cultural habits and were making every effort to promote adult education.

The general situation in Guam was similar to that of Samoa. 98 per cent of the children between 7 and 13 years and 70 per cent of the children between 16 and 17 attended school. The average number of years of schooling completed by adults was 8.4.

In Hawaii, where 98 per cent of the children between 7 and 16 attended school and 86 per cent of the children were receiving secondary education, there was a large university for teacher training, from which most of the teachers in Hawaii had graduated. The majority of those teachers were women, who were encouraged to enter the profession.

In the Virgin Islands, 98 per cent of the children between 7 and 13 attended school and approximately 70 per cent were receiving secondary education. In that Territory, as in Samoa and Guam, a problem was raised by the lack of experience of formal schooling among the adult population, whose average number of years of schooling was 6.2.

Those figures showed that women in the Territories administered by the United States were availing themselves of the educational opportunities extended to them.

Mr. WARD (United Kingdom) thought that some of the Cuban representative's questions might be answered by a description of measures taken to promote the education of girls in certain Territories administered by the United Kingdom.

In Hong Kong, the school enrolment of girls had nearly doubled in five years: it had increased from 41,458 in 1948 to 80,586 in 1953, and had kept pace with the increase in the enrolment of boys. A vocational school for girls, with 495 places, had been opened in 1951 and a technical school with 352 places had been set up in 1952. Opportunities for higher education were the same as they were in the United Kingdom: 243 women, as against 609 men were enrolled in Hong Kong University and were well represented in many of the faculties.

In Singapore also, the school enrolment of girls had nearly doubled in four years, and had increased from 26,750 in 1948 to 50,700 in 1952. A special increase had been noted in English language schools, where the attendance of girls had risen from 6,500 in 1948 to 22,700 in 1952. A new girls' secondary

school, giving education up to school certificate standard and with domestic science and scientific equipment, had been opened in 1952 and would serve as a model for all new girls' schools. Scholarships to the United Kingdom were available to women. A committee was examining the need for a polytechnic institute, where girls could learn domestic science, commerce and art.

A craft centre had been opened in Malaya in 1952 for girls who did not want to proceed to secondary school after completing six years of primary schooling, but wanted to learn to make a living. In addition to domestic science and crafts, such as fabric printing, the pupils were taught English, arithmetic and civics.

He considered that the only way of breaking the vicious circle referred to by the Cuban representative was to bring educated women from abroad to demonstrate the advantages of education. The influence of more highly educated persons was the very essence of the process of education. In many Territories, it was difficult to persuade girls to attend schools. A campaign to eliminate that difficulty had been undertaken in Northern Rhodesia, where fathers were unwilling to allow their daughters to leave home because they relied on them to marry men who would support the whole family. An illustrated pamphlet, describing the advantages of schooling from the point of view of making a better match for the daughter, had been issued, with great success. A tour of teachers and pupils had also been organized to demonstrate to parents the useful arts taught to the girls.

With regard to adult education, he quoted the example of a chain of women's clubs in Uganda, where women met to do needlework and other activities and to hear talks about other parts of the country. Contact with different people was one of the most important aspects of education. Schooling and action for adult education should move on parallel lines; schools tended to separate children from their parents, but adult education could help to prevent a disastrous cleavage between generations.

Mr. KADRY (Iraq) pointed out, with reference to paragraph 3 of document A/AC.35/L.133, that the unsatisfactory situation with regard to the education of girls was merely a facet of the lamentable position of education in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The UNESCO representative had rightly stated that if real efforts were made and concerted energy were applied, the difficulties would not loom so large. There was no immediate need for elaborate equipment: open-air classrooms with well-trained teachers and keen pupils could achieve excellent results. Where there was a will, there was a way: it was for the Administering Powers to prove that the will was there.

In connexion with the statement in paragraph 5 of document A/AC.35/L.133 that the quality of education was usually poorer for girls than for boys, he stressed the fact that bad education could do irreparable harm. His delegation was extremely concerned by that aspect of the problem and hoped that action would be taken to remedy the existing conditions.

It was stated further in paragraph 5 that the demand for more educational facilities for girls had swelled to a clamour in certain areas. Nothing could be done to meet that demand unless enough women teachers were adequately trained. The Iraqi delegation urged that vigorous action should be taken immediately.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.