

UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY



Distr.  
GENERAL

A/AC.35/SR.194  
10 August 1959  
ENGLISH  
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

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COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

Tenth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY-FOURTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Tuesday, 28 April 1959, at 10.55 a.m.

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PRESENT:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. KELLY	(Australia)
<u>Members:</u>	Mr. ROBERTSON	Australia
	Mr. CASTRO ALVES	Brazil
	Mr. KANAKARATNE	Ceylon
	Mr. CORDERO MICHEL	Dominican Republic
	Mr. DOISE	France
	Mr. TURKSON	Ghana
	Mr. HERRARTE	Guatemala
	Mr. RASGOTRA	India
	Mr. KITTANI	Iraq
	Mr. GOEDHART )	Netherlands
	Mr. de BRUYN )	
	Mr. DAVIN	New Zealand
	Mr. CASTON )	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mr. BROWNING )	
	Mr. HOUGHTON )	
	Mr. MORE )	United States of America
	Mr. SIMMS )	

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mr. KHAN	International Labour Organisation
Mr. ACHARYA	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
Mr. WALTER	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Dr. SACKS	World Health Organization

<u>Secretariat:</u>	Mr. PROTITCH	Under-Secretary for Trusteeship and Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories
	Mr. KUNST	Secretary of the Committee

EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS IN NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES: GENERAL DEBATE  
(continued)

Mr. HOUGHTON (United Kingdom) reminded the Committee of the United Kingdom's attitude on the important problem of race relations in education in Non-Self-Governing Territories.

In 1950 the Committee had expressed the view (A/AC.1303/Rev.1, paragraph 50) that: "(a) In the field of education no principle is more important than that of equality of opportunity for all racial, religious and cultural groups of the population", and that "(b) Respect should be paid to the wishes of any group desiring to establish particular educational facilities for its members, but this should be subject to the overriding consideration that the general welfare of the whole community is not thereby prejudiced and that the practical operation of any system of differentiation does not lead to discrimination against any group". The Committee had added that "differentiation ... should not militate against the development of mutual sympathy and a feeling of common citizenship among the inhabitants of a Territory", and that "where separate systems exist, each group in the community should be given a fair share of the public funds used for educational purposes". Moreover, the Committee had reaffirmed in 1956 that "the principle of non-discrimination is essential to and is an essential part of education" (A/3127, paragraph 81).

His delegation still firmly endorsed those principles of non-discrimination, while admitting that separate educational systems existed in some Territories administered by the United Kingdom and that the introduction of an integrated system must necessarily be a slow process. That situation was due to local educational and financial problems.

Many educationalists believed that a child's education should be in keeping with the environment and the community to which he belonged and that undifferentiated education could not meet those individual needs. Some expatriate education officials were perhaps over-insistent on the retention of that differentiation. However, the reports of the Directors of Education of North Borneo, Sarawak and the Fiji Islands showed that they were keenly aware of the need for racial co-operation and intended to retain separate education only so long as that was justified, by language difficulties for instance.

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(Mr. Houghton, United Kingdom)

Where the problems were essentially of a financial nature, in African Territories for example, there was a move towards the allocation to indigenous primary education of sums that were proportionally equal to those spent on education for Europeans. The allocation for secondary education was already about equal.

He was pleased to record that progress and hoped, like other speakers, to see still more rapid advances and the broadest possible application of the principle of inter-racial education. Meanwhile he had every confidence in the wisdom of the educational experts on the spot, who were endeavouring to meet individual needs without raising racial barriers.

(c) FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION (A/AC.35/L.298)

(d) SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION (A/AC.35/L.299; A/AC.35/L.302)

Mr. KITTANI (Iraq) expressed regret that the principle of free education had not yet been accepted everywhere. The UNESCO report (A/AC.35/L.298, paragraph 7) stated that "Belgian and French policy favours free tuition in state primary schools; in British Africa the debate is still in progress ... In many Non-Self-Governing Territories, particularly in Africa and in the Pacific, state schools are still far outnumbered by mission schools, where, in general, tuition fees are charged". That situation was especially to be deplored in Territories with a high level of illiteracy such as British Somaliland, where in 1951 99 per cent of the inhabitants had been illiterate but "free education is given to 20 per cent of the pupils in schools of all categories" (A/AC.35/L.298, annex, page 2). He did not feel that such a policy would be likely to engender the thirst for knowledge referred to by several members of the Committee. He also deplored the fact that "in a relatively large number of the Territories there still appears to be no provision for free textbooks and stationery" (ibid., paragraph 22).

Education could be compulsory only when it was free and there were sufficient schools to meet the needs of the population.

Having studied the ratio between the primary school enrolment figures and the total number of children between the ages of five and fourteen years

(Mr. Kittani, Iraq)

(A/AC.35/L.298, annex, table IV), he felt that, in most of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the objective of free and compulsory education was still a very long way off.

Turning to the conditions of secondary education in the Territories, he recalled that, in 1956, the Committee had emphasized the need for "expansion and diversification at this level of education", which "should not only serve as the intermediate stage between primary and higher education but also have its own purpose and be autonomous in the sense that it should provide an education and training of sufficient content in itself without necessarily leading to higher education". He deplored the fact that most of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were still very far from the goal of providing secondary education for about 25 per cent of the children (A/AC.35/L.299, paragraph 2), or even for 5 per cent, as Mr. Houghton had envisaged. There was indeed a "very large gap between the number of pupils entering education and those who pursue it at the secondary level" (*ibid.*, paragraph 66). Thus in Kenya, where in 1957 there had been over 500,000 African pupils in the primary schools, those attending secondary schools had numbered only 3,316, a proportion of less than one in 150, whereas that proportion had been one in six for Asian children and more than one in three for European children.

Mr. RASGOTRA (India), referring to the statement made by the United Kingdom representative regarding free and compulsory education, said that parents did, in any case, bear part of the cost of education, in proportion to the taxes they paid. "Free" education meant that the direct incidence of education costs did not fall on the children or their parents, irrespective of whether or not the latter paid taxes. He pointed out, moreover, that subsidies from the metropolitan country covered only a small fraction of the total expenditure of the Territories, which was itself far from adequate.

The principle of compulsory education was clearly propounded in resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights and the Social Commission, according to which a child was entitled to free and compulsory education at least at the primary level. That was a fundamental principle which simply meant that every child in a certain age group, which varied from country to country, had a right to receive an education that would enable him to develop his personality and become a useful citizen.

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(Mr. Rasgotra, India)

The problems posed by education in the Non-Self-Governing Territories were not very different from those faced by India. The Indian Government believed that every child had the right to education. The principle of compulsory education was, therefore, embodied in the Indian Constitution. The Indian Government had at first hoped to attain the goal of universal primary education within ten years, but owing to the lack of statistical data necessary for effective planning and as a result of financial and numerous other difficulties, progress in the spread of education in the first few years had been slower than expected. In the course of the first five-year plan (1950 to 1955), the proportion of children attending school had risen from 42 to 58 per cent. A second five-year plan, involving a total expenditure of \$630 million, was at present being carried out and the proportion of children attending school was expected to reach 63 per cent by the end of 1961. Thus, though the initial objective had evidently been over-ambitious, planning in the light of available resources had enabled the Indian Government to make steady progress in the direction of full achievement of the objectives. If the present rate of progress was maintained, the goal of 100 per cent school activity could probably be attained in about ten years.

Obviously the mere proclamation of a principle would not ensure the introduction of free and compulsory education overnight, but it was important that that principle should first of all receive official recognition. It would then be possible to undertake the second stage and draw up the necessary plans. In many Territories the local or metropolitan authorities evidently had no such plan. Those factors, in his view, were obstacles in the way of rapid progress in the field of primary education.

In the Territory of St. Helena, which had a population of 4,649 and whose budget showed a deficit, education was free and compulsory. That was certainly a ground for satisfaction, but why, then, was the situation so bad in the Territory of Brunei, which was much bigger and had a large budgetary surplus? It would be interesting to know for what reasons the Administering Power recognized the need for universal education in the former Territory where financial difficulties existed and not in the latter where the financing of educational planning was not a problem.

(Mr. Rasgotra, India)

In British Somaliland there was said to be a plan for the rapid development of education. The illiteracy rate there, however, was 99 per cent. The Indian delegation would like to know to what extent the plan, if one existed, had been carried out. In that Territory the situation was complicated by the fact that a large part of the population was nomad. There could be no question, of course, of demanding a system of universal education immediately. But the Administering Authority should provide for it step by step. For example, in selected areas the attendance of enrolled children should be made compulsory; in other areas primary education should be made compulsory for all children of school age. Simultaneously, tuition fees should be abolished in the experimental areas. The area of free and compulsory education could then be extended, by stages, to cover the entire Territory.

In another Territory a seven-year plan had been drawn up. Apparently, however, school attendance ceased after the third year of study. That was rather surprising since as a general rule it was during the first year that absenteeism was highest. The matter should be examined more closely so as to discover the causes which led to the discontinuation of a child's school career at such an early stage. He did not mean to suggest that free and compulsory education should be instituted everywhere all at once, but there was no reason why compulsory education should not be introduced in areas where sufficient schooling facilities existed or could be more easily developed in a comparatively short period of time. Efforts must be made to popularize education through experiments carried out in certain limited areas. Such experiments had been made in India with great success.

The United Kingdom representative had quoted an article by Professor Arthur Lewis. The Indian delegation fully subscribed to the conclusions of that article, namely that educational plans with targets and dates should be drawn up. Professor Lewis' view was that the aim should be to achieve a primary school attendance rate of 50 per cent and a secondary school attendance rate of 4 per cent at the end of the first five-year period, and that at the end of the second five year period the rate of primary school attendance should reach 100 per cent and that of secondary school attendance 10 per cent. His delegation considered that Professor Lewis' suggestions were perfectly reasonable. It would

(Mr. Rasgotra, India)

not advocate more rapid progress at that stage, though in its view the relation of secondary school enrolment to primary school enrolment should normally be 25 per cent.

In planning, full allowance must be made for the probable increase in population. If, as had happened in Mauritius and West Irian, the rate of educational expansion did not take into account the rate of population growth, the goal of universal primary education would never be reached.

The United Kingdom representative had tried to justify the maintenance of separate educational systems for the different ethnic groups in British Territories by saying that equality could not be introduced immediately without greatly lowering the level already reached by the schools for European children. He would not deny that, but did not see why non-European children should be the only ones to suffer from the inadequate development of educational facilities. The United Kingdom representative had also spoken of the lack of funds and of metropolitan contributions to Territorial budgets. It was difficult to draw up a balance sheet of what a metropolitan country gave to and took from its Territories. While the amount of metropolitan subsidies was made known, the Committee was not informed of the benefits derived by metropolitan countries from the exploitation of the Territories' resources, from trade and commerce, and so forth. It was obvious, at any rate, that in the context of the Territories' needs, metropolitan contributions were like a drop in the ocean.

Furthermore, there were glaring disparities in the allocation of funds for the education of different racial groups. In Kenya, for example, in 1956-1957 about £880,000 sterling had been allocated for the education of the children of 63,000 Europeans, whereas the 6 million Africans had been allowed only £2,130,000. Thus the United Kingdom had failed to respect the Committee's recommendation, made as early as 1950, that where separate systems existed, each sector of the population should receive a fair share of the available funds. In fact, the small European community was at the present time receiving the lion's share of such funds. Such privileged treatment could not be explained away by saying that the Europeans paid more taxes than the Africans or the Asians. The distribution of the tax burden amongst the various elements of the population simply corresponded to the distribution of income.

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(Mr. Rasgotra, India)

Such racial discrimination was incompatible with the United Kingdom's moral and international obligations. It ran counter to the principles and purposes of the United Nations. It could only perpetuate divisions and prejudices against which the United Nations was striving.

Separate systems of education existed in other Territories too, in Asian Territories, for example, but for different reasons. In several Territories there were three or more separate systems of education, such as Chinese education, Tamil education, Malayan education, English education and so on. Although those systems were not strictly speaking based on racial discrimination, they were equally undesirable. Considerations there were linguistic. The authorities in those Territories should follow the example of India, where all children learnt several languages. Since the purpose of education must be to prepare all the elements of a Territory's population for self-government, the value of separate institutions was not evident, unless the idea was that the different elements of the population should administer themselves separately.

He had been struck by the very great importance given to denominational education in certain Territories. In Mauritius, for example, there were several education authorities, corresponding to the religions of the communities in question. Such multiplication of the types of school merely increased the cost. One of the advantages of Western education and one of the reasons why the peoples viewed it with favour was precisely its secular character: the State did not make education a means of propagating any particular religion or ideology. He wondered, on that point, whether the representative of UNESCO would express a view on the merits and demerits of denominational education as against secular education.

Finally, with regard to the language of instruction, it was a good idea to teach the people a Western language, but during the very first years instruction should be given in the vernacular so as not to cut the young children off from their environment. The practice adopted by New Zealand in the Cook Archipelago and the Tokelau Islands could be taken as a model in that respect.

The CHAIRMAN expressed the opinion that it was beyond the competence of the United Nations or a specialized agency like UNESCO to formulate a value judgement on the role in education of major ideologies such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity or Islam.

Mr. RASGOTRA (India) said that he simply wished to know whether, in the opinion of the UNESCO representative, the cause of education was better served by denominational or by secular education.

Mr. KANAKARATNE (Ceylon), replying to the remarks made by the United Kingdom representative regarding absenteeism in Jamaica, pointed out that, in general, it was not enough to give children free education and to place new schools at their disposal; they must also be provided with decent living conditions. Absenteeism was an all too common phenomenon in under-developed countries, even those which were now independent, since children often had to be kept out of school to help their parents at work, or themselves work to add to the family earnings. He considered that the educational situation was linked to the social situation and wanted to know the opinion of the United Kingdom delegation on that matter. He wondered also whether parent-teacher associations could not do useful work with regard to school attendance.

He wished to associate himself with all those who had protested against discriminatory practices in education. The harmonious development of a community was not encouraged by bringing up the children of its various ethnic groups separately and in isolation. A European child who grew up in a privileged environment would not be inclined later on to consider the Africans as his equals. African children, for their part, experienced from their earliest years a feeling of injustice and bitterness, which was liable later to arouse them to violence. His delegation hoped that the United Kingdom and the other Administering Powers which continued to maintain separate educational systems in their territories based on racial distinctions would inform the Committee of the measures they were taking gradually to abolish that practice. It was time they put into effect the principles to which they claimed to subscribe.

Mr. GOEDHART (Netherlands) pointed out that the Territory to which Mr. de Bruyn had referred in his statements was Netherlands New Guinea.

Mr. RASGOTRA (India) recalled that at the opening of the Committee's session he had made known his Government's view regarding the matter of sovereignty over West Irian.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.