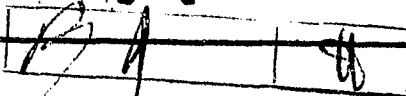




A/AC.35/SR.3
22 August 1950

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH



SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TRANSMITTED
UNDER ARTICLE 73(e) OF THE CHARTER
First Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE THIRD MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York,
on Monday, 21 August 1950, at 2.40 p.m.

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- Education in Non-Self Governing Territories; the Secretary-General's analysis of information and reports of the specialized agencies:
(a) eradication of illiteracy (A/AC.35/L.11, A/AC.35/L.11/Add.1, A/AC.35/L.16); (b) language of instruction (A/AC.35/L.15)

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	Mr. GARREAU	France
	Mr. de ARAOZ	Mexico
	Mr. LAKING	New Zealand
	Mr. LOPEZ	Philippines
	Mr. WARD	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mr. GERIG)	United States of America
	Mr. CALIVER)	

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Representatives of Specialized Agencies:

Mr. MENTALL	International Labour Organisation (ILO)
Mr. PAWLEY	Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
Mr. DESTOMBES	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Secretariat:

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

EDUCATION IN NON-SELF GOVERNING TERRITORIES; THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION AND REPORTS OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES: (a) ERADICATION OF ILLITERACY (A/AC.35/L.11, A/AC.35/L.11/Add.1, A/AC.35/L.16); (b) LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION (A/AC.35/L.15)

1. The CHAIRMAN called upon the representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
2. Mr. DESTOMBES (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) recalled that under the provisions of the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 2 December 1949, UNESCO had been asked to undertake certain studies on the eradication of illiteracy and the use of indigenous languages in instruction. The Executive Board of UNESCO had examined the resolution at its 19th session and had instructed the Director-General in collaboration with a large number of Member States to make a preliminary study of the scope and procedure of the surveys which would have to be undertaken in order to implement the General Assembly's resolution, and to report his findings.

3. After examining two draft reports, now before the Committee as documents A/AC.35/L.15 and A/AC.35/L.16, together with a report on the activities of UNESCO in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the General Conference of UNESCO at its 5th session had adopted a resolution instructing the Director-General to undertake an over-all study of the question of indigenous or national languages of native peoples as vehicles of instruction, and to communicate annually to the United Nations an account of how Member States had applied the methods advocated by UNESCO in combatting illiteracy.

4. In pursuance of that resolution a conference of experts was to meet at Paris in 1951 to study and report on the problems submitted to it. The conference would consist of three working groups, one to study the use of vernacular or national languages and the use of a second language for teaching purposes, another to study the fight against illiteracy, and a third to study the psychological and social aspects of bilingualism and multilingualism in education.

5. With regard to the question of vernacular ^{languages,} he pointed out that different conditions prevailed in each territory; it would therefore be necessary to study the situation in each territory carefully so that in every case the decision taken could be in accordance with the interests of the population. The experts would be unable to take such a decision without a preliminary study of the linguistic, educational, financial, psychological, social and political factors of the problem.

6. When the decision had been made, certain problems would still remain to be settled before it could be carried out. Unwritten languages would have to be codified; the problem of the second language would have to be solved, teaching material would have to be prepared and, if the education was given in the indigenous language, text books would have to be produced and teachers trained.

7. He recalled

7. He recalled that UNESCO had already studied in the past the problem of the language in which fundamental education should be given. In 1947 it had convened a meeting of experts who had been invited to draft some recommendations on the way in which UNESCO could help to solve the problem. The experts had proposed that a permanent exhibition of material used throughout the world in the field of education should be organized at UNESCO Headquarters; that a permanent group of language experts should be set up to advise by correspondence or at meetings all States or organizations desirous of receiving practical help in that field, and, finally, that arrangements should be made for the international exchange of personnel required to carry out the experiments in the various countries. Also in 1947 UNESCO had held a regional study conference at Nanking on fundamental education, and the experts had all acknowledged that wherever possible the language of instruction should be the mother tongue.

8. UNESCO had been obliged to abandon the study of the question. Following upon the General Assembly resolution it had decided to take up the matter again in 1951 and, in the meantime, a few publications would be prepared for the use of Member States.

9. UNESCO envisaged two stages in the struggle against illiteracy; first it was necessary that every child should attend school long enough to learn to read and write, so that after leaving school he would be able to continue his studies; it was then essential to undertake an intensive campaign against illiteracy in all countries where it was to be found. Before undertaking any campaign, however, a statistical survey should be made of the scope of the problem. Such statistics were difficult to compile and were still, therefore, incomplete. The data currently available concerned non-illiterate populations and not literate populations because, although it was possible to ascertain the number of inhabitants able to read and write, it was not possible to obtain precise information with regard to their degree of culture.

10. The question of a definition of illiteracy was one of the most important problems still unsolved. Several definitions had been proposed, the latest being the one issued after the Seminar held at Mysore the previous year; according to that definition, a person was considered literate not only if he knew how to read and write a simple text without difficulty, but also if he knew the rudiments of arithmetic, if he had a knowledge of the history of his country, and if he was aware of the place he occupied in the community. That definition was too broad and should be simplified.

11. In conclusion, Mr. Destombes quoted a passage from the latest report of UNESCO according to which that body, in collaboration with the United Nations, would attempt, through education, "to make men understand that in the world of today all peoples were members of the same community, and to prepare them to live in that new universe."⁽¹⁾

12. Mr. WARD (United Kingdom) said that the problem of illiteracy could not be separated from other problems raised by the question of education in general; illiteracy was not an evil in itself, but rather the symptom of the evil resulting from the poverty and isolation of some parts of the world. It existed in Non-Self-Governing Territories and in sovereign states. He wished to bring to the notice of the members of the Special Committee the information he had received from the Minister of Education of a certain Latin-American country concerning the situation with regard to education in that country. The number of schools was so limited there that out of 780,000 children of school age, 500,000 could not attend classes. Of those attending school, approximately 6,000 worked without desks, blackboards, and even without maps. Moreover, there were only 4,000 school teachers. A great many countries were in a similar position and the problem would be difficult to solve.

13. In examining and paying tribute to the documents which the Secretary-General and the UNESCO Secretariat had submitted to the Committee, he desired to emphasize two points in particular.

(1) Provisional translation.

14. He wished, first of all, to emphasize the need to define illiteracy. The task was certainly not easy, but without such a definition, the figures collected in the various territories could not be used for any scientific comparison, and he hoped that in the near future UNESCO would be able to provide a universal definition of illiteracy.

15. In the second place, he stressed that it was not enough for a child to attend school long enough to learn to read and write for him to be classified afterwards as literate. He noted in that connexion that during the mobilization at the beginning of the last war, a number of British citizens had turned out to be illiterate although they had attended school for nine years, in accordance with the law on compulsory primary education. The explanation of that phenomenon was that learning to read and write was not an end in itself but only a means of acquiring education in the broader sense of the word. Having learned to read and write, a child must, if he was not to forget what he had learned, have at his disposal texts and books which he was able and willing to read.

16. It was therefore first of all a question of increasing the number of texts available to the child. The problem could be greatly simplified if the number of languages in which these texts had to be printed could be reduced, but that was a question which the Committee would examine at a later stage and he would not dwell on the point for the time being.

17. Next, it was a question of choosing texts likely to interest the child. The desire to learn was not universal, and the first step towards the development of education was to arouse in children the desire to be educated. That was the psychological aspect of the problem and one of the most important.

18. Obviously, the number of schools must be increased. In that field slow but steady progress had already been made, and he gave as an example the children of Nigeria who, in 1952, had only been able to stay at school for eight years whereas at present they could stay for fourteen years.

19. New schools could not, however, be established without teachers and that fact involved a financial problem of the very highest importance. Although it was universally recognized that members of the teaching profession were underpaid, it remained nonetheless true that the expenses arising out of their salaries were always substantial. In the Gold Coast, for example, assuming that there was an adequate number of teachers in the primary schools, the salaries paid would come to 2,250,000 pounds sterling a year, while the total annual revenue of the country was only 12,000,000 pounds sterling.

20. In conclusion, he said that the problem had two essential aspects: on the one hand, the fight against illiteracy depended upon an improvement in the general economic situation; on the other hand, that fight could only be undertaken by taking the human aspect, the customs of the various Territories, into due account and by attempting to develop a desire for education in the people themselves.

21. Mr. CALIVER (United States of America) said that the eradication of illiteracy in the Non-Self-Governing Territories was one of the most critical and difficult problems facing the present-day world. That fact emerged clearly from a reading of the document prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.35/L.11) in spite of the fact that the data it contained related to less than half of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. A comparable study of the conditions obtaining in underdeveloped countries would show that the problem was not confined to Non-Self-Governing Territories.

22. Turning to the causes of illiteracy, he said that studies conducted in the United States showed that its causes there were similar to those found in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. One cause was inadequate school attendance due to the inaccessibility of schools, the absence of regulations concerning school attendance, and the loss of the skills acquired in school from disuse. Other causes, which were not explicitly mentioned in the Secretariat paper, were poor teaching, the absence of any link between school teaching, on the one hand, and the interests and needs of the pupils on the other, the inadequacy of the teaching material and the generally rather low cultural level of the families and communities. In former days, anyone able to read and write in his native language, was regarded as literate. However, as the world progressed, contacts between peoples and communities became more and

more frequent and the eradication of illiteracy became more and more essential, particularly in a democratic world. In the document which it had prepared, the Secretariat repeatedly called attention to that fact and even suggested that the definition of illiteracy should be broadened by regarding as illiterate not only a person unable to read and write, but also a person unable to listen, speak and interpret, i.e., one who lacked the essential means of communicating with his fellow men.

23. The fact that millions of human beings lacked means of communicating with each other constituted a very serious problem. From the point of view of the individual, lack of education increased his chances of disease, poverty and social maladjustment. From the point of view of community welfare, illiterates constituted an obstacle to progress. They weakened the democracies by exposing them to the influence of non-democratic ideologies. The Secretariat paper said that education was valuable only in so far as it helped to improve living. The United States delegation agreed wholeheartedly. It further believed that as life grew more complex, the need for a higher level of education became increasingly pressing. The development of means of communication and transport made the peoples of the world more and more mobile and interdependent. Although it was unlikely and perhaps undesirable that most of the Non-Self-Governing Territories should become as highly industrialized as the administering powers, they would inevitably feel the impact of the world's technical progress. Thus, as man was increasingly replaced by the machine, the processes of production, distribution and consumption would become more intricate and would require from everyone greater knowledge and skill. At the present stage in international relations, when even the literate knew only incompletely what they ought to know, the future of the illiterate raised a major problem.

24. He laid stress on the particular importance of providing an appropriate education for adults, in view of the fact that they were daily called upon to make decisions on which depended not only their own future but also that of their families, their neighbours, the State to which they belonged, and the entire world. It was therefore necessary to improve educational programmes in such a way that the youth of today would be better prepared for the future than the youth of yesterday had been. But first the adults must be given proper

education so that they should not thwart the purposes of the school programmes. The problem of illiteracy could, of course, be approached in many ways, depending upon the Territory involved. The administering powers were to be commended for their past and present efforts in the Non-Self-Governing Territories under their administration. Nevertheless, however varied the solutions might be, they must include certain elements which were common to all the Territories, such as the selection of educational material suitable for adults, the special training of teachers in adult education, the training of instructors for teachers' colleges, the development of appropriate methods and techniques; moreover, the attention of governments, educational authorities and the general public should be drawn to the importance of the problem and co-operation fostered among institutions of higher learning, public and mission schools, and community agencies.

25. The achievement of those aims would require a special programme which most existing educational institutions were not in a position to carry through. That had proved true in the United States and had caused the United States Office of Education, with the financial support of a philanthropic foundation, to work out a special project on illiteracy. That project had evoked worldwide interest and had won high commendation from UNESCO officials, so much so that one of the staff members responsible for the implementation of the plan had been invited by UNESCO to go to Haiti the previous year and to India during the current year.

26. In conclusion, Mr. Caliver stated that while he agreed with the representative of the United Kingdom that the problem of illiteracy was mainly an economic problem, it was essential that some solution should be found in order to save the world from the dangers threatening it.

27. Mr. GARREAU (France) felt that the Special Committee would not succeed in finding a general solution to the problem of illiteracy in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. As emphasized by the United Kingdom and United States representatives, illiteracy was a practical problem related to the economic and other conditions existing in each Territory and could not be solved separately. At all events, the Committee should await the results of the exhaustive study of the problem to be undertaken by UNESCO before seeking a general solution.

28. The French delegation was aware of the fact that illiteracy was one of the most serious problems of worldwide scope. More or less rapid and extensive progress had been achieved by the administering powers, according to the economic conditions existing in each Territory. Illiteracy was more critical in the less developed Territories where schools were scattered over a wide area and means of communication inadequate.

29. The Special Committee should therefore confine itself to examining the particular position of each Territory and noting the progress achieved in the fight against illiteracy as reported in the excellent synopsis prepared by the Secretariat.

At the request of Mr. WARD (United Kingdom), supported by Mr. de ARAOZ (Mexico) and Mr. GARREAU (France), the Committee decided to continue the discussion on sub-paragraph (a)-Eradication of illiteracy--of item 5 at a later date and in the meantime to proceed to the consideration of sub-paragraph (b)-Language of instruction.

30. Mr. GERIG (United States of America) wondered whether the Mexican representative was in a position to provide information regarding the experiments undertaken in Mexico for the eradication of illiteracy.

31. Mr. de ARAOZ (Mexico) said that his delegation was not yet in possession of the necessary information but would submit it to the Committee as soon as it was received.

32. In reply to Mr. GARREAU (France); Mr. DESTOMBES (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that UNESCO had not yet received the report it had requested from the Mexican Government with respect to the measures which the latter had taken in combatting illiteracy in Mexico.

33. Mr. GARREAU (France) said that, according to the information received, the use of the Indian vernacular as the language of instruction in Mexican primary schools appeared to have given excellent results. He wondered nevertheless whether the students who completed their primary studies in the vernacular were not later placed at a disadvantage in comparison with students who had received their education in Spanish. The point was whether any purpose would be served in providing education in a vernacular language, no matter how little it was used. It would be most difficult to apply that principle in French Equatorial Africa, for instance, where there were countless different dialects.

34. Mr. GERIG (United States of America) gave some information regarding the method applied by the United States in the Non-Self-Governing Territories under its administration.

35. In Alaska, English was the language of instruction both in the territorial schools and in those of the Alaska Native Service. English was also the language used in the public schools of Guam, although the ancient Chamorro language was still spoken by a large number of the inhabitants. In 1900, shortly after the United States took over the administration of Guam, all children between the ages of 8 and 14 were required to attend school. English was also the language of instruction in the Hawaiian Islands. The vernacular was taught as an optional subject in the secondary schools and in a few primary schools in agricultural communities, but it aroused little interest even in the latter. English had been spoken by the inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands before the latter were placed under United States administration.

36. English was also the language of instruction in the public schools of Samoa. In the Virgin Islands, the people spoke English and English was the language of instruction in all public and private schools. In Puerto Rico however, Spanish was the language of instruction in the primary and secondary schools and also at the University. English was optional, and as a guide in the teaching of that language the United States Department of Education had published a teacher's manual in three volumes. In the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, lessons in the primary schools were in the vernacular. The languages spoken in the islands were Japanese and the native dialect and it had proved impossible to use English in primary education, although it was the language of instruction in the intermediate schools.

/37. In conclusion,

37. In conclusion, Mr. Gerig said that he was prepared to place at the Secretariat's disposal any statistical information it might require.

38. Mr. WARD (United Kingdom) said that the choice of the language of instruction in Non-Self-Governing Territories must be based on the following considerations:

1) The necessity of ensuring that the isolated populations of those Territories should have access to world culture and should enjoy the advantages of the main streams of civilization;

2) The necessity of not depriving them of their own cultural heritage

39. Those two aims were not always mutually compatible; what could be done in one Territory was impossible in another. The Government of the United Kingdom considered that it was impossible to adopt a uniform policy in the matter. Since 1925, the United Kingdom had decided that primary education in Non-Self-Governing Territories should be given in the vernacular with the specific aim of enabling the indigenous peoples to preserve their cultural heritage. Later, instruction was given in English so that the indigenous inhabitants might have access to world culture. That was the policy adopted by the United Kingdom in Non-Self-Governing Territories and described in an official document published of the British Colonial Office in 1927, entitled "The Place of the Vernacular in Tropical Africa". He quoted an extract from the document emphasizing the two points mentioned above. So far, the method had produced very satisfactory results. At the end of the secondary school programme, students who had had their primary schooling in the vernacular were only one year behind those who had studied in English and by the second year at the university there was no longer even that time lag.

40. He was aware of the practical difficulties involved in using the vernacular as the language of instruction. Even in the interior of each Non-Self-Governing Territory there was frequently a multitude of dialects striving for predominance. It was therefore essential to make a choice between all the dialects in use, and certainly the principle of education in the vernacular could not be applied throughout.

41. At a previous session, the Egyptian representative, while appreciating the efforts made by the administering powers to develop education in the language of the country, had wondered whether the multiplicity of dialects within a single territory was not an obstacle to national development. Mr. Ward realized that that danger existed, but as matters stood it was inevitable. In any case, primary education in the vernacular did not impede a student's university career. Finally, the study of the vernacular dialect was not always abandoned when passing from education in the indigenous language to education in English. Some indigenous languages could be considerably developed and were of great cultural interest.

42. In conclusion, he said that although the method adopted by the United Kingdom was not the only one possible, it had produced excellent results and had made it possible to achieve the two fundamental aims of all education in Non-Self-Governing Territories, those of retaining the cultural heritage of the indigenous inhabitants and of providing them with access to world culture.

43. Mr. GARREAU (France) wished to recall the point of view of the French delegation on the question of the teaching of indigenous languages. In his opinion it was essential to determine in each case whether it was a question of real language or of a dialect spoken by a small minority of the indigenous population. In all regions where France had been faced with a language spoken by the majority of the inhabitants, attempts had been made to develop it and to make it into a written language with a grammar and a syntax. Formerly, there had existed in certain territories a great number of languages or dialects which it had been and still was impossible to develop because of their rudimentary character and the small number of inhabitants who spoke them. The French delegation therefore considered that if there was a genuine desire to develop education in those territories and to create an élite, which would in turn be able to take over the education of the rest of the indigenous population, education must be given in another language which, in the case of territories under French administration, was French. In point of fact, the student who had been educated for four or five years in a rudimentary indigenous dialect was at a disadvantage in comparison with the student who had received his primary education in French and was able to continue his studies with ease in a secondary school and later at a university.

/44. He stressed

44. He stressed the necessity of training an intellectual élite in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and pointed out that France had achieved satisfactory results in that respect. He believed that only through such an élite could the cultural development of the indigenous populations be ensured and the local dialects raised to the status of a real language. He explained, in that connexion, that the Institut Français de l'Afrique Noire at Dakar carried out studies of the principal resources and dialects and codified the orthography, grammar and syntax of those dialects so as to make them into written languages. He pointed out that in Togoland, both primary and secondary education was given in the Ewe language which was spoken by more than a million of the inhabitants there; he added that that result was due to the efforts of the Ewe people themselves. In Annam, the intellectual élite of the country had codified and developed the Annamite language. Vietnam still possessed a language, history and culture of its own. In Cambodia, where there was a genuine language as well as a very ancient literature and culture, the French administration had encouraged the restoration and development of that language and culture by printing text books and literary works which had been distributed in schools throughout the country and by ordering that Cambodian should be taught as a second language in the secondary schools. At Laos, the vernacular, which had been in the process of disappearing, had been restored. In North Africa, the teaching of Arabic was given a high place, particularly at the University of Algiers.

45. He made it clear that France had not adopted any uniform policy in the teaching of indigenous languages, but made use of empirical methods which enable it to preserve the principal dialects and to train an élite capable of ensuring the cultural development of the indigenous peoples. Thus, territories which had once been backward today numbered among their indigenous inhabitants, writers, doctors, public officials and even a Governor General. Thanks to that rational and practical system, a large number of African dialects would become written languages and instruments of education.

46. Mr. LOPEZ (Philippines) wished to reply to the highly interesting statements of the United Kingdom, United States and French representatives. He explained that in the Philippines, as in other territories, there had been a lar,
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number of vernacular languages which after being written down in native symbols had been transcribed in the Latin alphabet following the Spanish colonization. At the beginning of the 20th century, the American administration of the territory had decided to use only the English language in education and had carried out that decision strictly, putting up notices in the schools prohibiting and penalizing the use of any vernacular language. Nevertheless, from the outset of the National Independence Movement, the Philippine people had sought to develop their local dialects. Moreover, they had succeeded in reducing the number of those dialects, once eighteen, to only three. In 1935, they had finally chosen Tagalog as the national language. At the present time, English remained the official language but Tagalog was taught in primary schools. Spanish remained on the syllabus in secondary schools. Gradually, Tagalog would undoubtedly become the official language of the Philippines and English would only be studied as a second language.

47. He wondered whether, following the example of his own country's history, it might not be possible to encourage the population of Non-Self-Governing Territories in which several vernacular languages existed side by side to choose one of those languages which would be taught at the same time as the language of the administering power. On another point, it would be useful to know whether any study had been made of the extent to which the adoption of a particular auxiliary language, such as French or English, had had an influence on the pupils' desire to learn, and on the progress they were able to make in their studies. For example, he wondered whether in the case of the various Territories administered by the United States where the teaching was in different languages, the results had varied according to the language used.

48. Mr. WARD (United Kingdom) wished to reply to the questions asked by the Philippine representative, which he found both interesting and discerning. He explained that in the Territories under British administration, the administering power had tried for twenty-five years to encourage the indigenous population to choose a common vernacular from among the many dialects that were spoken. The work done in that field had achieved some success, but it had also brought about many lengthy discussions and violent quarrels among the indigenous population, inter alia in Nigeria. All the efforts of the Europeans to establish a standardized and common vernacular had met with lively opposition from the indigenous population.

/49. As regards

49. As regards the Philippine representative's second question, he was not at that stage of the discussion, in a position to determine to what extent the adoption of an auxiliary language, such as French or English, in preference to a vernacular language, had any influence on the schoolchildren's desire to learn and on the ease with which they pursued their studies. However, he was sure that a child's progress in his studies depended a great deal on his wish to learn.

50. Mr. GERIG (United States of America) was not in a position to reply immediately to the questions asked by the Philippine representative, but would try to give him the fullest possible information in the course of the discussion of that item of the agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.