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Fourth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SEVENTY-SEVENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 24 August 1953, at 2.05 p.m.

CONTENTS

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

PRESENT:

Chairman:

Mr. LOOMES

Australia

Rapporteur:

Mrs. MENON

India

Members:

Mr. FRAZAO

Brazil

Mr. LIU

China

Miss MAÑAS

Cuba

Mr. SVEISTRUP

Denmark

Mr. BENITES-VINUEZA

Ecuador

Mr. de la BASTIDE)

Mr. CHANTON)

France

Miss RUSAD

Indonesia

Mr. KHALIDY

Iraq

Mr. GRADER

Netherlands

Mr. SCOTT

New Zealand

Mr. PIRACHA

Pakistan

Mr. WARD

United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland

Mr. FERNOS-LSERN)

Mr. SEARS)

United States of America

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mr. GAVIN

International Labour
Organisation (ILO)

Miss BAÑOS

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 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)

Mr. LIU (China) wished to emphasize the great importance, in matters of education, of equality of opportunity for all ethnic, racial and religious groups; the principle had been deservedly stressed in the 1950 Special Report on Education and in the paper on equal treatment in matters relating to education (A/AC.35/L.130). Whereas the 1950 report had been mainly concerned with conditions in Africa, it was gratifying to note that the paper on equal treatment dealt with other territories as well, in particular Singapore and the Federation of Malaya.

Those two territories were of special interest to his country, both because of their geographical proximity and because they had a large Chinese population. The Government of the Federation of Malaya was greatly concerned with educational problems, and had passed an ordinance in December, 1952, the ultimate aim of which was free and compulsory education for the children of all races in national schools, where the Indian and Chinese languages would also be taught. Such a policy should eventually weld together a Malayan nation, and the Chinese delegation had no quarrel with that. It should be noted, however, that the Chinese community in Malaya had shown a distinct reluctance to accept that plan. The reason was not far to seek. Tables in document A/AC.35/L.130 and in a 1951 report to the Government of the Federation of Malaya, entitled "Chinese schools and the education of Chinese Malays" showed clearly that of the four types of schools extant - the so-called English schools, and the Malayan, Indian and Chinese schools - the expenditure per child and the Government grants and subsidies were by far the lowest in the case of the Chinese schools. At the same time, the Chinese community contributed a considerable proportion of the funds collected for the other types of schools. A similar situation existed in Singapore. The figures showed an appalling disparity and inequality of treatment, altogether contrary to the recommendation on equal treatment in matters relating to education contained in General Assembly resolution 328 (IV).

His delegation was gratified to note the progress in educational matters achieved in a number of Non-Self-Governing Territories, including the two which it had singled out for comment, not in a spirit of criticism but merely to show that there was room for further progress.

Mr. KHALIDY (Iraq) expressed appreciation of the statements of those representatives of Administering Powers - and particularly of Denmark and the United States - who had informed the Committee of the action taken to make practical use of the 1950 Special Report on Education. As the Administering Powers obviously attached great importance to the Committee's debates on education, it was only logical that they should inform the territorial educational authorities of the character and results of those debates.

He had commented previously on the extent to which the Sub-Committee which would draft a special report on education should rely on the 1950 report; in addition, he wished to support the general plan for the Sub-Committee's work suggested by the Chairman.

Turning to the substance of the item under discussion, he pointed out that the information on education in Morocco, as submitted by the French Government (A/2410/Add.1) contained a number of unfortunate omissions. Indeed, the inclusion of various facts and figures which were conspicuous by their absence would have completely altered the picture presented in that document. Thus, whereas virtually every French child of school age was attending school, only 7 per cent of the Moroccan children were fortunate enough to do so, although 95 per cent of the total budget funds was derived from the Moroccans. In contrast with the 412 Moroccans enrolled in institutions of higher learning in France, there were 1344 French students who had been sent from Morocco to study in France at the expense of the Moroccan tax-payer. In a territory inhabited by some 7,500,000 Arabs and 363,000 Europeans, 131 periodicals and newspapers were published in French and nine in Arabic, and the only two daily newspapers published in Arabic were known to speak for the French interests in Morocco. Such facts deserved the consideration of the Committee.

Mrs. MENON (India) remarked that statistics, not being entirely comparable, should not be relied on too heavily; there was, moreover, a danger that the way the various documents before the Committee were presented might serve to hide the less favourable aspects of colonial administration which the Committee was trying to eliminate.

She agreed with previous speakers that the Committee should at the present session concentrate on a few strategic aspects of education, keeping in mind the principles approved in 1950.

Spectacular progress was not to be expected in matters relating to popular education. The Administering Powers had indicated a desire for progress, but they were following different paths, and not always the best. France was pursuing a policy of assimilation, designed to stifle the political aspirations of the people. In its colonial schools, the medium of instruction was French and the aim was to rear black and brown Frenchmen and thus to bring them into the mainstream of European civilization. It was a policy devoid of racial discrimination, but it failed to pay adequate attention to indigenous culture.

Other Administering Powers depended on missionaries for most of their educational work. In the Belgian Congo, all education for Africans was in the hands of the missions, which were subsidized by the Government. She quoted from the British report entitled "African Education" to show that the purpose of the missions was not to inculcate spiritual values but to teach evangelism in its crudest form. Consequently, the entire basis of mission education was wrong and the indigenous inhabitants were more harmed than helped by it. The same report spoke of the tensions resulting from that type of education. Many young Africans were torn between the old way of life and the new, which they had not completely assimilated. The extended family system, which had embraced the total life of the community and which had provided security and legal and moral sanctions of conduct, had been thrown out of gear. The result had been the weakening of old systems of authority, with a consequent increase in juvenile delinquency, unemployment and destitution. The report further noted that indigenous spiritual values had been destroyed, and that what had been borrowed from Western culture to replace them was not spiritual strength but material weakness. If that was the result of a century of missionary education, the system required careful review. She was therefore not convinced that the United Kingdom representative's enthusiastic attitude with regard to the education currently received by the Africans was justified.

Assuming that the purpose of education in Non-Self-Governing Territories was to help the people of those territories to achieve self-government within a measurable time, surely the people themselves must decide what kind of education they needed to attain that goal. The United Kingdom representative had failed to mention whether the Africans who served on educational councils and committees had been elected or appointed; if appointed, they would merely echo their master's voice and would in no way represent the people. She was not satisfied with the United Kingdom representative's explanation of the closing of African independent schools in Kenya; that the children had been absorbed in government-run schools did not alter the fact that the people were not permitted to have the type of education they wanted.

Western civilization should not be imposed on the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories; rather, they should be given a chance to conserve their own spiritual values and freedom to develop according to their own pattern.

The progress of education was bound to be slow; but the Administering Powers must at least make a sincere effort to provide mass education by making schooling easily accessible to children. Yet in some parts of Africa children were expected to walk to school long distances through areas infested by dangerous animals. In pleasing contrast was the recent progress in British West Africa and Uganda, in particular the proposed publication of primers and graded readers in the major African dialects, an example which the French and Belgian authorities might well follow.

The education of girls still lagged far behind that of boys; as a typical example, only 12 girls in Uganda - a territory with a population of over 5 million had sat for the school certificate examination in 1951.

The United States representative had drawn a happy picture of educational conditions in Puerto Rico; it was therefore surprising that, in spite of a literacy rate of 75.7 per cent, in a country in which every child was taught English, less than 25 per cent knew English well, and about 40 per cent hardly knew it at all.

On the other hand, she noted with satisfaction the attempt to study and codify African dialects for teaching purposes, the tendency towards greater unification of the regional systems and the increasing attention paid to the education of girls

She was also happy that the reports and recommendations of the Committee were receiving the attention they deserved. She had on the whole confined her remarks to Africa because she was convinced that if the problem of education was solved there and the continent became free, its solution in the rest of the world would be relatively easy.

Mr. de la BASTIDE (France) wished to dwell particularly on the development of education in Tunisia and Morocco. School attendance in Jewish and European schools - which, incidentally, were open to students of all races and creeds - had remained relatively stable; the great problem which the Government had had to face had been the sudden rush of young Moslems to modern schools since the Second World War. That movement was strongest in the urban centres, and most of the new students were boys; Moslem girls had appeared in modern schools only in 1950, and in relatively small numbers.

In order to meet the situation in Tunisia, the Government had in 1949 adopted a twenty-year educational plan, providing for universal school attendance in urban centres within twenty years, and concentrating on the boys first and on the girls second. The actual increase in school attendance had been more rapid than provided for in the plan, but it had been possible to make schooling available to every applicant in 1952. About 40 per cent of the total school population had attended school that year. In view of the reluctance of Moslem parents to send their daughters to school, the figure for the boys alone was more indicative: over 80 per cent of Moslem boys in urban centres were attending school. The plan was working out very well indeed.

In Morocco, which had a larger population, mass increases in school attendance were also to be noted in the Moslem primary schools. In 1952, there had been 157,000 students in 1200 schools, whereas in 1945 there had been only 40,000 in 220 schools. Those figures did not include the Jewish, European and Koranic schools. The percentages of children attending school were roughly the same as in Tunisia.

Great progress had therefore been made with regard to education for boys in urban centres; the French Government would next turn its attention to rural education, education for girls, and the development of vocational training.

Mr. CHARTON (France) agreed with the Chairman's proposals regarding the work of the Sub-Committee and the United Kingdom representative's suggestion that the Sub-Committee should concentrate on certain important matters that had not been dealt with at earlier sessions. While compulsory universal education was a vital problem, technical training too was important from the point of view of economic development.

Turning to the Secretariat memorandum on higher education in the Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/AC.35/L.125) he explained that in France the term enseignement supérieur applied not only to universities of the classical type, but also to research institutes and to the specifically French institution of the grandes écoles, such as the Ecole normale supérieure and the Ecole polytechnique, where teachers, administrators, engineers and other specialized personnel were trained. Furthermore, the baccalauréat could be considered as the first stage in higher education, since it prepared the way for university courses.

In the French Overseas Territories, secondary education up to the baccalauréat standard had developed enormously since the Second World War. The training of indigenous staff could therefore be undertaken in the Territories themselves. Ten years earlier there had been three or four thousand French officials in Africa. Well over that number of Africans were now being taught in secondary schools and access to all administrative posts was open to them. There were 23 secondary educational establishments in French West Africa. In Madagascar nearly 9,000 pupils attended secondary schools. In Tunisia the number was 12,000 and in Morocco it was 19,000, of whom 6,600 were Moslems. The French lycées and colleges in the Overseas Territories were living institutions with marked characteristics of their own and were very important cultural centres for the surrounding areas.

The number of candidates for the baccalauréat was also increasing. The baccalauréat juries were presided over by university professors from French faculties. In some Territories examining juries had been appointed from the university professors on the spot.

Mr. Charton then gave an account of the development of faculties and universities in the French Overseas Territories. At Dakar, the Institut des Hautes Etudes, established in 1950, now comprised courses of higher education in law, science and medicine and had initiated a course in letters. Those courses were branches of the universities at Paris and Bordeaux, but before long Dakar itself would become a fully-fledged university. It should be noted that a certificat d'études du droit et des coutumes d'outre mer (certificate of studies in overseas law and customs) had been established. In Morocco, the Institut des Hautes Etudes Marocaines specialized in the scientific study of all questions relating to Morocco and the Moslem world, their languages, history, geography and so on. There were also faculties of law, science and letters. There was also a most active centre of juridical studies and a centre of scientific studies. In Tunisia, the Institut des Hautes Etudes de Tunis gave courses in law, science, letters and Arabic studies. An ever-growing number of Moslems, including girls, were attending such institutes of higher education and many Moslems went to French universities. In addition, the traditional Moslem universities such as the Grande Mosquee in Tunis and the Karaouyne University at Fez continued to flourish and were sympathetically regarded by the authorities. An Institut des Hautes Etudes was being established in Madagascar.

From the large number of overseas students attending French universities it had been deduced, first, that it was the French policy to attract them to such universities and, secondly, that the students could not obtain the education they desired at home. On the first point, Mr. Charton emphasized that the movement of students to France was not due to pressure from the French authorities. The students themselves wished to study in France and the experience they gained there was very helpful to their own countries on their return. Some students came at their own expense, others on scholarships granted by the Territorial Governments and still others on scholarships from the French Government. In 1952, 1,640 overseas students had attended French universities. In addition to those, there were about 700 Moroccan and about 500 Tunisian students in France. Students usually came to France to carry out supplementary or specialized studies which could not be obtained on the spot in specialized schools or institutes. Plans were being made, however, to carry out in Africa the teaching of subjects, such as tropical medicine, which could best be studied on the spot.

In the Cite Universitaire in Paris there was a Pavillon de l'Union française with 300 places for African and Malagasy students and a Pavillon de Tunis with places for 150 Tunisian students; two Moroccan pavillons were in the process of construction. It must be stressed, however, that the overseas students were not segregated in any way, since French and other students could be admitted to the same pavillons.

He assured the Indian representative that the French Government was well aware of the possible danger of imposing a foreign civilization. The aim of French higher education was to try to bring about a fusion of African and French values. The establishment of French universities in Africa had led to a renaissance of African art, drama and music. The Africans themselves recognized their need for assimilating some of the values of Western civilization. A centre for the study of African languages had recently been set up at the Ecole Nationale de Langues Vivantes in France. Attention had also been given to the Moslem culture and a Franco-Moslem baccalauréat had been established which incorporated the essential aspects of the Moslem civilization and Western culture. The French Government's main aim was to promote a universal culture, to give education a practical orientation and to offer students from the overseas Territories access to French higher education.

The meeting was suspended at 4.05 p.m. and resumed at 4.35 p.m.

Mr. FERNOS-ISERN (United States of America) explained that literacy in Puerto Rico was determined by a person's ability to read or write either Spanish or English. Spanish was the language the people most desired. The educational policy was formulated by elected Puerto Rican representatives. English was taught from the first grade, but the medium of instruction throughout was Spanish. Importance was placed on English because it was the language of communication with the United States and Puerto Rico constituted part of the United States political system. The Government of Puerto Rico was doing and intended to continue to do everything within its power to extend the school system to include the greatest possible number of children of school age.

Mr. WARD (United Kingdom) replied to points raised by various speakers.

When referring to the education of the Chinese in Malaya and Singapore, the Chinese representative had quoted from "Chinese Schools and the Education of Chinese Malays", a work prepared by Doctors Fen and Woo at the request of the Malayan Government. That in itself showed that the Malayan Government was already well aware of the situation and anxious to improve it. It had been implied that equality would demand that the same amount of money be spent per pupil for all types of school, and that the fact that in Malaya and Singapore less money per head was spent on Chinese schools than on other types proved that the Chinese were not receiving their fair share of education. While that was true to some extent, it should be remembered that it did not necessarily cost the same amount per head to provide the same level of education in different cultures. Furthermore, the meaning of the term "English school" was much wider than at first appeared. These schools were open to all children able to follow the instruction, not only to English children. The actual attendance figures were: Indians: over 19,000; Malays: 21,000; Chinese: 45,000; others, including Europeans and Eurasians: less than 3,000. The English schools were the most popular in the country, and it was clear from the figures that the Chinese community valued and used their facilities more than any other.

The Iraqi representative had specifically praised the United States and Netherlands Governments for implementing the 1950 report by transmitting it to administering authorities in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The United Kingdom Government deserved the same praise for having taken the same action.

He had been disappointed to hear the Indian representative indulge in generalities, many of them inaccurate. As regards missionary education, when the United Kingdom Government referred to "voluntary agencies" it certainly did not mean exclusively mission activity. In Mauritius for instance education was controlled by committees representing all the communities on the island - governmental, Catholic, Church of England, Hindu and Moslem, all receiving equal treatment. Schools might also be run by individuals or private committees.

It was not true to say that the family system, particularly in Africa, had been thrown out of gear by the schools. In education, there were factors much more important than the schools, especially the influence of the home. That was

why United Kingdom educational policies for Non-Self-Governing Territories laid so much stress on the education of women. The break-up of the African pattern of life could certainly be ascribed to education, or rather mis-education, in the sense that when two cultures came into contact it was the superficialities which were absorbed first. It was the task of the schools to redress that situation, by putting across the better side of Western civilization.

The Indian representative had also said that people must be allowed to decide their own culture, but they could only do that when they were aware of the facts on which their decision had to be based. Primitive peoples could not educate or develop themselves out of nothing. The United Kingdom was not foisting an alien culture on Africa - Africa was crying out for it and for the prospect of economic betterment it brought. Western civilization should offer all it had, collected not only from Europe but from the East and the whole world, and the Africans would choose what they wished to accept. The idea that members of education committees appointed by governments merely reflect the opinions of their governments was quite untrue and contrary to human nature.

It was decided to proceed to item 4(b) of the agenda, returning to item 4(a) at the next meeting.

(b) Compulsory education

Mr. FRAZAO (Brazil) recalled that his delegation, supported by the United Kingdom and Pakistan, had stressed the value of establishing some kind of priority in dealing with the general aims of education in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and of equating those aims in accordance with various conditions and stages of educational development. Having established the broad principles and the main goals of education, the Committee could perform useful work, bearing in mind two practical considerations, the most urgent and pressing problems confronting the territories and the policies and programmes for solving those problems. One of the most important problems of compulsory education was to ensure that time, money and human material were not wasted through a relapse into illiteracy. The problem was not only one of legislation, but also one of eliminating the economic, social and political factors which might be responsible for wastage. Experience had shown that at least four years' schooling was necessary for the retention of

literacy, yet the figures given in tables 3 and 4 of document A/AC.35/L.128 showed that in fact a very serious falling off in attendance took place after one or two years. It might be correct to conclude that high wastage in primary schools showed that very little progress had been made in the eradication of illiteracy and in educational development. Apart from the waste of educational resources, it had a serious economic effect. Furthermore, the waste of human material in under-developed areas was far-reaching. Pupils leaving school before the age of 12 or 13 were not equipped to benefit from further education or to learn skilled crafts.

The problem of wastage was not peculiar to the colonial territories, but it was more acute there, because of the lower stage of economic and social development. The Committee should consider that problem as one which deserved its special consideration. It would be very helpful if the administering Powers could in future years provide information on the measures taken to reduce or remove wastage. Attention should also be paid to the curricula themselves. In many areas courses were only available covering a much shorter period than the four years regarded as necessary. It would be helpful if other administering Powers could produce figures relating to that problem in the form adopted by the United States for Puerto Rico. The Committee would do well to concentrate on compulsory education as a means to eliminate wastage of educational resources.

Mr. BEDELL (United States) agreed that a full discussion of compulsory education would be beneficial. Compulsory education already existed in all the Non-Self-Governing Territories administered by the United States, which had reached some conclusions which might be of value to the Committee. He reviewed the Territories under United States administration and showed that although the legislation varied in accordance with local ideas and conditions, it normally provided an eight-year course of compulsory education. He thought it most important for the idea of education to be presented in such a way that both parents and pupils would regard it as desirable and normal, and even as something worth paying for. In the United States and its Territories very few enforcement officers were required. The aspect of compulsory education which provided most difficulty was not enforcement but the provision of technical resources such as teaching staff, transport, etc.

The Committee should seek to define the type of education most suitable for the Non-Self-Governing Territories on the basis of what they wanted, in relation to the economic and technical training they required to improve their standard of living and the best available educational advice.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.

16/9 a.m.