



COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

Seventh Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Friday, 4 May 1956, at 10.45 a.m.

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PRESENT:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. ARENALES CATALAN	(Guatemala)
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Mr. VIXSEBOXSE	(Netherlands)
<u>Members:</u>	Mr. CUTTS	Australia
	U MYA SEIN	Burma
	Mr. YANG	China
	Mr. de CAMARET)	France
	Mr. DEBAYLE )	
	Mr. KESTLER	Guatemala
	Mr. RAGHU RAMAIAH	India
	Mr. PACHACHI	Iraq
	Mr. GRADER	Netherlands
	Mr. THORP	New Zealand
	Mr. CALLE Y CALLE	Peru
	Mr. GIDDEN)	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mr. WARD )	
	Miss ARMSTRONG)	United States of America
	Mr. HARRIS )	
	Mr. RIVAS	Venezuela

Representatives of specialized agencies:

	Mr. GAVIN	International Labour Organisation
	Miss McNAUGHTON	Food and Agriculture Organization
	Mr. DESTOMBES	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<u>Secretariat:</u>	Mr. BENSON	Representative of the Secretary-General
	Mr. KUNST	Secretary of the Committee

EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS IN NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (A/AC.35/L.223)  
(continued):

- (b) ERADICATION OF ILLITERACY (A/AC.35/L.226);
- (c) PROVISION OF READING MATERIAL FOR NEW LITERATES (A/AC.35/L.221);
- (d) WASTAGE AND RETARDATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS (A/AC.35/L.224);
- (e) SECONDARY EDUCATION (A/AC.35/L.225);
- (f) TEACHER TRAINING AND THE STATUS OF TEACHERS (A/AC.35/L.228, A/AC.35/L.231);
- (g) FINANCING OF HIGHER EDUCATION (A/AC.35/L.219);
- (h) RACE RELATIONS IN EDUCATION (A/AC.35/L.232);
- (i) OTHER QUESTIONS RELATING TO EDUCATION AND CONDITIONS THAT MAY ARISE IN THE COURSE OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Mr. PACHACHI (Iraq) said that illiteracy was at the root of the economic and social backwardness of most of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the future welfare and happiness of the peoples of those Territories largely depended on a satisfactory solution of the problem. Literacy was not merely a vital end of education but was also indispensable for political advancement. Democratic institutions would perish without the constant support of an educated and articulate public opinion.

In the special report on education adopted in 1950, the Committee on Information had recognized the overriding importance of the problem for the future of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Among other recommendations, it had suggested that UNESCO should seek to define the term "literacy" and recommend a uniform method for presenting statistical data on illiteracy. UNESCO had not, however, been able to adopt a universally acceptable definition of literacy. The recommendations of the Committee of Experts which had met in 1951 had not evoked the expected response from Governments and the problem still remained unsolved. The question of definition, however, important though it was, should not be allowed to impede the fight against illiteracy. There might be differences of opinion about the exact meaning of literacy but there could be no difference with regard to that level which was at the bottom of the educational ladder, namely complete illiteracy.

From the Committee's previous studies and the present UNESCO report it was clear that a campaign against illiteracy must form part of a comprehensive plan of educational development based upon expert studies and surveys, drawn up in the light of other educational problems and of economic and social problems. Such

(Mr. Pachaehi, Iraq)

plans should provide for the extension of primary education, the development of fundamental adult education, the training of teachers and finally the production of reading and other educational material in the vernacular.

The rate of illiteracy in the Non-Self-Governing Territories was very high and the little progress so far achieved had been too slow to have any real and lasting value. Few Territories seemed to have made any serious study of the problem and still fewer had devised plans for the eradication of illiteracy. In most Territories the problem was dealt with in a haphazard and ineffective manner and initiative was often left to individuals.

Although the principle of compulsory education had been accepted in many Territories, its implementation had made little headway, owing to lack of sufficient funds, of clear and well-conceived plans and of enthusiasm on the part of some of the colonial Administrations. As a result primary school enrolment, which might be taken as a guide for the determination of the rate of illiteracy, had not changed appreciably since 1951. For example, the increase in the Belgian Congo had been 5 per cent, in Northern Rhodesia 4.6 per cent, for the African population in Nyasaland 3.7 per cent and for the Africans in Uganda 5 per cent. In Kenya the figure for the Africans had actually dropped 1.8 per cent and in Aden the number of boys in primary schools had declined by 41 per cent in a single year.

On the other hand, there was evidence of real progress in the Gold Coast and in the Territories administered by the United States. From 1951 to 1954 the enrolment of pupils in the Gold Coast had risen from 34 per cent to 60 per cent. It was significant that that great advance had been achieved in a country that was on the threshold of independence and whose education was under the authority of an indigenous administration. That encouraging development showed what could be done with proper planning where the people were given greater responsibility for the conduct of their affairs.

What he had said about primary education applied even more emphatically to the problem of teaching adults to read and write. The efforts of most of the Administering Powers in that field had been entirely insufficient. The UNESCO study dealt with the problem in a clear and concise manner.

(Mr. Pachachi, Iraq)

When the underlying principles of fundamental education were valid everywhere, teaching methods and techniques must be adapted to the peculiar conditions of each Territory. It was therefore necessary to begin by making intensive studies of such conditions in order to discover what means might best be employed for the extension of fundamental adult education. The UNESCO report also stressed the importance of comprehensive planning and effective control by the Administrations over all phases of such programmes. At the same time a teacher-training programme should be initiated, since, in the words of the UNESCO report, "the key to the success of any teaching programme is the teacher himself".

The efforts of UNESCO for the promotion of teacher-training in fundamental education were especially noteworthy. A Fundamental Education Centre set up some years previously in the Middle East had rendered valuable assistance to the countries of the region and had given great help in the campaign against illiteracy. He hoped the Administering Powers would not hesitate to draw on UNESCO's knowledge and experience in that field. At present fundamental education had a secondary role in the educational policies of many of the Administering Powers and the efforts being made in that direction were clearly unequal to the task.

Turning to the UNESCO report on reading material for new literates (A/AC.35/L.221), he drew attention in particular to the definition of the term "new literate", in paragraph 4, and to the summary in paragraphs 84 to 87. The report referred to such agencies as the Gold Coast Vernacular Literature Bureau and to the activities of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations in that field. It would be interesting to hear from the representatives of the Administering Powers what action had been taken in the Territories under their administration, particularly in those which were not mentioned in the UNESCO report.

(Mr. Fakhachi, Iraq)

The introduction of the question of periodicals, referred to in part II of the report, raised points which went beyond the UNESCO study and transcended any narrow concept of the functions of education. The Committee might wish to consider whether it should not in future programmes enter into the whole question of mass communication as provided by the press, radio and the cinema.

It was clear from the summaries of information that in many of the Non-Self-Governing Territories the press had a very limited range. The extension of the popular press would probably be one of the most effective means of encouraging the habit of reading. The importance of the press, and particularly of newspapers published in vernacular languages, should be emphasized in the Committee's report on education.

When the Committee was considering its future work the question might be raised whether the Secretariat could prepare a detailed statement on mass communications in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, showing the circulation of local periodicals and the number of radio stations and receivers and dealing with the role of the cinema in the cultural life of the people. The study might usefully indicate to what extent communications of that character were encouraged or sponsored by the Government or even under complete Government control. For the time being, however, what was important was to draw attention to the broadest aspects of the provision of literature which might be offered by modern means of mass communication. For that purpose the Committee would benefit from further information from the representatives of the Administering Powers, and in particular from the representatives of France and Australia on action taken in West Africa and in the Pacific to provide reading material, especially in the vernacular languages.

Mr. RIVAS (Venezuela) said that UNESCO's report (A/AC.35/L.226) gave excellent, although understandably cautious, guidance on the eradication of illiteracy. At the same time, some of the statements, such as that in paragraph 34, were rather ingenuous.

(Mr. Rivas, Venezuela)

Literacy was the key to many doors. In the Non-Self-Governing Territories it should promote the purposes of the United Nations Charter and enable the dependent peoples to attain a full measure of self-government by peaceful, constitutional means, without the bloodshed which had so often accompanied the process of national liberation in the past.

Referring to a comment the French representative had made at the previous meeting, he explained that in Spanish the term "educacion" was far wider than the term "enseñanza" and embraced the whole concept of fundamental education.

From its own experience, his Government could endorse UNESCO's remarks, in paragraph 44, on the value of over-all planning, guidance and administration. Government decisions were valueless without the machinery to enforce them. In 1871 Venezuela had decreed that there should be free compulsory education. If the country had had the necessary machinery to enforce that decree, Venezuela would have no illiteracy problem now. Unfortunately that had not been the case. For one thing, the Government had had to proceed by a process of trial and error, progressing from the Spanish and over-academic educational system through the French system to the elaboration of a system based on other countries' experience but closely adapted to Venezuela's needs. Literacy campaigns were now undertaken by the Ministry of Education through mobile teams, community literacy centres and popular cultural centres, by the Labour Department, and by the Defence Department so far as army recruits were concerned. Noteworthy results had been achieved both in eliminating illiteracy and in training the adult population in such matters as handicrafts, accounting, pediatrics and home economics. Growing use was also being made of educational radio broadcasts. To avoid the lack of co-ordination inevitable in a Federal State, where education was the sovereign responsibility of each State, the Venezuelan Government had succeeded in persuading the States to relinquish their rights to supervise their educational systems. The number of school districts had been reduced from twenty-one to six and a central supervisory body had been established. The setting up of parent-teacher associations, too, had led to greater co-ordination.

(Mr. Rivas, Venezuela)

The United Kingdom representative had misunderstood an earlier statement of his. He had never meant to imply that people should be left free to learn what they wanted. They should, however, be allowed to determine the type of education best suited to their needs as a community. That fact had emerged clearly in his own country in connexion with its fundamental education programme.

An eminent Venezuelan contemporary of Bolivar, Herman Roscio, had clearly realized during his struggle for Venezuelan independence that in order to become free a people must be master of its own educational system, so that there could be no distortion to suit the purposes of the foreign Administrator. He had also found that an effective educational programme could be drawn up only by indigenous educators aware of the country's needs and he had realized that all people, however primitive, had their own culture. Herman Roscio's findings were equally valid now.

The ideal solution was for a country to draw its cultural inspiration from universal sources, translating it into terms based on its own experience. In that connexion he agreed with previous speakers that foreign experts could perform valuable services.

In conclusion, his delegation would urge the Committee and the Administering Members to take vigorous and positive action to promote education as one of the best roads to self-government.

Mr. YANG (China) congratulated UNESCO on its report on the eradication of illiteracy (A/AC.35/L.226) and, subject to the reservations in paragraph 3, he endorsed the recommendations formulated in paragraph 75, which he hoped the Sub-Committee would take into account in drawing up the report on educational conditions.

From 1950 onwards the Committee had given special attention to education in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, in conformity with General Assembly resolutions 330 (IV) and 333 (IV). It was now in a position to say that, although some progress had been made, the general picture was far from satisfactory. The eradication of illiteracy was one of the most critical and complex problems



(Mr. Yang, China)

the Non-Self-Governing Territories had to face and it would be fruitless to seek a solution outside the scheme of education as a whole. Current literature in vernacular languages should be provided for mass literacy campaigns. The Committee would certainly wish to know what progress had been made in that field and whether financial considerations prevented further expansion.

As the statistical information at the Committee's disposal was incomplete, the conclusions which UNESCO drew from it were somewhat tentative. He expressed the hope that at its next session the Committee would have full information on the scope of the problem, plans for its solution, progress made in the implementation of such plans and difficulties encountered. It would be encouraging if target dates for the complete eradication of illiteracy in the Non-Self-Governing Territories could be announced at that session.

Mr. HARRIS (United States of America) said that UNESCO's two reports on illiteracy (A/AC.35/L.221 and L.226) were of great interest to the United States, which was anxious to eradicate the small percentage of illiteracy which still existed in the United States and the Territories for which it was responsible. Both reports stressed the danger of drawing hasty conclusions from insufficient data. No agreement had yet been reached on the actual definition of the word "literacy", which varied according to the community. The standards of an advanced and complex community could not be applied to a primitive one. He endorsed conclusions 2 and 3 in paragraph 75 of the UNESCO report on the eradication of illiteracy (A/AC.35/L.226).

The need for an incentive to education had been stressed. Unless a people had some kind of aspiration to spur it on, progress with any literacy programme would be slow. The experience of Hawaii, where the missionaries had filled a vacuum left by the decay of the country's faith in its former gods and had produced books in the vernacular language for the first time in Hawaii's history, was a case in point. The royal edict of 1846 decreeing that all adult men and women should be taught to read and write had been welcomed with enthusiasm, for the people had felt the need of education. He endorsed recommendation 6.

(Mr. Harris, United States)

Several representatives had supported recommendation 4 unconditionally, but he wished to reiterate the reservation contained in the recommendation, in accordance with the position of the United States taken with respect to primary education in the vernacular language.

Mr. WARD (United Kingdom) said that the representative of Iraq appeared to think that the authorities of Aden and Northern Rhodesia were applying a go-slow policy with regard to education. That was far from being the case. Referring to the figures for Aden given in the Secretary-General's summary and analysis (A/3114, page 17), the Iraqi representative had deplored the drop in the primary school enrolment of boys from 8,866 in 1953 to 5,200 in 1954. He himself felt that the figure for 1953, which was the only spectacular increase in a series which otherwise showed a slow but regular rise, must be erroneous.

With regard to the primary school enrolment in Northern Rhodesia, the figures given in document A/3109 (page 104) showed that there had been an increase of about 17 per cent from 1952 to 1954, which represented a considerable financial and practical effort on the part of the authorities. The quality of the instruction received should also be taken into consideration. In that connexion it should be noted that of the 184,000 pupils enrolled in primary schools in 1954 all but 8,750 were in Government or assisted schools. Ninety per cent of the teachers were fully trained and no teacher had more than thirty-five pupils in a class. Furthermore, in 1948 only one pupil out of six who entered the lowest primary class had finished the course, whereas the parallel figure was now three out of four. Finally, there had been a significant increase in the number of girls enrolled in primary schools between 1952 and 1954. In the face of such evidence it was impossible to maintain that the authorities' educational effort was unsatisfactory, in either quantity or quality.

Mr. PACHACHI (Iraq) hoped that the figure for the Aden 1953 primary school enrolment was indeed erroneous, for he would be happy to be able to allay the fears of his Government in that respect. The figures he had given for Northern Rhodesia had been taken from document A/AC.35/L.220/Add.1, table II (pages 6 and 7) which showed an increase in the percentage of enrolment .

(Mr. Pachachi, Iraq)

to children of school age of only about 8 per cent between 1951 and 1954. Such an increase did not compare favourably with that of the Gold Coast for the same period, which was 26 per cent.

Mr. BENSON (Secretariat) said that the figures given in document A/AC.35/L.220/Add.1 were provisional and that the document had been circulated subject to correction. Care had been taken to check the figures as far as possible and those for Northern Rhodesia had been given particular attention and agreed with the figures given in the annual reports of the Education Department. The 1953 figure for Aden was as supplied in the information transmitted under article 73 e for that year.

U MYA SEIN (Burma), referring to item 4 (b) of the agenda, wastage and retardation in primary schools, said that the UNESCO document (A/AC.35/L.224) had been of real interest to his delegation. It should be noted, however, that its main purpose was to indicate various mathematical means by which the progress of pupils in a school system might be traced. He hoped that the methods advocated by UNESCO would be considered by the Administering Powers and that as a result the Committee would receive more ample information in the future.

The Committee would do well to consider the possible reasons for what was described as stagnation of primary school pupils. Where that occurred the educational facilities of the country had not been properly utilized. Generally speaking the educational system was itself retarded by pupils who were not obtaining an adequate education. In some cases the pupils might be to blame, in others the parents, in yet others the schools. In any event it was evident that the whole system of education needed re-examining. What was happening was that education was not making the appeal to the people which it must if success was to be achieved. The Committee would later take up the question of teacher-training; experience suggested that as schools extended the employment of teachers who were not properly trained might lead to stagnation or wastage. He would welcome comments by the representatives of UNESCO or of the Administering Powers on his suggestion that the quality of the teachers was a principal factor in the situation.

(U Mya Sein, Burma)

Experience suggested that wastage occurred when there was a change in the language of instruction. Any such change should be carefully planned.

Yet another reason might be that pupils or parents found that there was no connexion between the teaching given at school and life at home. In countries under foreign administration the schools tended to aim at the production of Administration staff and in that event it frequently happened that only children who wished to enter the Civil Service or work for foreign employers continued to attend school. Schools should cater for a much larger class, since the progress of a community depended on the education of those who participated in the normal life of the towns and villages.

To sum up, he said that the Committee might decide that it should once again emphasize the importance of education as a means of developing the civic consciousness of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

He would be glad to hear any comments that the representatives of ~~Administering~~ Powers might have to make on his remarks. He would like to know whether they considered that technical improvements in education could overcome the losses shown in the document. In his delegation's view, even though school methods were improved there would continue to be wastage unless the popular demand for education could be stimulated and the form of education offered brought into harmony with the national aspirations.

Mr. RAGHU RAMAIAH (India) said that the Committee was handicapped in its work by lack of adequate material. Concerning most of the Non-Self-Governing Territories the Committee had no figures for later than 1950. Yet, under Article 73 e of the Charter, it was the bounden duty of the Administering Powers to transmit information regularly to the Secretary-General.

He had been intrigued by the United Kingdom representative's suggestion that quality was more important than quantity in connexion with education. In the context, he felt that was a dangerous theory, since it might give rise to complacency. He would argue that any education, however bad, was better than none.

According to the available figures 54 per cent of Africans attended school. Figures, however, were sometimes misleading. For instance, in Basutoland many

(Mr. Raghu Ramaiah, India)

students remained at school for only two years. In the Caribbean 30 per cent of children never learned to read and write sufficiently well to do so in later life. He wondered whether UNESCO could suggest any practical way of stopping such wastage.

In India, wastage had been almost eliminated by a system of basic education which followed the principle, referred to by some members of the Committee, that education should be related to environment. Primary school pupils were first taught about their own surroundings and local life and the range of teaching slowly expanded in accordance with their capacity to absorb it. He suggested that the Administering Authorities might try to discover what kind of teaching would appeal to the pupils. The way to keep the children coming to school was to make education interesting and that should not be difficult.

The figures of school enrolment seemed to show a steady increase in the Belgian Congo and French Equatorial Africa. There had been a decline in Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and some other territories; perhaps some explanation could be given. The figures for British Somaliland were less satisfactory than those for French Somaliland and it would be interesting to have an explanation of that fact.

Enrolments appeared to have declined in Kenya, perhaps on account of the recent unsettled conditions. He would like to know what steps the Administering Power was taking to ensure an increase in the figures.

On the whole he would commend the United States for the relatively high enrolment figures in the Territories under its administration.

With regard to secondary education, the tendency seemed to be to make it more and more academic and less designed to prepare students for agricultural or industrial work. It was most important that any scheme of secondary education should take into account not only the present situation but also the future growth of the country.

He emphasized the need for institutions of secondary education in the Territories themselves. He congratulated the New Zealand Government on the establishment of a secondary school in the Cook Islands and wondered whether the Australian Government could not follow that example in Papua.

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English

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(Mr. Raghu Ramaiah, India)

On the whole enrolment in secondary schools in Africa seemed very low compared with other areas; it was the obligation of all the Administering Powers to ensure an increase in those figures.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.