

A GLANCE THROUGH THE REVIEWS

Educational Needs in Africa, by M. VITTORINO VERONESE, *Director-General of UNESCO, Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin, Geneva, 1961, No. 2.*

... Independent Africa will not obtain the complete educational system it should have, and wishes to have, so long as it must rely exclusively, or almost exclusively, on outside assistance, which at best will suffice to keep education at its present level. In exceptional cases as many as 30% to 40% of the teachers and administrators are African, but, as a general rule, the proportion is closer to one per cent. Bilateral or multi-lateral assistance should henceforth be primarily devoted to the *training* of African teachers for general and technical secondary education.

Figures concerning adult education also speak for themselves. Illiteracy in Tropical Africa amounts to 80% to 85% compared with a world estimated total of 43% to 45%. Another telling statistic is the number of radio receivers per 1,000 inhabitants which was 19 in Tropical Africa in 1959 compared with 27 for the world total; in view of the great distances and lack of communications, the educational function of radio receivers is particularly important here.

As for the education of girls, in which Unesco has always shown keen interest (here it might be worth remembering the old saying that if you educate a man you educate an individual; if you educate a woman you educate a family), the position is again unsatisfactory. Except in two or three countries, they account for barely 30% of the school attendance. This inequality can result from cultural, religious or traditional obstacles, but it is more often economic in origin. What is the use of sending daughters to school for four, five, or six years to acquire bookish knowledge, parents argue, just when young African girls are preparing for the tasks and responsibilities of a grown woman? The education of girls, especially in rural districts, must first prove itself on economic and social levels if it is to be usefully introduced, and one of our many tasks in the field of education is to help prove this. Once it is realized that women can be better housekeepers, better heads

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of families, and even more prosperous shopkeepers as a result of education, the girls will have a better chance of getting to schools.

All countries in Tropical Africa have expressed an urgent need for planning education and educational development within the context of their economic and social development plans and programmes. This also includes specific educational needs for devising, adapting and re-orientating existing curricula and textbooks to present-day realities, including the modern history of the country, the region, and the rest of the world. The countries concerned also want to transfer the responsibility for education from the overseas directing and executive staff to national teaching, directing and executive staff. This involves what is the underlying and most pressing problem of all: the education and training of nationals not only to replace overseas personnel, but to staff the expanding educational and training establishments.

The Tropical African countries also express an urgent need for economic resources for construction of school buildings and institutions to train the personnel they need so urgently; to finance textbook publishing houses, public libraries and educational radio services, and also to finance a part of the cost of overseas teachers for secondary and higher education whom they will need in the immediate future.

Outside assistance towards helping meet these needs is already reaching local Governments from a number of sources. In the case of former British or French territories, the British Commonwealth Development Corporation and FIDES, the *Fonds d'investissement pour le développement économique et social*, continue to give considerable support and several thousand nationals from these two countries are teaching in African schools; other bilateral aid, moreover, is provided under some United States programmes. Multilateral assistance comes from members of the United Nations family and some limited assistance, usually in kind, comes from those non-governmental organizations with offices and activities in Tropical Africa.

Unesco, as already stated, currently has projects totalling so far some \$11.5 million scheduled for the next two years, with probably some extra funds coming from the UN Special Fund.

In this connection, in addition to acting already as executing agent for the UN Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance and the UN Special Fund, Unesco will henceforth co-operate with the newly-created International Development Association (IDA), which came into being in September 1960, in the promotion of education projects likely to contribute to economic and social development. Co-operation will take the form of advice to this new organization and to member

States on projects within the sphere of Unesco competence for which loans are being considered. In the case of the IDA, this would include technical education and higher educational training.

So far as Unesco is concerned in Tropical Africa, the Organization aims at giving help for the necessary planning, in particular for teacher training, which is undoubtedly the bottleneck. The intention is, therefore, to help prepare studies and surveys and to organize seminars and conferences in educational planning, in the development and expansion of universities and institutes of higher learning, and in the development of a programme in African culture, particularly in teaching language and history. Questions of adult education, including programmes for the expansion of radio as an educational means, are also to be discussed. All these measures will naturally be taken in close collaboration with African leaders in order to make them aware of the availability of Unesco's international experience in these fields.

There are also two important demographic factors in connection with educational planning which have to be taken into consideration: the high rate of increase of population in some areas and the high percentage of persons under the age of 20. A third factor affecting planning is the trend towards migration and urbanization due to industrialization in some States.

The most urgent immediate question, of course, concerns the availability of teachers. "Give Africa teachers, and more teachers," said many African delegates at the recent General Conference. Another delegate, from Somalia, gave a somewhat more picturesque example of how great is the thirst for learning. Commenting on the need for school buildings, he said that this problem could be left aside, temporarily, if need be; a tree, he pointed out, is enough to prop up a blackboard and provide a little shade for the class, "it is the teacher who makes the school, not the building...".

Unesco, with help from the UN Special Fund, is about to start at the Federal College in Lagos, Nigeria, the first of a number of programmes for the training of secondary-school teachers. Similar programmes are planned for colleges in the Sudan, Ivory Coast, Cameroons and the Congo (Brazzaville), this last a regional project catering also for Gabon, Chad and the Central African Republic.

A Unesco specialist team of five high-level educational administrators in the fields of educational planning and finance, statistics, evaluation, curricula and modern methods of administration is starting to spend 6 months in each of three African countries. While making a review of the administration of education in these countries, they are

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also taking the opportunity of holding practical courses of 3 months each for administrators and supervisors from the host and neighbouring countries. All three courses, catering for about 135 students, are held in French and English.

A four-month training course for journalists of the French-speaking States of Tropical Africa opened at the University of Dakar under Unesco auspices at the end of January, and a refresher course for young English-speaking economists, similar to one organized last December at Rabat by Unesco for those of French expression, will be held, with the help of the International Economic Association, later this summer, probably at Addis-Ababa.

Two regional centres, one French-, the other English-speaking, are being opened for training or refresher courses of tutorial staff in training colleges for primary-school teachers, Unesco providing the teaching staff, equipment and fellowships for local staff. On the overall problem of helping countries to establish their manpower needs in education, science, culture and mass communication, Unesco is co-operating with other United Nations agencies, notably the International Labour Organisation and the Economic Commission for Africa.

Offers of funds from member States have been received to support a project already under way for the establishment of a central School Planning Unit, staffed by architects experienced in tropical design, to promote the most economical construction of functionally designed schools and educational buildings, made wherever possible from local materials.

A meeting of directors of broadcasting and directors or ministers of education is envisaged for later this year to formulate plans for increased broadcasting services both for school and for adult education in the home. This involves not only the training of script writers for preparing programmes on such subjects as history, geography and languages, but also the instruction of teachers in the use of radio programmes in the classroom. Experience from the past has clearly shown that broadcasts can only be effective if the teachers have the text of the lesson as well as special instructions in advance of the broadcast. The importance of education by radio in Africa, and perhaps by television too, cannot be too strongly stressed.

Another problem concerns the financing of costs for the overseas teacher who is absolutely essential in the immediate future at the secondary and higher school level. To meet the situation, Unesco is developing a recruiting service on the following broad lines : (1) handling of requests for recruitment where all costs are met by the recruiting

country ; (2) supply of teachers on a basis by which the Organization would bridge the financial gap between local salaries and the sum required to attract foreign staff ; (3) a direct basis of technical assistance to countries unable to meet the financial demands incurred by the importation of teachers.

The considerable cost of such schemes could be counterbalanced by the fact that if the needs are quickly and successfully met, the situation could, by this very action, right itself within a period of perhaps five years.

This, then, may give a broad idea of present educational needs in Tropical Africa ; they are not only great, they are also tragic. The old truth that quick help is double help is highly valid in this case. Unesco, with others, is trying to answer as many as possible of these needs within the limit of its budget. It is difficult to set any priorities in an instance such as this where all is priority ; however, one might venture to say that the training of teachers possibly heads the list of needs.

As I told the last Unesco General Conference: "How can Unesco avoid its responsibilities in this year 1960 which has been marked by the independence of a large number of States on the African continent?... The international community has a duty to assist these States to forge their destinies by all means at its disposal..."

In conclusion, I should like to add that our projected assistance to Tropical Africa in the immediate future must take into account the rapid and dramatic pace of development in Tropical Africa. This makes it difficult for organizations such as ourselves, who have been asked by local Governments to help, to do much more at this stage than to size up the needs and the problems with which we have to grapple, and to try also at the same time to anticipate their subsequent growth. A definite start has been made in some instances already, but it will not be until much before the end of this year that practical results can begin to appear.