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CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC AND  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

Sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Economic Commission for Latin America, the United Nations Bureau of Social Affairs, and the Organization of American States, with the participation of the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization

Santiago, Chile, 5 to 19 March 1962

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

held at the Universidad Técnica del Estado, Santiago, Chile,  
on Thursday, 8 March 1962, at 9.45 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. MACKAY (Argentina)

Rapporteur: Mr. NIETO CABALLERO (Colombia)

CONTENTS:

Economic and social problems in relation to education (continued)

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SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IN RELATION TO EDUCATION (continued)

Mr. MORALES CARRION (United States) thanked the Government and people of Chile for the cordial welcome extended to his delegation. Chile, which had always been a focal point of educational ferment and had provided a propitious environment for such great teachers of America as Sarmiento, Bello, Hostos and Amunátegui, was an ideal site for a conference on education.

The Conference would be a call to action and would enable all the countries of the hemisphere to determine their educational requirements with greater accuracy as well as the objectives they pursued and the means available for achieving them. What had to be done now was to wage the final battle against the inevitable concomitants of inadequate economic development: acute poverty, ignorance and desperation; and it was imperative to extend without delay to millions of people living in the American continent the benefits and opportunities provided by twentieth century technological development.

The present era offered the most dramatic challenge that had ever confronted the ideals of a free and open society. It was essential to demonstrate by means of effective action that a democratic society could satisfy the earnest desire for social and economic change and create the equality of opportunity to which all inhabitants of any country were entitled.

The Charter of Punta del Este recognized the great value of economic and social planning as an instrument of the modern State and the importance of developing the human resources of the American countries, since the greatest social asset was man himself. If the Alliance for Progress was to become a reality for the peoples of the continent, investment would have to be made on a massive scale in man himself, since he was both the greatest producer who would multiply material goods to do away with want and poverty and the creator of the spiritual values, referred to by Mr. Prebisch and other speakers, that brought out the originality and characteristics of each culture.

The educational process produced radical economic and social changes. It should be carefully planned on the basis of a study of human resources and dovetailed with the other types of planning, since investment in human capital received the benefits of other investments while stimulating productivity at the same time.

/The integration

The integration of educational planning with economic and social planning was no easy matter, because the demands of the former in a developing society were boundless, and those generated in other fields by an inadequate basis of economic activity were equally so. The setting of over-ambitious or over-modest education targets was fraught with risks, but so was investment with a view to rapid economic development regardless of the creation and multiplication of skills. Education and economic development were inseparable and therefore called for exceptionally sound judgement and a keen sense of perception as regards the real state of national affairs on the part of those whose responsibility it was to determine objectives and allocate and distribute resources.

Several delegations had said that educational planning entailed international co-operation. In the Charter of Punta del Este the United States of America had signed a solemn pledge of co-operation and assistance, and was firmly resolved to honour it. The United States concern for the educational process had induced it to give its energetic support to the Ten-Year Education Plan and to propose the establishment of a special commission, sponsored by OAS, to help in defining educational needs and assigning priorities.

Other delegations had drawn attention to the fundamental role of primary education, which was the cornerstone of the educational system, and a vital factor in enabling the peoples of the region to achieve prosperity and develop their cultural potentialities to the full. But it would be a mistake to overlook the duty of the educational system to train the technical personnel and craftsmen required by the new patterns of economic and social progress.

With regard to higher education, the universities had to shoulder the immense responsibility of training the technical experts who would play a vital part in the overhauling of economic and social structures contemplated in the Charter of Punta del Este. At the request of President Kennedy, another OAS commission had carried out a study on the most pressing requirements in respect of university education. The United

States shared the Latin American countries' profound interest in that subject, and was confident that the next few years would witness the continuance of the process of reorganization upon which several Latin American universities had already embarked, and that more and more regional ties of inter-university collaboration would be formed.

A number of delegations had pointed out that the Alliance for Progress, especially where its educational aspect was concerned, should operate on the basis of each country's national personality and cultural values. Unquestionably, the Herculean labour of social reform to which the signatories of the Charter had committed themselves at Punta del Este should result in a strengthening of the cultural personality and the national consciousness of every country concerned, and should open up new possibilities for it to express its ethos. In that respect, he was sure that, as President Kennedy had said when proposing the Alliance for Progress, Latin America's contribution would enrich and give new strength to the life and culture of the United States, and would thus further understanding and mutual respect among the countries of the western hemisphere.

If the Alliance for Progress were to be successful, it would have to exploit the rich cultural diversity of the Americas, since it was not only manufacturers of capital goods that were needed, but also producers of those cultural assets that were an intrinsic part of open societies of independent personality, which shaped their own national ways of life, as was fitting in a continent where liberty was the prerogative of Governments and citizens alike.

Mr. QUEZADA (Bolivia) said that the central topic of the Conference was no novelty to Bolivia, since it was identical with the objectives of the Bolivian revolution, which were to be pursued at two levels: that of economic liberation and that of an over-all improvement in the standard of living.

Bolivia's national revolution had begun to transform the country's economic, political and social structure by various measures, such as agrarian reform, nationalization of the mines, universal suffrage and new legislation on education.

In compliance with the instructions issued by the agencies sponsoring the Conference, his Government had presented a report on the educational situation in Bolivia, with three supplementary annexes. The first set forth the National Economic and Social Development Plan; the second dealt with rural education; and the third outlined the reform of Bolivia's educational system in line with the ten-year economic development plan. Bolivia had remodelled its educational system in respect of the primary and secondary cycles, which it was replacing by three successive and interconnected cycles, i.e. basic education, testing for aptitude and specialization, the aim being to train the requisite personnel for the work involved in economic development.

Bolivia had no doubt that from the background data presented and the experience of other countries as described at the Conference it would learn much that would be of help in its pursuit of a brighter future.

Miss GUITON (United Kingdom) said that in education it was the individual that counted, and since a society was a collection of individuals, it was by helping the individual that societies could develop with the time. Consequently, it was the purpose of the United Kingdom Education Act of 1944 to provide for each child an education suitable to his age, abilities and aptitudes. Since the Second World War the United Kingdom had been concerned both with its own educational reorganization, and with helping the educational authorities in the territories for which it was still responsible with their own plans for educational development. Her delegation much regretted that it had not been possible for representatives from the West Indies and other territories in the region to attend the present conference, but she drew attention to the very useful paper prepared by Dr. Lewis of the West Indies (Information Document No. 4), and hoped that the Conference would later be able to hear the views of her colleague from British Honduras.

The help which those and other countries sought from the United Kingdom was aimed at their economic and social development, which they rightly considered to include independence; hence, they were being helped to attain the structure and trained staff needed to give them a flying start into independence, within the Commonwealth, as she hoped, but only if they so decided.

The economic and technical assistance granted by the United Kingdom now amounted to £160 million (450 million dollars), approximately double the total for 1957-58. Most of that was bilateral aid directed particularly to the developing countries of the Commonwealth, but there were also contributions to multilateral aid through United Nations bodies. Particular emphasis was placed on the training of students, and there were now 55,000 students training in the United Kingdom, which represented 10 per cent of the student population in higher education institutions. There was also a large programme of advisers, and the United Kingdom provided increasing facilities for the teaching of English through the British Council.

United Kingdom experience had led to the conclusion that there were three aspects of educational development that were of basic importance; (a) a reasonably accurate knowledge of existing needs, as a basis for planning; (b) a coherent and flexible development plan, including a list of priorities because without a plan human and financial resources would be wasted; and (c) steady and continuous investment, which meant plans based on a realistic calculation of available resources. Sharp annual fluctuations inhibited planning and consequently, despite the great value of external aid, particularly at the initial stages of development, the main reliance must be on a steady increase in the proportion of the nation's resources devoted to educational development.

Mr. MALGRAT (Panama) thought that, in considering the educational situation, the discrepancy between demographic growth and economic development must be taken into account. No nation could advance unless education was available to its people, and Panama was now devoting 25 per cent of its budget to education. Yet even that amount, supplemented by a contribution from private sources of 3 million dollars representing 4.4 per cent of the national budget, was insufficient to meet existing needs. Of the population aged 6-15, 35.9 per cent did not attend school because of the scattering of the population, and the lack of schools. The 1960 census showed that out of 8,925 population centres, 5,600 had less than 50 inhabitants. The plan covering the period up to 1966 for building primary and secondary schools - some with local help - would require 18 million dollars, of which 5 million had been supplied under

Alliance for Progress agreements, or 27.7 per cent. To that must be added the cost of repairs during the next ten years, and the requirements of vocational and higher education, which would bring the sum needed up to 28.5 million dollars, so that, in fact, the contribution thus far received would represent 17.5 per cent of building needs for the next ten years. It was hoped that by incorporating the whole of the school-age population in the educational system a great step could be taken towards eradicating illiteracy.

Plans for the expansion of vocational training would mean doubling the number taught in the public schools; 500,000 dollars would be needed so that the students could be properly trained. In the past twenty-six years, the university population had grown thirty-two times. In 1960, there had been 3,000 students at the University of Panama, and 4,700 in 1961, a 50 per cent increase. The existing facilities in higher education were clearly insufficient; building requirements alone would cost 1.3 million dollars and, if equipment were included, the amount would be 2.5 million.

He referred to Information Document No. 30, which outlined the situation in Panama and the plans for dealing with it. It was fruitless for countries to work out long-term plans if the funds were not available to carry them out. He referred to the statement made at the fourth plenary meeting by the representative of Brazil and expressed the hope that in the committee stage the conference would arrive at specific conclusions concerning the direct relationship between the plans submitted by each of the Latin American countries and the international aid that would make possible the execution of those plans.

Mr. GONZALEZ ALSINA (Paraguay) said that his delegation warmly endorsed Mr. Torres Bodet's remark at the inaugural meeting to the effect that the Americas were no mere abstract concept; what counted was the living reality, and it was within that framework that co-operation should be sought, as concrete evidence of the fraternal spirit of its peoples.

The subject of discussion was education and economic and social development, not as separate elements, but as component parts that would have to be smoothly dovetailed if progress was to be achieved. Paraguay had observed such principles ever since, early in its history, the Jesuit missions had come to  
/spread the

spread the gospel of work and prayer among its people. One outstanding aspect of their activities was relevant to the present occasion, since it had a bearing on the psychology of planning. The Jesuits had neither spurned the Guarani tongue nor trampled upon the religious beliefs of the indigenous inhabitants, but had used them to form a deep channel through which the truths of Scripture reached the people. Their example was an object-lesson in finding the way to the heart of a people, so as to lead it by natural stages along the road to a better life, and thus equip it at one and the same time with those elements of both material and spiritual welfare that make for human happiness.

While planning was essential for systematic action in fields so complex as education and economic and social development, it would have to be in harmony with the aspirations of the peoples concerned. Hence the faithful interpretation and authentic expression of those aspirations should be the keynotes of planning.

Clearly, the resultant definition of education was the dissemination of a state of mind that would make each individual member of society a dynamic factor of social progress, and therein lay the link between education and economic and social development, since the former served the latter's ends while the latter broadened the former's horizons.

That close relation between education and development was familiar to Paraguay from its own experience. Towards the middle of the last century Paraguay had reaped the benefits of an educational development effort which had run parallel with the advance of industry, the building of highways and the expansion of trade. War had wiped out the progress achieved, and it was only recently that Paraguay had been able to recuperate. Only in the last decade had the country's energies been devoted to combating stagnation, and education had been assigned a major role in the process. In its efforts to that end, Paraguay had enjoyed the invaluable co-operation of UNESCO, as the President of the Republic had placed on record in his last message to the Chamber of Deputies.

/With respect

With respect to the educational situation in Paraguay, only 24 per cent of the people were illiterate, most of them persons over thirty years of age. Among the literate, however, the majority had left school before finishing the primary course.

The limitations indicated arose from the lack of proportion between the investment required in the economic and social field and the resources available, since Paraguay's total budget was only about 23 million dollars.

Although Paraguay had progressed in recent years with the aid of international loans, the country had had to resort to extreme measures that seemed inevitable if it was to move out of its present state of poverty. But since it could not continue to make such efforts indefinitely he hoped that international resources would be made available on an extensive scale.

In the meantime, Paraguay would endeavour to forge ahead with its economic and social development projects. To that end it had recently created a Department for Economic and Social Development Planning and a National Development Bank. The Act of Bogotá and the Charter of Punta del Este had given an impetus to programming and project-making throughout the continent, but it would be advisable not to undermine the confidence in planning by too dilatory an initial effort, but rather proceed with projects that had already been started, without discounting the possibility of eventually including them in a definite plan.

In so far as agrarian reform was concerned, the more equitable distribution of landed property did not necessarily have to follow a particular pattern. For instance, the eastern zone of Paraguay, which was almost exclusively devoted to agriculture, had an area of 159,827 square kilometres and contained the bulk of the population, which in all numbered 1.8 million inhabitants. It was estimated that 50 per cent of the total number of rural families (100,000) still had no land of their own to farm. The Inter-American Development Bank had recommended that each should be given 30 hectares, but even so more than four-fifths of the eastern zone would still remain unpopulated. The problem was therefore less insoluble than a certain body of opinion maintained. The State

had of course the duty to correct any abuse of property rights, but care should be taken not to make things still worse by doing so.

Paraguay had no irremediable difficulties, and the only real obstacle to its progress was the limited nature of its economic resources. It was therefore anxious for international co-operation, while at the same time the country would be happy to house the headquarters of a regional planning centre for education and economic and social development.

Mr. ANCHISSI (Guatemala) said that the great political and social upheavals of the world took the form in Latin America of a burning desire to develop human potentialities through education. Integrated planning of educational systems was undoubtedly necessary, but the question was whether all the Latin American countries had sufficient experts qualified to execute the plans and, even more important, whether they had the specialized personnel to implement them with due efficiency. In view of the need for capable educational leaders, it was essential to develop secondary and university education of a high quality. Any attempt to give preference to one educational level over another was at variance with the Act of Bogotá, the Charter of Punta del Este and the Declaration to the Peoples of America signed by all the nations belonging to the inter-American system.

Primary education and the teaching of reading and writing were obviously the base of any educational process. It should be borne in mind, however, that the implementation of such programmes entailed integrated planning undertaken by highly qualified people. This delegation also wished to draw attention to a number of other points: (a) the preparation of a national plan based on the geographical, social and economic characteristics of each country; (b) the search for and selection of the organizations, means and staff to produce leaders for carrying out the national plans; (c) the development of plans for extending basic education; (d) the encouragement and promotion of technical training; (e) the effective use of all available resources; and (f) the willing co-ordination of all resources and activities, particularly in the case of the international organizations, which should be allowed to proceed with their work without intervention.

/He expressed

He expressed his faith in the future of Central America. All the small countries of Central America should form one great people, they should therefore see to it that their educational programmes were sufficiently regional in character to satisfy the needs common to them all.

In conclusion, he reviewed the economic and educational situation in Guatemala on the basis of Information Document N° 25, submitted to the Conference by his Government.

Mr. WOLF (Inter-American Development Bank) said that it was now generally realized that economic under-development prevented educational progress, while a low educational level hampered economic development; consequently more attention was being devoted to educational problems within the framework of development policies. Educational problems varied widely from country to country, but the basic objectives were to reduce illiteracy and provide a basic education for all children, to increase the opportunities of moving from the lower to the higher levels of education, to reform educational systems, especially in the universities, and to revise the content of education so that individuals could be trained to play an active part in the progress of their societies. Such changes could not be introduced overnight, and the gradual effect of investment in education was one reason why investments in such other projects as power stations or housing might seem more attractive.

The educational effort must be primarily a national one; firstly, because the problems related to each country's own experience, and secondly because the large funds required could never be provided by a combination of public and private international agencies. The Act of Bogota, the Alliance for Progress, and the establishment of the OAS Special Commission for the programming and development of education were all major steps forward in providing the framework for action. The Inter-American Development Bank had accepted specific responsibilities in the educational field and was to administer the Trust Fund for Social Development established by the United States Government as part of its contribution to carrying out the recommendations of the Act of Bogota. The Bank's activities would include the supplementary financing of facilities for higher education and training in relation to economic and social development.

/The educational

The educational projects which might be financed would include basic sciences, especially in fields of direct importance to economic and social development; engineering and related applied sciences; agronomy and other fields of agriculture important to the development of the rural sector; economics, public and business administration and other important applied social sciences; social welfare and public health; teacher training, and urban and rural planning. The Bank's policy would be to strengthen institutions that could contribute to national and regional life and influence such educational reforms as the use of qualified full-time teachers and research workers at the universities, the raising of academic standards and the adoption of university-wide administrative reforms. The Bank could not operate in isolation; it sought the co-operation of other agencies in planning and executing joint projects, and urged the adoption of planning and co-ordinating arrangements to avoid waste and duplication. He was confident that the present conference would provide the Bank with valuable guide-lines, thereby assisting it to play an active part in furthering the educational development of Latin America.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.