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CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION AN ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

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Santiago, Chile, 5 to 19 March 1962

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND PLENARY MEETING
held at the Universidad Técnica del Estado, Santiago, Chile,
on Tuesday, 6 March 1962, at 10.5 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. BARROS (Chile)

Rapporteur: Mr. NIETO (Colombia)

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ELECTION OF OFFICERS (continued)

Mr. NIETO (Colombia) thanked the Conference for the special honour it had conferred on him by electing him as Rapporteur.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN RELATION TO EDUCATION

Mr. TORRES BODET (Mexico) said that the Latin American peoples were deeply interested in strengthening their economic development through education and since the two processes were complementary, in expanding their educational systems at the same time through rational, well-organized and balanced planning. Such planning would involve international co-operation which would have to follow two main lines, so far as education was concerned. The first method was to make use of common information and voluntary technical advisory services provided either by the Latin American countries on a reciprocal basis or by such international organizations as were in a position to furnish those services to applicant countries desirous of forging ahead with their programmes. The second was to establish special funds which would enable the budgets of the economically weaker countries to bear, during the period of expansion, the heavier costs of investments which would have to be serviced.

States which co-operated in order to further their economic development could agree on certain educational schemes, following the example of the Latin American countries which had participated in UNESCO Major Project N° 1 on primary education, but it was particularly important for each country to retain its personality and the creative freedom of its culture.

National education was indivisible. Hence, however high the priorities justified by economic development, the attention devoted to any system should not frustrate the legitimate aspirations of every community. Even if it were necessary to train technicians and advisable to assign high priority to their training, it must not be forgotten that, in order to raise their level of skill, it would be necessary, at the same time, to promote primary education and literacy campaigns more actively, especially in countries such as Mexico which had to concentrate on assisting numerous very valuable rural communities. It would be uneconomic not to take great care to train technicians, but it would be undemocratic, not to say inhumane, to forget the majority.

/Free primary

Free primary education was still the indispensable basis for every national structure designed for progress. A plan for the extension and improvement of primary education was being applied throughout Mexico and the results had been very encouraging. Following the building of 11,800 schoolrooms, and the appointment of 15,600 new teachers, school enrolment had increased by more than one million pupils in a little over three years. The illiteracy rate among the population of 6 years and above had declined from 66.59 per cent in 1930 to 37.78 per cent in 1960, although the total population had more than doubled during that period.

In the modern world, primary education alone, vital as it was, could not ensure a country's economic development. It was urgently necessary to develop secondary education, not only of the traditional kind, almost invariably designed as preparation for the university, but in accordance with plans and programmes whose flexibility would render them more realistic inasmuch as they combined practical training with cultural education.

In Latin America, the concentration of interest on primary education had meant that young people were not yet given enough opportunities of secondary and higher education. The system would have to be gradually developed until its capacity matched real demand, not only from the standpoint of the aptitudes of the applicants, but also in relation to the social needs of peoples which required more and more skilled labour and large numbers of competent technicians.

In Mexico, about 97 per cent of the 374,000 pupils enrolled in institutions for intermediate education entered secondary schools, or those grooming pupils for the universities, and only a little over 21 per cent opted for schools providing industrial, commercial, pre-vocational and other types of training. To improve the organization of secondary education, in respect of both structure and performance, the relevant plans and curricula had been reformed with a view to making them more flexible and practicable. The first school generation to benefit by the new system would graduate in 1963, and it was expected that a much larger proportion than at present would apply for technical training, which meant that more technical schools would be required. With regard to higher education, a

country without enough efficient institutions providing sound professional, university and technical training would be a country without leadership, subject to external control, an easy prey to mob pressured, and more like a factory than a sovereign nation. Higher education and unimpeded scientific research should be the constant concern of all peoples that cherished their independence. So the Government of Mexico believed; and it was accordingly taking steps to increase the allocation of funds to the technical, artistic and cultural institutions for which it was directly or indirectly responsible.

As one of Mexico's economic development problems lay in the urgent need to prevent over-concentration of the population in and around the capital, measures were being adopted for the simultaneous strengthening of the universities and other educational institutions of the various States, and, in greater measure, those fulfilling a regional function of wider scope.

Although the money spent on education represented a substantial proportion of the Federal budget, it did not suffice to meet the vast range of needs. In 1961, total expenditure on education amounted to 3,116 million Mexican pesos, of which 21,411 million had been spent by the Federal Government and 705 million by the constituent States. Precise assessment of the relation between the income and expenditure of institutions maintained by private enterprises was a difficult matter, but their annual budgets amounted to approximately 366 million Mexican pesos. If this sum were added to those spent by the Federal Government and the State authorities, a total of 3,482 million would result, which, in the aggregate, and in round figures, would represent an annual per capita expenditure of only about 100 Mexican pesos.

So far as the Federal Government was concerned, it was felt that the level of expenditure on education had almost reached the advisable maximum for a country faced not only with pressing educational needs but also with an awe-inspiring requirements in other sectors and services. The noteworthy increase in the funds allocated to education could be measured by the fact that they represented about one-fifth of total Federal budget expenditure.

The description he had just given of the situation in Mexico would no doubt apply to other Latin American countries. Consequently, it was increasingly necessary to promote well-planned economic development, lest education should lag in the rear of a movement of which it was at one and the same time the beneficiary and the driving force. Such planning called for large-scale international co-operation, but the paramount principle should be absolute respect for each people's cultural personality, and there must be no intrusion upon the inmost sanctum of national sovereignty - the right to organize the training of its own citizens in accordance with its own laws and aspirations. He hoped that the Conference would serve to bring into sharper focus one of the basic problems of the time: that of the balance which must be achieved between the development of the resources needed to increase production in Latin America and respect for the human values that were essential to progress within a framework of justice, independence, peace and dignity.

Mr. PFEFFER (Chile) said that interest had been shown in educational matters at the outset when Chile itself was being organized as a nation. Inspired by the ideals of the Enlightenment, the authorities had realized that it was necessary to institute a system of education to prepare the new kind of person that was needed for the new nation's independent existence. From then on, education had developed steadily. Landmarks in that development had been the creation of the National Institute in 1803, the University of Chile in 1842, and of the José Abelardo Nufiez Teachers' Training College, the School of Arts and Crafts and the Institute of Education in the second half of the nineteenth century. The successive European and United States philosophies, each in its own day, had left their mark on Chilean education. Thus, towards 1889, Herbartian ideas had held sway, to be supplanted in the early twentieth century by Dewey's theories of pragmatic education. At the same time a new concept of humanism had emerged, namely, that education would have an economic as well as a scientific and literary content. In keeping with the new trend, an effort had been made in 1928, to reform education radically, but it had been thwarted by political events. Several attempts had been made later to reform education and had led to the founding of the experimental primary schools, the Manuel de Salas secondary school and the reformed secondary schools, as well as the establishment of the Education Department.

The State and private educational systems had developed organically and systematically in harmony with Chile's vital needs. That trend had been in keeping with constitutional principles, which, while guaranteeing its freedom, stipulated that education should be a primary concern of the State.

The budget for education had also expanded steadily, particularly in the last three decades, and Chile had reason to be proud of its average for school attendance, which was one of the highest in Latin America (4.4 years). It was also gratifying to see the political maturity of the Chilean people and the existence of a large and well-integrated middle class. Nevertheless, some problems that urgently demanded solution still remained, among them the traditional ways of life prevailing in the countryside, the over-development of the towns, particularly the capital, and the lack of sufficient economic dynamism, which had become even more acute in recent years. Thus, although the tempo of educational development seemed to be satisfactory, the social and economic indices in which it should be reflected were inadequate.

It was generally agreed that the educational development of a country should be on a par with its economic and social development, but it had not always been clear what the causal relationship was between the two or whether they were simply two correlative phenomena that were interdependent or, in other words, which assisted each other. History showed that neither hypothesis applied to every time and place was valid. In some countries, for instance, economic development had outstripped educational development; in others, the opposite had occurred, and in others again neither could be said to have predominated without some misrepresentation of the situation.

At all events, the experience of the developed countries of the West could not be repeated in Latin America. In the first place, Latin America was faced with a desperately urgent problem and would have to speed on like wildfire if it hoped to reach the level of economic efficiency required by its accelerated development. Secondly, the rapid development

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which it earnestly hoped for demanded similarly rapid changes that would affect both the social structure and the people's values and ideals. Thirdly, economic development could not continue to depend upon the exploitation of the masses, as in the 18th and 19th centuries and, lastly, it necessitated a much more productive use of resources which could only come from substantial and sustained technological development. The technique of the more advanced countries could not be applied since one of its aims was to economize on labour, and labour was precisely what was most plentiful in Latin America. Consequently education was called upon to play a dynamic part in economic and social development.

Until recently education had been regarded as a means of developing all of man's potentialities as an individual since it was considered to be a service for the wealthier classes alone. Connected with that idea was the traditionalist role assigned to education and the concept that it was a static social system that trained people within the framework of established values. The present aim was, however, to make education a mainspring of development. It was, in fact, considered as the right of every member of the community and as an instrument of the social change needed for it to advance.

Thus, the traditional role of education as a means of upholding status was being radically changed and becoming one of preparation for social change. It was also admitted that a balance should be struck between the demands imposed by the over-all moulding of the personality and the common ends towards which the individual strove as a member of society.

That concept had gradually gained some ground during the last few decades. Its widespread acceptance had been due mainly to the application of the principle that the primary responsibility for guaranteeing the right to education devolved upon the State, as the unequivocal juridical manifestation of the nation.

/In that

In that context, he proposed the following specific bases for discussion: (1) national educational services should be regarded as a public service to which all the individual members of the national community, without discrimination, should have the right of access; (2) it was incumbent upon the State to guarantee the full enjoyment of that common right, either by direct or through the competent social unit; (3) the common right to education, real enjoyment of which was guaranteed to every person by the State, was the right to education as a service in which a proper balance was maintained between the all-round moulding of his individual personality and meeting the claims and requirements of national development objectives; and (4) national educational services should be regarded as an important instrument of the social change implicit in the accelerated tempo of the community's development.

From that standpoint educational services should be designed to fulfil the following two main functions: (a) an integrating function, which on the one hand would ensure dissemination of the values and motivations on which modern society's drive towards progress was based, and their acceptance by the individual members of society; and which on the other hand, would guarantee the full development of the individual personality, with no limitations other than those imposed by the individual's own abilities and aptitudes and by the requirements of social progress; and (b) a selective and distributive function, which would result in satisfactory selection of the basic social capital possessed by the community in the shape of the talents, abilities and aptitudes of its constituent members; and which would likewise ensure the rational distribution of that basic social capital among the various roles and functions essential to the steady and smoothly co-ordinated progress of the community.

Such aims could only be fulfilled through national educational services governed by standard principles and norms, and characterized by informity of objectives and co-ordination of the measures adopted to achieve them. That did not mean that the State ought to be the sole provider of education, but simply that the various parts of the system should be linked to one another in such a way that those requisites were satisfactorily met.

/With respect

With respect to the economic criteria in the light of which the problem of education should be approached, it was a mistake to consider expenditure on general education as mainly consumer expenditure, and expenditure on technical and vocational education as investment. In the first case, technical and/or vocational education could not exist without general education, since the latter might be described as an essential input of the former. Still less accurate was it to speak of general education as a form of consumption, when it constituted the base form which an individual set directly forth upon his working life. All expenditure on education would therefore have to be considered investment in basic social capital, and such benefits as that capacity to live his own life at higher levels of concord, beauty, dignity and intelligence which education conferred upon the individual should be regarded as gratuitous by-products of productive investment, rather like the so-called "external economies". Not only ought expenditure on education to be considered investment, but it ought also to be given the same priority as other forms of investment in basic capital.

Unquestionably, it was still difficult to measure the productive value of such investment, since the direct and indirect effects of education on productivity could hardly be distinguished from the influence of the other factors that came into play. Again, the price system in the Latin American countries tended to undervalue education, as could be seen from the small salaries earned by teachers and in the prevailing ignorance of the social cost of low school attendance. Serious efforts would have to be made to solve the technical problem of how to measure the true value of education, thus ensuring it due priority within investment expenditure.

With the ten-year plan soon to be launched, Chile had made a great stride forward in the planning of development. The difficult task that still lay ahead was to unify all the aims and ideals in respect of economic, educational and social development in a single body of measures decisions. He had every confidence that the determination of his Government, the efficiency of his country's teaching profession and the new spirit of international and inter-American solidarity which had found expression in the Alliance for Progress and in the present conference, would provide opportunities of seeking effective ways and means to ensure the Latin American peoples an immediate future more in keeping with the dignity of man.

/Mr. ABAD

Mr. ABAD (Ecuador) said that several of the economic and physical characteristics of his country affected the educational problem. They included the low over-all level of income and its inequitable distribution; the composition, distribution, rate of growth and ethnical diversification of the population; and the geographical zones into which the country was divided, together with its complicated topography, which has resulted in the more or less prolonged isolation of certain areas and the survival of antiquated institutional systems. Moreover, the rate of growth of the population had increased, owing to the expansion of medical services and to health campaigns.

After describing some of the impediments to educational progress in Ecuador, he referred to Ecuador's development during the period 1950-60. The structure of the economy had remained almost unchanged throughout that decade, although during the first five years development had been fairly rapid, thanks to a boom in the banana export trade which had increased foreign exchange earnings and had made it possible to obtain external credits, both of which sources had been drawn upon to augment the stock of social capital. In the second half of the decade, however, the influence of internal and external factors (stagnation or decline in world prices for exports) had led to an economic standstill which had been reflected in a difficult social situation.

The distribution of income was extremely uneven, since the so-called "under-privileged" classes constituted a major proportion of the population, while the middle and upper classes represented only a small percentage. Nevertheless, the social classes in Ecuador were characterized by a high degree of mobility, attributable chiefly to the economic factor and the educational system. It was hoped that stabilization on a basis of social equality and justice would be achieved.

He went on to list a number of different factors which were responsible for the disadvantages against which the underprivileged classes had to struggle: the lack or deficient state of drinking-water facilities; the shortage of preventive and curative medical services, especially in rural areas; the absence of sound dietary habits; housing deficits (although
/organized efforts

organized efforts to remedy that situation had begun, with the creation of a Housing Bank and a National Housing Institute); the limitations of the social security services, which benefited a relatively small number of people, and those only on a modest scale; and the low cultural level resulting from the restricted scope of the educational services.

The Government of Ecuador, aware of the country's plight, and convinced that the only way to remedy its backward state was by means of planning activities which would permit smooth and co-ordinated development in line with clearly-defined objectives and specific targets, had created a National Economic Planning and Co-ordination Board, which was preparing a ten-year economic and social development plan. However, as immediate action was called for to lighten the hardships of the people of Ecuador, a development plan for 1962 and 1963, formulated by the Board in question, had been put into operation. It included specific educational targets established with a view to training the human resources required for the development and implementation of various sectoral programmes.

He then referred to another of the factors hindering the development of education, namely, shortage of funds, and stressed the indispensability of adequate external assistance.

The situation described had given rise to a variety of problems in the field of education, of which he mentioned the most important. One of them was the limited scope of the educational system, in the sense that it served a very small proportion of the population, with the result that the cultural level of the rural population was low, and there was a shortage of human resources capable of playing an active and efficient part in Ecuador's economic, cultural and social development processes. To solve the problem, enough school buildings would have to be erected to meet present and future requirements, so that in ten years' time there would no longer be children who had no school to go to; a sufficient number of teachers would have to be trained to satisfy the present and future demands of the different branches of education; the number of inspectors guiding and supervising the teachers' work would have to be /increased; and

increased; and schools would have to be endowed with furniture, textbooks and teaching materials. Ecuador had already made substantial efforts in those directions, and had launched a school building plan, had raised to the maximum the number of primary and secondary school teachers, and had considerably increased the budgetary allocation for education.

Another problem was that the educational system of Ecuador was characterized by a high rate of wastage (or "drop-off"), which was due to the isolation in which some sectors of the population lived; to the straitened economic circumstances of the broad masses, which forced a large proportion of the population to go to work at too early an age; to the lack of school and social welfare services; to the inability of the pupils to adapt themselves to methods of teaching which took no account of their interests and needs; and to the lack of co-ordination between the various levels and branches of the educational system, which limited the students' access to different types and grades of education.

A third problem was the number of teachers specifically trained for primary and secondary school teaching was not large enough. Again, there was a shortage of specialists in the various functions and branches which the educational system comprised.

In regard to the technical aspects, moreover, the educational system was disjointed, and there was no satisfactory co-ordination between its various branches and levels, so that a radical reform of the very essentials of the system was needed, to give education a practical content without neglecting spiritual values.

Some efforts had been made to solve those problems by increasing the number of educational establishments, pupils and teachers and by enlarging the education budget.

Illiteracy was deserving of special attention. It was calculated that in 1944-54, the proportion of illiterates had been as high as 52 per cent, a figure which at the present time, according to estimates, had been reduced to 43 per cent. Obviously, so high a percentage had a negative influence on the country's development process, and the problem called

/for immediate

for immediate solution. To that end, the Government of Ecuador had created a special literacy and adult education department with which UNESCO was co-operating.

From the foregoing brief analysis of the educational difficulties involved, it was clear that scientific planning was needed to surmount them, and on that understanding, the Government had established an Integrated Educational Planning Department which had already made a start upon preliminary research. The Department enjoyed the collaboration of a representative of the National Economic Planning and Co-ordination Board, and was thus enabled to co-ordinate its work with development planning activities.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.