

MEETINGS

ON EDUCATION IN AFRICA

HELD IN TANANARIVE

by *Michel Doo Kingue*

Two big meetings on problems of Education took place in Tananarive, under the auspices of UNESCO, from 2nd — 13th July, and from 3rd — 12th September, 1962, respectively. They were the Conference of experts on the adaptation of the programmes of Secondary Education to Africa and the Conference on the Future of Higher Education in Africa.

I was chosen to represent the Federal Republic of Cameroon at the first of these meetings and I led the Cameroon Delegation at the second.

THE MEETING OF EXPERTS ON THE ADAPTATION OF PROGRAMMES OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

The meeting of experts was devoted to the Study of the problems raised by the adaptation of the Secondary Education Programmes to Africa. The following countries received invitations and were to designate two experts to the meeting: Basutoland, Bechuanaland, Cameroon, Congo (Brazzaville), Congo (Leopoldville), Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Ethiopia, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Upper Volta, Mauritian Island, Kenya, Liberia, Lybia, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, United Arab Republic, Central African Republic, Ruanda-Urundi, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanganyinka, Tchad, Tunisia and Zanzibar.

Thirty-one countries replied to this invitation, but owing to travelling difficulties, the experts of two countries were not able to attend the meeting. In all therefore twenty-nine countries were represented by forty-five experts.

In addition, the United Nations Organization, the International Labour Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (F. A. O.) and the World Meteorological Organization sent representatives. The World Confederation of the Organizations for the Teaching Profession (W. C. O. T. P.), the International Federation of Teachers' Union and the International Office of the Catholic Educational System were also represented by observers.

This Meeting had several objectives. On the one hand, it was to conceive the general framework in which would be set the review of programmes and to study the repercussions of these reforms in the adjoining domains (training of teachers, utilisation and adaptations of didactic devices, scholarly and professional orientation, admission to universities, etc.); on the other, to examine the mechanisms and the modern techniques for the elaboration and the reviewing of the programmes in the niches of universities, teaching institutions, and normal college in the work role of the programme adaptation. They will draw up working and research plans at national and regional levels with a view to helping the Governments of the countries concerned to adapt their general secondary education in such a way that it might answer to the needs of the African physical, intellectual, affective and moral development of the African child and adolescent, as well as to the economic and social needs for the development of the students in question and the education for international understanding and peaceful cooperation. Finally, the meeting was to propose a programme for regional cooperation of a nature to stimulate and maintain on a national level, the action taken to attain the objectives just indicated. Equally it was to define the nature and forms of international aids which African countries could have need of in the field of the adaptation of the programmes of secondary education. The First Plenary Sessions of the meeting were devoted to the definition of the objectives of secondary education and to the discussions on the necessity for a reform of the programmes at this level of education.

All the experts agreed that secondary education should not maintain the academic character which it has had up till now, that it is time to adapt it to the needs and realities of African countries; that it should not be the privilege of a few, but on the contrary, should raise the cultural level of a great number of people and narrow as much as possible, the existing gulf between the elite and the masses. Besides, the meeting underlined the following as the essence of secondary education:

- As to its place** in the school course, this term applies to a teaching programme of varied length which comes after at least six years of primary education and which can either constitute an end in itself or a preparation for higher education at the university and specialised colleges.
- As to its curriculum**, the First Section taken as the « main body » consists in the initiation in languages and literatures, fine arts, mathematics, physics and natural sciences, history and geography, elementary technology, a knowledge without which the 20th century adolescent would not understand his world. The Second Section with its several optional subjects must enable the young man to prepare himself either to enter a university or to enter into an institution of higher learning: technical, agricultural or industrial, or still to enter immediately into the middle grades of the civil service

or the private firms grades which are of great demand in Africa. In these two Sections the programme of teaching embraces a civic, moral, physical and health education.

- As to its objectives** the general secondary education teaching programme thus defined, must awaken the curiosity of the young African in all fields of science, must enable him to be fully conscious of his duties as a citizen; must enable him to know deeply his national and regional environment, tighten his links with his cultural patrimony and thus, widening his horizon in the world of culture and continuous scientific progress, it will give him the sentiment of universal solidarity. The secondary education teaching programme, if well defined, must lead to a full bloom of all the natural gifts of the individual and prepare him sooner or later to cooperate to the fullest in the spiritual, cultural, social and economic progress of his country.

As for the reasons which make necessary the reform of the programmes, they are several: cultural emancipation leading to the assertion of the African personality; African approach to problems, necessary re-inforcement of African unity for a better understanding of the African countries the safeguard of cultural contribution on the international exchange level; for educational reasons, notably the need to draw benefit from the already existing developments and from the recent educational progress which make necessary the review of programmes even in countries that are very much developed; the necessity to propose to the students the study of things that are relevant to his experience so that his intelligence, his sensibility and his creative imagination can fully open up; finally, for practical and economic reasons (events that affect the growth of African cultures, better understanding on the environment implying that action on nature becomes more effective; eventually training of the course of studies by the suppression or modification of some elements that are not of consequence in Africa at this phase of education).

It was therefore apparent to the participants at the Conference that it is not only the content of the programmes that needed reviewing but it would also be necessary to re-consider the structures of secondary education; to think over the teaching methods in order to raise the efficiency; conceive a school administration that will take account of the new orientation and the new imperatives.

THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

This conference was a continuation of and a complement to the Conference of the African States held at Addis Ababa in May, 1961. The following territories and Member-States were present as participants: Basutoland, Bechuanaland, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Re-

public, Congo (Brazzaville), Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Federation of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland, Gambia, Ghana, the Mauritian Island, Liberia, Lybia, Malagassy Republic, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Nyasaland, Uganda, United Arab Republic, Ruanda, Sudan, Tanganyika, Tchad, Zanzibar. Observers from the following Member-States were also present at the Conference: Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, Canada, Cuba, United States of America, France, India, Israel, Poland, United Kingdom, Czechoslovakia, U. S. S. R., Vietnam, Vatican was also represented by observers. The United Nations, the Economic Council for Africa, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Foundation for Children and the Technical Assistance of Universities totally or partially French-speaking (A. U. P. C. L. F.), the Association of British Commonwealth Universities, the Association of International Universities (I. A. U.), the International Association of Professors and Teachers (I. A. U. P. L.), the International Office of Catholic Education, Pax Romana, the African Cultural Society, Universal Confederation of the Association of Christian Students, International Council of Scientific Unions, Inter-University Council for higher education overseas, the Ecumenical Council of Churches, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Edward W. Hazen Foundation, Phelps Stokes Fund, Rockefeller Foundation.

The Conference made proposals:

- 1) To find possible solutions:
 - a) to the problems on the choice of study programmes for higher education and adaptation, special conditions of life and development of Africa, as well as the formation of specialised personnel in the techniques of public administration and economic development;
 - b) to problems of administration, organization, structure and financing which the creation or the development of institutions of higher learning raise from the point of view of the institutions themselves and in the widest perspective of the national policy.
- 2) To give information to the United Nations Organizations to its specialised institutions and to other organizations or bodies interested in the international cooperation and assistance in the development of their programmes meant to offer assistance to the institutions of higher learning in Africa or be of some use to them.

The Agenda for this Meeting was made in consultation with a group of higher education experts in Africa: the Economic Council for Africa and International Association for Universities.

The following questions were studied in detail:

- 1) The role of higher education in the Cultural, Social and Economic development of African countries.

- 2) The planification of the development of higher education in Africa.
- 3) The problem of personnel.
- 4) The problem of funds.
- 5) The choice and the adaptation of programmes.
- 6) Cooperation between African countries for the development of higher education.
- 7) International aid and cooperation for the development of this programme of education.

Concerning the Role of Higher Education in the Cultural, Social and Economic Development of African Countries: All the participants felt that to establish universities in Africa is a necessity. And this is an answer to the need of trained responsible personnel well equipped to face local realities easily and with greater results. It is a fact that no single foreign university can alone meet the demands of African people for their social and economic development. Each country has its own spirit and its own special personality. Its institutions must therefore bear evidence of these characteristics. Consequently, apart from their traditional role which consists in giving liberal education, universities in Africa must take into account the needs of the African world. They must produce for the African society, men and women equipped with the technical knowledge to enable them participate fully and usefully in social and economic development of their continent.

In all countries of the world the mission of the university is to define and to establish the ideals of the society which it serves. The mission of African universities cannot therefore be different. While giving its full contribution to the intellectual reservoir of the world, the African higher education programme must aspire to offer to the people of this continent their legitimate place and to cement for ever African unity. With this and in view, the African university must consider itself the guardian cultural centre of the community in which it is situated and the defender of its artistic and literary heritage. It must research on this heritage and place at the disposal of its public the results of its findings. The onus lies on it to redress the deformed picture still made of Africa and diffuse the right picture to the world. The African university must equally offer to all the members of its community indelible possibilities of education: in other words, it must be its CENTRE OF SOCIAL EVOLUTION.

We can briefly summarise the role of a university in an African country by saying that it should be for each country: THE CENTRE OF INTELLECTUAL MOBILISATION.

This is the concept formulated by the President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon a few months ago at the Ebolowa Congress of the Union Camerounaise. It was therefore reassuring to the Cameroon Dele-

gates to note that their point of view was also that of other African countries.

Concerning the **planification** of the development of higher education, it would be recalled that the Addis Ababa Conference indicated as follows the goals to be attained by 1980 in the different grades of education :

- (1) Primary education given to all children.
- (2) Secondary education open to 30 % of the primary school leavers.
- (3) Higher education accessible to 20 % of secondary school leavers.

In order to realise this plan, it was resolved that the proportion of National Revenue which the African States should allocate to education must be raised from 3 % in 1961 to 6 % in 1980. The Conference of Tananarive estimated that provisional objectives for the **development of higher education in Africa** during the next 20 years must, in students registered in and outside Africa, rise to at least 5.9 % of the corresponding age group in North Africa and to 1.5 % of the corresponding age group for the rest of Africa (Middle Africa *) by 1980. The proportion of students in foreign universities must progressively be reduced so as not to be above 10 % of all the students for Middle Africa, and 5 % of all the students from Northern Africa. In this respect, it will be good if the States and bodies which help Africa accord them scholarships tenable on the spot instead of giving them awards abroad. They could also convert these awards into contributions enabling foreign professors to teach in Africa. It is equally necessary that the awards offered be used for study tours during vacation outside and inside Africa.

It would be boring to give an account of all conclusions made by the Conference of Tananarive. I would however like to end by mentioning three others. One of them is on the problems of teaching personnel, another is on African studies, and the last one is on Cooperation between African countries.

If it is considered, on the one hand that African States want to raise from approximately 10 % (present figure) to 95 % in 1980, the **personnel** of local origin employed in their institutions of higher learning, and on the other, that the number of students registered must be tenfold by 1980 in Middle Africa, the needs in personnel (taking into account the progressive rise of the student professor ratio, which must change from 7 to 1 professor to 15 to 1 professor in 1980), is of greater consequence. In order to train as great a number as possible of personnel of African origin, we must make provision for a significant increase in foreign personnel during the first five or ten years.

* Middle Africa as distinct from Northern Africa.

So as to better encourage young Africans to accept becoming members of the teaching personnel of universities and other institutions of higher learning, it will be necessary to **make the teaching profession** in some countries more attractive. The steps which have already been taken in certain African States aroused much interest in the Delegates of the other States. In Ghana, for example, the salary of a university professor is one-third higher than that of an administrator with the same qualification.

Concerning **African Studies**, the Conference plans to organise and develop within the universities, institutes for African studies to stimulate and coordinate research work on Africa. It is particularly recommended to assemble and analyse all the existing documentation on Africa. The Conference requested that UNESCO should take the initiative to ensure this assembling of documents in a specialised centre where it will be available to all the Member-States. For their own part, the Member-States must establish their own individual centres of documentation. The Federal Republic of Cameroon plans to utilise, for this work, the Federal Linguistic and Cultural Centre. The Cultural Department of this Centre is in charge of collecting the traditional and cultural material as indicated above.

As regards to the **Cooperation between African countries**, all the members recognised the fact that the exchange of professors should take place between African universities. It will be expected that if, for example, a history programme on Malagasy civilisation is taught in the Federal Cameroon University, a Malagasy history professor should be in charge of it and vice versa.

In conclusion, those responsible for the educational policy of African countries would have on hand precious material for thought and for work when the reports on the two big Conferences of Tananarive on which I have just written will be published. It is hoped that they will derive great benefit from this material.

MICHEL DOO KISQUE

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