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CONTINUING EDUCATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

The idea that education does not stop with the end of childhood or adolescence but continues throughout life and meets a permanent need of individuals and societies is steadily making progress. The term "continuing education" has taken its place in the vocabulary not only of education specialists but also of planners and men concerned with technical or political action. The Ministers of Education from 88 countries who met in Teheran in September 1965, for instance, unanimously proclaimed the need to set adult literacy work against the general background of continuing education. The educational problems of young people were set out in similar terms by the International Conference convened by Unesco at Grenoble in August 1964.

The time has now come for the International Committee for the Advancement of Adult Education to examine this idea, to study its content and significance, to consider the practical implications, for the present and the future, of the concepts and principles of continuing education, and to formulate recommendations on the subject. This document provides an outline of a system of continuing education and concludes with a list of various questions, which the Committee is naturally at liberty to extend or to curtail.

II. CONTINUING EDUCATION SYSTEM

Continuing education is scarcely "institutionalized" at all. Certain universities and organizations have adopted the term "continuing education" to cover their adult education services, but these are still exceptions, even if it is reasonable to think that this practice will become the rule within a relatively short space of time. For the present, there is no Ministry or government department responsible for continuing education and very few institutions have the term in their official titles. Basically, "continuing education" as yet refers simply to a terminology, a series of ideas and principles, a range of interests and research.

There is, however, no doubt that even now, the idea of continuing education not only facilitates a better interpretation of educational processes but is calculated to bring about fundamental changes in the whole educational system. All we shall do here is to single out a number of important consequences on which the Committee is required to give its views.

1. Unity and integration

There is a striking contrast between the singularity of an individual's personality and destiny, on the one hand, and the variety of methods used for his training, on the other. No great harm would be done if it was merely a question of a variety of approaches, in line with various phases and the various responses which men must make to different situations. Such a diversity is not only inevitable but represents a positive advantage. But what is involved is a conflict (very often a radical conflict) between natural bent and lines of guidance. On the one hand, we have one particular man thinking, acting, happy or sorrowful, developing or falling back. But, for the purposes of education, various individuals

are brought together by chance in the same destiny and forced to reconcile as best they can demands which are often incompatible. In the education and training given at school, at home, in the factory, in the training workshop and within trade unions, producers, consumers and citizens receive teaching, instruction and training whose aims and effects do not tally.

Continuing education represents an effort to reconcile and harmonize these different phases of training so that the individual is no longer in conflict with himself. Because of the emphasis it places on the comprehensive "oneness" of development, it leads to the idea of programmes and means of education which establish permanent links between what is needed and what is taught for the purposes of working life, cultural life, general training and the various situations for which and through which each individual fulfils his potentialities.

2. Systematization

"System" is used here in reference to efforts aimed at establishing cohesion and revealing the interconnexion and interdependence between the various aspects and phases of the educational process viewed as a whole. Although many components of continuing education are already to be found either among schools and institutes or in informal education facilities, what has so far been lacking is an overall view of the educational problem, which would make a proper division of responsibilities possible and help in devising and preparing those structural reforms for which the need is everywhere manifest. In certain Western countries, there have been twelve or so unsuccessful attempts since the last world war, and education moves from one change to another without finding either its internal balance or appropriate means of meeting the requirements of modern society. No doubt success was impossible and it is hopeless to look for solutions to these problems without having recourse to a new conception of education which makes due allowance for the constant and universal need felt by human beings to receive training, to learn and to advance.

In a new context - one where education takes its place in every sector of existence and throughout the whole period of the personality's development - many of the walls by which the different types and phases of educational activity are sealed off, often hermetically from one another must disappear, giving way to active and lively communication. Henceforward, education may be conceived as a coherent structure in which each part is dependent upon the others and has no meaning except in relation to the others. If one part of the structure is lacking, the remainder is out of balance and none of the parts is equipped to provide the specific services for which it was devised. What is needed, then, is a series of harmonizations with respect to theory no less than to practical work.

(a) Co-ordination of youth and adult education

If education becomes a continuing process, all the educational structures are bound to be profoundly affected by the change. On the one hand, the programmes and methods devised for children and adolescents can no longer subsist as they stand. On the other, the content and spirit of adult education are likewise linked with the changes occurring in the early stages of education.

It is unnecessary, in this context, to describe, the services provided by schools and universities to individuals and societies. These institutions, by and large, have common features in every climate and latitude. But with continuing education in view, we may consider the matter in a fresh light and, to some extent, question certain structural and functional aspects of these venerable seats of learning. If it is agreed that men can and should learn, study and develop throughout their lives, some of the functions of these establishments for the education of children and adolescents must of necessity be radically changed. When it is considered that the adult-to-be must learn while at school the bulk of the ideas and skills that he will need for the rest of his life, it follows that the programmes of such institutions are conceived "encyclopaedically". During the six, seven or ten years which a child spends in the classroom, he must acquire the maximum amount of knowledge and reduce the "gaps" in that knowledge to the minimum. Hence there is a universal tendency to add new subjects and to extend the content of the instruction given. Certificates also serve to attest that the required level of knowledge has been reached and that the schoolchild can be sent out into the world either directly or through the intermediary stages of higher education. The methods used are also affected by this conception of the school's rôle. Priority is given to memorizing, as the best guarantee of being able to pass the certificate barrier.

The traditional type of school is also a means of selection, which operates throughout the system. From the moment he takes his place in the classroom, the child knows on which side he is - among the good pupils or the bad. His great concern is to come first or, at any rate, to get a good place in the upper brackets of his class. Competition is omnipresent and up to the last moment of his school and university life, the child or adolescent is spurred on by the desire to do better than others and to beat his rivals, if only by a hairsbreadth. He has, indeed, no alternative. When all is said and done, the whole educational system is, more or less overtly built on the idea of competition, since only a given percentage pass the examinations and, except in certain autocratically organized societies, places go to the most outstanding students.

It would probably be Utopian - and not even desirable - to bring about a complete change in these structures of the scholastic world, linked as they are, in so many respects, with enduring characteristics of human nature. At the same time, the introduction of the ideas and achievements of continuing education into life and into society radically changes some of these traditional features or, at any rate, makes their significance merely relative.

Programmes matter less. On the one hand, they cannot match the scope of the material to be taught, which, as we have seen, tends to cover all the sectors of human activity. On the other, the "gaps" mythology loses much of its foundation. A gap, if it means anything, implies a plenum and nothing could be further removed from continuing education than the idea of a plenum in knowledge or in skill. The logic of such education holds that knowledge is constantly changing and developing and that nothing short of a whole life can suffice for the one and only authentic programme, which is to perfect the quality of knowledge and improve the means for the perception of the world and for communication. The purpose of the schools therefore becomes essentially different. Any "encyclopaedic" ambition vanishes. Any desire to impart a complete teaching seems disproportionate to the means and aims in view. The mind needs, of course, to be "furnished" and the memory stocked as far as possible so as to create frames of reference and provide food for thought. But the essential lies elsewhere: in the acquisition of the skills of learning. Henceforward, schools should concentrate on training in the method, or rather the methods, suited to each of the main functions which have been identified and which can be continually elaborated with the help of the human sciences. The subjects taught are then seen to be simply the support and occasion for acquiring these skills, with the actual acquisition of the skill as the main objective and the subject-matter of purely relative importance. Keen minds and gifted individuals have, of course, always succeeded in cutting free from the letter of what is taught and retaining for their own use the elements of a personal method. When they have come on a teacher who has also known how to awaken them, they have had great good fortune. But what has hitherto been the exception must now become the rule. For most young minds, schools as they operate at present provide little more than a conditioning. This counts for something and nobody could do without it. But the requirements of the mind and the heart are on a different plane and different in scope. From the school, a taste for research, for intellectual adventure, for the systematic and constant building up of cultural experience, can and should penetrate into the inmost structures of the mind and feelings. This is not too high an ambition but it implies far-reaching reforms which, as already pointed out, can be carried out only in the system of continuing education.

It is obvious that adult education has everything to gain from a reform of education for children and adolescents which allows for the needs of continuing education. Various conditions must be met if adult education is to be vigorous. There must be infrastructures, equipment, institutions, administrators and leaders⁽¹⁾. First and foremost, however, there must be people wanting it. Here, there is no compulsion. If an adult is to embark on a course of study or training, and to impose discipline on himself, he must, first of all, feel a special need (or needs) and, secondly, have a taste for learning. He must

(1) Many meetings and surveys have been devoted to the consideration and study of these theoretical and practical aspects of adult education since Unesco came into existence. As far as this part of the document is concerned, the reader is merely advised to refer to the proceedings and conclusions of the Elsinore, Montreal, Grenoble and Teheran conferences, and to the work of regional or national conferences and seminars. See also document UNESCO/ED/COMEDAD/65/5.

also have been trained early in life to practice the techniques of theoretical and practical learning on his own account. These various conditions can be met only if early education follows the paths which lead to a desire and a capacity for continuing education after the years of schooling and throughout life as a whole. The interest, vigour and extent of adult education depends on this collective acceptance by peoples, which in turn depends on the line taken by education from the moment it starts. It should also be pointed out that adults have to make considerable efforts to free themselves or cure themselves from the twisting and crippling they have suffered from badly devised and badly conducted teaching and training.

(b) General education and vocational training

Continuing education must also seek as far as possible to harmonize the general aspects of training and the specific aspects, more especially as regards vocational training, both at the level of children and adolescents and at the level of adults. These two aspects of education are still frequently separated if not opposed, as though each related to different objectives and different values. A more thorough analysis leads to reducing the distance between these two sectors, which reinforce each other and which have common aims. It is well worth referring to the text of the bill submitted to the Norwegian Parliament on 9 April 1965, where the question is admirably stated: "From this angle, the Ministry considers it ill advised to make a sharp distinction in adult education between technical training and general education - or between "utilitarian" and "non-utilitarian" knowledge. The very fact that an individual aspires to learn, his desire to know more about his work and the society in which he lives, has an intrinsic value".

No matter what the trade under consideration, the object is not to train production workers but men - men who must be given, by this as by other means, the possibility of living more fully. In the interests alike of the individual and of his work, the educational process cannot be designed to provide the necessary knowledge and techniques for a given trade alone, and still less for a particular branch of a trade, but to furnish and develop abilities - as general as possible - for carrying out the complex tasks of production considered in relation to development. As for all other education, the key formula is to teach how to learn. It is against this background of continuing education and, in this particular case, of continuing "apprenticeship", that vocational training can take on its full significance.

Two observations should be made at this point. Firstly, vocational training cannot legitimately be separated from general education. If we accept the psychological and characterological premises of any form of teaching, what is involved is a variety of universal education corresponding to specific aspects of temperament, abilities and social requirements. But it should also embody

the same spirit, the spirit underlying the national education system as a whole and, to a large extent, it should use similar methods. Secondly, once facilities for continuing education have been organized in sufficient quantity and on a wide enough scale, the distinction between general education and specialized training will lose much of its justification. On the one hand, it will be possible for each individual, during most of his life, to equip himself for specific tasks which will be continually changing. On the other, the necessary ability to readjust can be acquired and maintained only if he has a sound and comprehensive general education to rely on.

These are the two most important aspects of the process of co-ordination and integration for which the prospects of continuing education will provide the conceptual framework and the essential lines to be followed. The same general idea will be found in each of the points to be dealt with in the remainder of this document.

3. Continuing education from the point of view of planning

Educational planning is a new idea which has rapidly gained ground and no longer encounters any real opposition. Most countries now recognize the need to look forward and discover how much investment in money, equipment and personnel training is required to meet the needs of each society's development. Planning also implies the making of choices, and this is by no means the easiest part of the operations to be undertaken. What share should be allotted to primary education, to secondary education, to higher education and, at each level, to the various different branches? There is no ready-made answer to these questions which is valid once and for all and for every type of society. What criterion, therefore, should be adopted? Manpower needs? In five years? In ten years? In fifteen years? The enduring needs of general education, without regard to immediate vocational considerations? Here again, minds are at work - as are various interests and various pressure groups.

There is, however, one item which is often left out of the programmes and concerns of the departments and individuals responsible for this aspect of planning, and that is adult education or, more precisely, continuing education as outlined above. In the early days of technical assistance, whether multi-lateral or bilateral, the planning missions requested by governments did not include any adult education specialists and, even now, they are only exceptionally included in such missions. This is a serious omission, which, in most cases, hinders the success of planning operations. It is within the context of continuing education that it is possible to plan usefully and effectively. Many arguments can be cited in support of this contention: the ultimate object of planning is the individual with all his specific features and in the unity of his development. Only a thorough analysis of the manifold educational needs linked with the various situations of men and women can furnish, reliable guidance in preparing educational plans. Among other things, this means that a resolute

effort must be made to go beyond the narrow traditional limits of the various types of education in order to achieve a global, organic view of educational action. If planning has any meaning, its purpose is to secure better use of the available resources and a reduction of waste - one of the major ills affecting education, as is generally recognized. This means that there must be a rationalization of efforts and, more particularly, a "pre-picturing" of the necessary phases in the various processes of learning to cope with life's problems. The most rapid and cursory analysis of the situation in most countries, whether developed or not, brings out the serious fact that much of the investment in this sector is non-productive. In certain countries which have had a system of free, universal primary education for several generations, there is still a high percentage of illiterates, including a large number who have reverted to illiteracy. And this aspect of intellectual and cultural erosion is the easiest to identify. How many of those who have spent five or even ten years in school continue to read, to learn, to study and to enjoy the riches of the poets and philosophers? In spite of the evident progress made in regard to mass participation in culture, those who, as adults, continue to follow the paths traced for them in their childhood are still only a minority. This is a form of wastage less obvious than the wastage of illiteracy but one which has equally serious consequences for the life of individuals and societies.

These considerations lead on to a statement of the basic principle of any rational educational planning: structures and procedures must be organized for educational work which continues throughout life - which means that all programmes must include the key elements of adult education and cultural development. The White Paper published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in 1965 under the title "A Policy for the Arts" contains a statement of policy on these lines, as persuasive as it is comprehensive.

The planning of continuing education is primarily the concern of those bodies which have powers of decision and command the resources needed for investment, in other words the public authorities. But to limit consideration to parliaments, states and local authorities would be to take a narrow and restricted view of the problem. The spirit and the will to plan have their place at every level, in private businesses and in public undertakings, once we recognize that coherence, harmonization and foresight are constant and universal requirements in respect of educational work. On the one hand, trade unions, co-operatives, and the many organizations and institutions concerned with mass culture have a decisive part to play in the carrying out of educational, training and cultural programmes. On the other, the planner's outlook and techniques are increasingly required to guide the work done within each of these particular structures of continuing education. The main goal of these bodies is to move out of the marginal, "fringe" position they have in many societies and to become effective instruments for the economic and social development of the nations in which they operate. Planning aimed at the establishment of theoretical and practical work programmes based on clearly defined principles and objectives is a vital factor in this very proper and necessary desire for efficiency.

4. Legislative and administrative measures to promote continuing education

In addition to the material and institutional structures which States must devise in order to provide the physical and cultural framework for continuing education, the authorities can do much to assist the development of certain aspects of such education by legislative and administrative measures, including:

(a) Adjustment of working hours

Certain working time-tables encourage continuing education; others present obstacles which are difficult to overcome. When the worker's job is so organized that he can be free at 2 p.m. or 5 p.m. he has an amount of free time which he can use not only for rest or entertainment but also for study or participation in group activities without having to pay the price of overtaking his physical or mental strength or interfering with his married or family life. The reverse applies in societies where a badly organized working day takes up most of the available time. Parliaments and governments have a duty to consider this essential aspect of the worker's life. It is not a simple problem, for it involves the rhythm of life - in some cases dating back for centuries - habits, traditions, prejudices, and also climatic conditions, which vary from one country to another. But there can be no doubt that rationalization of working hours and spare time (together with the time spent in travelling) is a decisive factor in the development of continuing education.

(b) Education leave

The idea of granting leave for the purposes of education and culture is making steady progress. In the Soviet Union, for example, and in most of the peoples' democracies, workers taking courses of study are entitled to leave averaging two to four weeks.

In France, the law of 1961 provides for education leave, in addition to ordinary annual leave, to enable all young workers under the age of 25 to attend courses regularly with a view to training for work as youth-group or adult-education leaders. This (unpaid) leave represents an important step towards recognition of the principle of cultural training in working hours.

Leave may be granted in various forms, either a given number of hours out of the total per week or a continuous period of days and sometimes weeks. If we accept the idea that the worker's intellectual and cultural development is desirable not only for the worker himself but for the firm and for society as a whole, such arrangements are quite natural in the structures of any modern society. They may give rise to short-term complications but, on a medium or long-term view, they are found to yield a very good return.

(c) Educational structures and institutions

The measures needed to set up the structures of continuing education are so extensive that they are inconceivable without large scale intervention by parliaments and governments. Of course, there is no question of starting from scratch. In most countries, there are libraries, museums, evening classes and many other institutions organized, administered or financed by the public authorities at the national or community level, as well as extensive radio or television networks. But even in those countries where such arrangements are widespread and well developed, they do not meet the people's cultural and educational needs fully or