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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

MEETING OF EXPERTS ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF TEXTBOOKS

Unesco House, 19 Avenue Kléber, Paris.

23 - 26 October 1950

REPORT

PART I : ORGANIZATION

The Committee of Experts on the Improvement of Textbooks met at Unesco House, from 23 to 26 October 1950, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Alfred J. Weiler (France), former Director of the Brussels Seminar on "The Improvement of Textbooks, particularly History Books".

The seven experts invited were :

- Howard R. Anderson, United States Office of Education
- Manich Jumsai (Siam), Unesco Department of Education
- J.A.Lauwerys, Professor of Comparative Education,
University of London
- Georges Panchaud, Director, Lycée municipal de Jeunes
Filles de Lausanne
- L.R.Sethi, Education Secretary at the Office of the High
Commissioner for India, London
- Haakon Vigander, Professor of English and History,
Oslo College
- Alfred J. Weiler, Director, Lycée expérimental de
Montgeron

The following observers attended parts of the Committee's sessions :

- Mr. Louis Gros, Director, United Nations Office in Paris
- Mr. Emile Hombourger, Secretary of the Comité d'Entente
and Member, Textbook Committee of French Unesco
National Commission
- Miss Moisson, Journalist

The staff members in attendance were :

Richard M. Perdew, Textbook Improvement Project
Marcel Vanhamme, Textbook Improvement Project
Sophie Moulært, Secretary
Mr. Jacob, Interpreter
Mr. Ravet, Interpreter
Mrs. Longley, Interpreter
Mr. Piquemal, Interpreter

The following members of the staff, in addition to those serving the Committee, attended some of the sessions :

Mr. Jaime Torres Bodet, Director-General
Mr. H. Lionel Elvin, Director, Department of Education
Mr. Jean Guiton, Deputy Director, Department of Education
Miss Monica Luffman, Programme Specialist, Department
of Education
Mr. Benoît Brouillette, Programme Specialist, Department
of Education
Miss Yvonne Tabbush, Department of Mass Communication

Radio and Press Activities

On the morning of the 26th, the Committee members were invited to the Unesco radio studios to record two brief round-table discussions on the work of the Committee, one in English and one in French.

The English recording was made by Dr. Anderson, Mr. Sethi and Mr. Vigander, under the direction of Miss Thelma Stafford of the Radio Division.

The French recording was made by Mr. Lauwerys, Mr. Panchaud and Mr. Weiler, under the direction of Mr. Paul Bordry of the Radio Division.

Press relations were handled by Mr. S.M. Koffler and Miss Yvonne Tabbush, of the Press Division. The latter distributed background material to the press, and arranged for Mr. Lauwerys to be interviewed by two representatives of the French press on the afternoon of the 26th. (One journalist, Mr. Romain Roussel, had a front-page article on the interview in L'Epoque for 27 October.)

PART II : DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE POINTS OF THE
AGENDA

1. Opening of the Meeting by the Director-General

The meeting was opened by the Director-General, who reviewed the problem of textbook improvement and some of Unesco's activities in this field. He stressed the need for concentrating Unesco's programme on activities of the highest priority and asked the Committee to give its advice as to the most important suggestions developed during the Brussels Seminar on the Improvement of Textbooks.

2. Organization of the Committee

The Committee unanimously elected Mr. Alfred J. Weiler to be its Chairman. The provisional agenda was then adopted, with two alterations :

- (a) item 4 was considered first, and
- (b) a new item - Recommendations for the Seminar of 1951 - was considered second.

3. Consideration of the Plan of a Pamphlet for the Use of Authors and Publishers of History Textbooks

After considering two documents in detail, the Committee made the following recommendations :

Having examined with close attention the two plans for a pamphlet for the authors and publishers of history textbooks;

Taking into account the great variety of educational systems and the many differences in national outlook;

The Committee recommends that :

- (1) Unesco prepare a pamphlet specially intended for the authors and publishers of history textbooks in all countries.
- (2) The author of the pamphlet take full account of the fundamental principles of Unesco and of the work of the Brussels Seminar.
- (3) The author of the pamphlet be given enough freedom to write an interesting, convincing and practical pamphlet.
- (4) The pamphlet be self-contained - i. e. it should have no bibliographies,

no specific reference to named textbooks. Preferably also there should be no sample chapter.

(5) The pamphlet should in general discuss problems and raise issues rather than give instructions and provide ready-made solutions.

(6) The writer of the pamphlet for authors and publishers should take into account the different age-levels of learners and the various systems of school organization.

(7) There should also be another pamphlet, intended specially for all those who teach history, which would take very fully into account methods of teaching and the findings of psychology.

4. Recommendations for the Seminar of 1951

Mr. Jean Guiton, Deputy Director, Department of Education, presented to the Committee a draft plan for the 1951 Unesco Seminar on the "Teaching of History". After discussion of it, the Committee made the following recommendations :

I. General principles - approved

(a) A programme which takes account of actual curricula, instead of emphasizing the ideal curriculum of history teaching. Thus, each group should study the different systems in effect and try to find the means of using them.

The "ideal programme" could be the subject of discussions during the course of general meetings of all the participants.

(b) A seminar of educators - and not a conference of historians. Hence, a new effort to get the Member States to choose participants "active" in the teaching of history (scientific and pedagogical training of teachers, curricula, methods, teaching aids).

The basic aim is to influence the thinking and acting of the participants, rather than to get expert aid for Unesco's activities, such as publications.

II. General plan for the organization of group work

(1) The draft programme sent to Member States and participants should say that there will be study groups, but should not list the agenda of each one. Instead, only the main themes of the Seminar should be listed. In order to aid the Seminar staff in the formation of the study groups, each applicant should be asked to indicate :

- (a) his field of professional experience;
 - (b) his chief interests as to age-group and kinds of schools; and
 - (c) the topics listed in the programme which he particularly wishes to discuss.
- (2) The Seminar staff should divide the participants into study groups on the basis of this information.
- (3) Teacher training should be considered in all groups.
- (4) Age-groups basis:
- (a) no group on children under six years;
 - (b) age-group basis accepted, with recommendation that provision be made for vertical organization when it better serves the purpose.
- (5) Expert consultants :
- (a) they must be well qualified, and paid;
 - (b) they should stay for full Seminar period;
 - (c) they must have a well-defined function, clearly included in the programme;
 - (d) they must plan their work long in advance, perhaps submitting a working paper for approval in advance;
 - (e) it is desirable to have "peripheral subject" experts : psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists;
 - (f) experts should be chosen from various cultural regions, not just from the western cultures.
- (6) Language :
- The majority of the Committee agreed that the groups should be bilingual, not monolingual.

III. Other considerations

- (1) Choice of participants - probably the most important factor in Seminar.
- (a) In order to get enough elementary educators to balance the secondary educators, the invitations might :
 - (1) have only those two categories of educators, whether teachers, inspectors or administrators;

- (2) ask plural-participant countries to choose from both categories;
 - (3) suggest directly to certain countries that they should send elementary educators.
- (b) In order to get good regional distribution :
- (1) fellowships might be given to distant and financially-limited governments;
 - (2) some plan of easing the heaviest travel costs would help.
- (c) In order to improve the quality of participants, ask that their governments give them money for expenses, and that they be assured of two weeks of vacation for recuperation before returning to their work.
- (2) Length of Seminar - keep it six weeks, if possible. Ten days necessary for "rodage" and at least ten days for preparing final reports. Remaining three weeks for actual work is necessary.
- (3) Working documents :
- (a) Unesco should submit only relevant documents, not those whose study or criticism is of benefit primarily to Unesco;
 - (b) no documents should be accepted from participants or others for translation or distribution later than one month before opening day of the Seminar;
 - (c) all working documents must be ready for use not later than the beginning of the Seminar.
- (4) Results of the Seminar :
- (a) It is desirable to publish a detailed report of the work of the Seminar, not merely a summary of its work;
 - (b) the results should be published as widely as possible, e.g. in the form of separate magazine articles, both to make Unesco and its work known and also to demonstrate the value of the Seminar.
- (5) Consideration of the recommendations of the Brussels Seminar on "The Improvement of Textbooks, particularly History Books" (as summarized by the Director of the Seminar)

After discussion, the Committee adopted the following statement on this item:

A. The Committee approves of the "General Wishes and Recommendations", with one minor change in wording. Special attention is called to the recommendation that all children, whatever kind of school they may attend, should be given during their school years a general idea of the essential facts of world history.

B. The Committee approves of all of the "Practical Wishes and Recommendations", and wishes to call special attention to the following items :

1. Next in priority, after the pamphlet discussed in Part II of this Report, should be placed the pamphlet dealing with the use of school textbooks by teachers and pupils. It might include the findings of Study Groups II, III and IV of the Brussels Seminar, together with the results of enquiries addressed to practising teachers and those responsible for the training of future teachers.
2. Unesco should publish a series of maps bearing upon important aspects of world history, which might later be included in historical atlases.
3. The recommendation that a comprehensive study of Islam and the history of Moslem countries, in English and in French, would be of service to authors of textbooks is to be regarded as an example only. The same principle applies equally to the other major world religions. Unesco should assist in the preparation and publication of such materials.
4. The Unesco Secretariat should publish two short documents, each accompanied by precise notes on how it might be used, of the following types :
 - (a) A list of works which might be used to build up an international library of school textbooks likely, on account of their subject-matter and presentation, to further international understanding.
 - (b) A list of films likely to promote international understanding.
5. Unesco should facilitate the exchange of school textbooks from all parts of the world, with a view to setting up in each country specialized libraries for teachers and authors of textbooks.

The view was expressed that teacher training institutions of all kinds have a special need for such libraries.

(6) Consideration of Unesco's Programme for the Improvement of Text-books and Teaching Materials.

For lack of time, this item on the agenda was not considered.