

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT MEETING ON PROFESSIONAL
TRAINING FOR JOURNALISM

Unesco House, 9-13 April 1956

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Growing need for professional training

1. The demand for new or improved instruction facilities in journalism or for journalists has, on the international level, reached a stage which would seem propitious for an appraisal of the most pressing needs, and of the remedies most suitable for meeting them. Moreover, new endeavours in this field may now assume special topical importance because of the fact that, whilst communication facilities as such continue to expand at a remarkable rate, facilities for professional training of those who operate modern communications show nothing like a comparable degree of growth, and very often remain distinctly inadequate to meet the manifest needs. Even in countries where general and professional training has been developed on a relatively large scale, and for quite some time, the methods used and the programmes of study or training offered, do not always equip the reporter or editor, the foreign correspondent or leader-writer of tomorrow, with the detailed knowledge and enlightened understanding which alone would enable him to provide fuller and more balanced information to the public he serves.

Unesco's rôle and objective

2. In undertaking an assessment of currently available instruction methods and facilities and in endeavouring to devise appropriate means for improving them, Unesco is mindful of its permanent obligation to promote the free flow of full information, as reflected in its Constitution and in various resolutions adopted by its General Conference. The Organization also takes into account certain requests for action formulated by the Economic and Social Council* which envisage an expansion of relevant Unesco activities. Above all, it intends to build upon its study of significant trends in professional training for information personnel. This comprehensive mandate may now be said to permit the dove-tailing of a variety of efforts all of which would serve to promote professional training at the international level in response to growing needs and on an increasing scale.

3. At the outset, it must be emphasized that Unesco does not in any way intend to replace, or indeed, to supplant existing facilities. The intention is rather to assist in the further development of facilities already available and in the creation of special additional facilities which it would

* Cf. resolution 522 (XVII) F,K; and 574 (XIX) A, adopted at the 17th and 19th sessions, in May 1954 and May 1955 respectively.

otherwise be difficult or impossible to secure. Unesco is encouraged to follow this course by past experience and by views expressed by the professional circles most directly concerned. The Secretariat is, furthermore, guided by the conviction that international work along these lines might be a practical contribution of growing efficacy towards the general improvement of basic information standards. Unesco's fundamental objective appears, therefore, threefold: (a) to widen the scope of professional training where it exists; (b) to promote instruction in journalism, irrespective of methods which may, of course, vary from country to country; and (c) to develop the teaching of subjects essential for conveying comprehensive international information.

International expert advice

4. The above considerations on the one hand and actual studies on the other hand have led to the decision to convene, as an initial step, an international committee of experts. This Meeting may be claimed to be the first international gathering of its kind specifically devoted to questions of professional training in the information media. It may reasonably be expected to represent an impressive cross-section of professional opinion and expertise. It is being called to afford Unesco the benefit of the best available specialist advice prior to the launching of any possible international scheme or project to promote professional training for journalism. Journalism is here taken to embrace all activities relating to the gathering and imparting of public information through the press, through radio and television broadcasting, and through newsreels and fact-films.

5. Following an examination of the gaps which may exist in present training facilities and techniques, the Meeting may study significant curricula trends, not least in the light of the increasingly complex tasks facing information personnel as a result of far-reaching international developments. Reference might be made in this context to the increasing importance of such subjects as the geography of news and the economics underlying international developments, to the cultural, scientific and social components of comprehensive reporting, and to the political significance of thorough and well-balanced news coverage.

Facilities for teachers of journalism

6. The Expert Committee is expected to round off its discussions with a definition of specific or general measures likely, under present conditions, to promote instruction and adequate standards in journalism in the most effective manner. In particular, it may focus its attention upon the need for better facilities for journalism teaching staff, possibly at an international centre or institute for teachers of journalism. If justified by initial experience, assistance in setting up one or two more such institutes might later be proposed. In any case, the full realization of a project of this nature would necessitate outside financial support as well as the active participation of such Member States and institutions of higher learning or training establishments as would be directly concerned. An international institute (or institutes) of this kind might be attached to a centrally situated school of journalism or university in a region where the expansion of training facilities is considered of especial urgency and importance, and whence new ideas and methods may rapidly radiate over wide areas.

Other forms of international action

7. In addition, the Expert Meeting may consider other forms of international action suitable for sponsorship by Unesco. These might include: aid missions to assist in the creation or development of training facilities, again particularly for journalism teaching staff, at national universities or other establishments; scholarships for journalism students and fellowships and other grants for editors, correspondents and working journalists to enlarge "training on the job" opportunities; regional and international courses and seminars for journalism instructors and for editors; the promotion of specialized studies and research; and the preparation of prototype textbooks.

8. If the Meeting were to recommend certain practical steps, these recommendations would form the basis, together with other measures recommended, of an entire programme of international action for which approval would at once be sought from Unesco's Executive Board and, thereafter, from its General Conference, at the ninth session (New Delhi, November 1956). To some extent, implementation of certain measures could begin at once. On the other hand, the very nature of the work in the field under review is such as to require long-term vision, planning, and execution. Over a period of time corresponding long-term results may be anticipated and become visible as a growing impact upon the contents and quality of the information reaching the world public.

II. PARTICIPATION IN THE MEETING

9. For reasons of expediency and finance, participation in the Expert Meeting has been limited to about 25 to 30 specialists from at least 21 different countries. These countries do not of course, by any means exhaust the list of those known to possess professional training facilities of one kind or another, but they may be said to represent in fair measure outstanding and/or original achievements in this field, both in terms of substance and geography.

Selection of Experts

10. By letter dated 1 October 1955, National Commissions or other appropriate agencies in these countries were asked to suggest the names of suitable persons who might be invited to participate in the Meeting. They should be deans of schools of journalism, or directors of other professional training establishments, representatives of professional organizations, editors, publishers, radio and television news directors, or other persons known to be particularly qualified to contribute to the study of problems concerning professional instruction. It is hoped that all participants, together with other specialists throughout the world, will remain natural points of contact for further consultations and for the progressive execution of such Unesco projects as may subsequently be developed. Some of them will prepare and present reports or working papers for consideration by the Expert Meeting (see III).

Additional representation

11. The United Nations, the International Labour Organization, professional associations, especially non-governmental organizations with consultative status, and certain other interested bodies will be invited to send observers.

III. PROGRAMME

Provisional agenda and working documents

12. The tentative programme set out below includes details regarding the subjects to be covered at the Meeting, the working documents which it might examine, and certain other matters. It should be noted that the following is a list of topics rather than an enumeration of actual reports or working papers.* For practical reasons it may, in fact, be found desirable to treat certain groups of subjects together within one single document.

13. A. PROBLEMS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

- (1) Unesco's interest in promoting professional training. (S)
- (2) Summary survey of communication facilities in relation to professional training facilities. (BP)
- (3) The rôle of universities in training information personnel. (WP)
- (4) Specialized training for press, radio, television, films. (WP)

14. B. RECENT TRENDS IN JOURNALISM INSTRUCTION AND CURRICULA DEVELOPMENT

- (5) Education for journalism in the United States of America. (R)
- (6) Methods and facilities in the United Kingdom and Commonwealth. (R)
- (7) Methods and facilities in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and in the Popular Democracies. (R)
- (8) Methods and facilities in other countries. (R)
- (9) International affairs at schools of journalism. (WP)
- (10) Comparative analysis of recent curricula trends of international significance. (WP)

* Abbreviations: S - Speech; BP - Background paper; WP - Working paper; R - Report.

15. C. IMPROVING PROFESSIONAL INSTRUCTION

- (11) Statement of relevant Unesco activities. (BP)
- (12) Possible measures for the improvement of methods and the expansion of facilities. (WP)
- (13) Training journalism instructors: international facilities for teachers of journalism. (WP)

16. D. INTERNATIONAL CO-ORDINATION OF PLANNING AND RESEARCH

- (14) The rôle of professional organizations, schools of journalism, information enterprises, private and public bodies in promoting professional training for journalism. (WP)
- (15) International research, bibliography and publications (quarterly) concerning journalism instruction and related matters. (WP)

17. E. MISCELLANEOUS18. F. ADOPTION OF REPORT(S) AND RECOMMENDATIONSIV. TECHNICAL ARRANGEMENTSInterpretation

19. Working sessions of the Expert Committee will take place at Unesco House. There will be arrangements for English and French interpretation, and all documents will be issued in these two languages.

Working Groups

20. The programme of the Meeting might be entrusted to three working groups. In addition, a drafting committee will be responsible for the final report of the proceedings and recommendations:

First Working Group Items A and B

Second Working Group Item C

Third Working Group Items E and F

Drafting Committee Item F.

Report of the Expert Meeting

21. Following adoption, the report of the proceedings and results of the Expert Meeting will be edited by the Secretariat and circulated to National Commissions, participants, interested organizations and individuals. A summary version may be issued as a Unesco publication.