

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Progress towards UPE: what the survey reveals about UPE in Asia and the Pacific

PLENARY SESSION

THE CASE IN FAVOUR OF UPE

In view of certain doubts on the desirability of UPE, Mr Smith introduced his paper by presenting delegates with a number of arguments in favour of UPE.

(a) The history of now-rich countries shows that development of the base of the educational pyramid always comes before development of secondary and higher education. In the less developed regions, the opposite has been true.

(b) The 'social rate of return' on investment in primary education has been shown to be higher than that on investment in secondary and higher levels; and the per capita expenditure at the primary level is much less than that at other levels. Secondary and higher education may be 40 or 50 times as expensive as primary schooling and can lead to graduate unemployment.

(c) Access to education is a right guaranteed by the constitutions of most countries although many countries have yet to adjust their budgets to reflect this.

(d) Equity - the equal distribution of opportunities - is a strong moral argument in favour of UPE. At present, access to top posts in most countries is limited to the relatively small number of people whose primary education had enabled them to go on to secondary and higher education.

(e) A political argument in favour of UPE is that participation in schooling helps to develop a sense of national belonging or identity: It may be the only means of developing national unity.

THE PROBLEM OF FINANCE FOR UPE

Since the education systems of many developing countries show imbalances in favour of secondary and higher education, Mr Smith gave the following suggestions for correction of these imbalances.

(a) More money might be supplied to primary education at the national level. But this is an unrealistic strategy in view of the large amounts already granted to education in many

national budgets.

(b) Funds might be directed to primary education from secondary and higher education.

(c) The rates of growth of secondary and higher education might be reduced in proportion to the rate of growth of primary education.

(d) Teachers' salaries might be reduced. Direct cuts are not likely to be acceptable but indirect ways of reducing the amounts paid to teachers might be tried. These include:

(i) Reducing the level of professionalization by shortening the length of training and lowering the entry qualifications.

(ii) Using monitors or other less qualified helpers to assist the teacher.

(iii) Increasing class sizes.

(iv) Introducing multiple shifts or double sessions.

(v) Reducing the amount of time children spend in school each day.

MAJOR CHALLENGES TO BE OVERCOME IN IMPLEMENTING UPE

(a) Pupils

(i) In some countries the exact number of pupils who will enrol for UPE is not known.

(ii) Enrolment and retention of girls in school poses a big challenge because of the need to change the attitudes of society.

(iii) Access to education alone does not ensure UPE. More needs to be done to upgrade delivery and to encourage students to attend school, for example, through provision of transport, free books and food.

(iv) Decisions need to be made regarding entry and leaving ages and whether or not pupils will be allowed to complete their studies by returning to school after "dropping-out".

(b) Teachers

Ways need to be found to persuade teachers to work in rural areas. Similarly, the use as teachers of people already living in rural areas needs examination. The entry qualifications of teachers - in particular, how many years schooling beyond their prospective pupils teachers should have, also should have closer examination. The question of using locally available but under-qualified people as teachers also deserves consideration.

(c) Buildings

Policies need to be worked out as to what types of building are required for specific purposes and how fuller use can be made of existing buildings. The question might be raised as to whether special school buildings are really needed at all.

(d) Teaching Methods

Development of traditional learning patterns should be explored: these might include peer group teaching, monitorial systems and different groupings of pupils e.g. family grouping, with older children helping the younger ones.

(e) Materials and Curricula

The following issues were raised:

- (i) To what should the curriculum be relevant?
- (ii) Should it be designed primarily with the present in mind or the child's future needs?
- (iii) Who should design curricula? Should classroom teachers be involved?
- (iv) Should there be different curricula for urban and rural pupils?
- (v) How can the contents of the curriculum be made intrinsically interesting to the pupils?

ADMINISTRATION AND CONTROL

Mr Smith raised the following issues:

- (a) Should administration be decentralized, and if so, to what extent?
- (b) Does decentralization ensure local participation in education?
- (c) What should be the extent of parental involvement in educational control?

SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT OF TEACHERS

This is one of the most essential issues and the question "How can teachers be given the best kind of professional support?" must be asked.

DATA GATHERING

What data is needed regarding attendance, pupil retention, number of children available, etc?

NON FORMAL LINKS

It is important to introduce non formal links with UPE. To this end, the following questions must be posed:

- (a) Should schools be separate from other development agencies?
- (b) What might drop-outs be involved in? Could employers help with literacy work?
- (c) How might the mass media and other kinds of distance teaching be integrated with formal education?

CONCLUSIONS

Mr Smith said the case for UPE was unanswerable but ways must be found to implement it effectively. The main issues to be dealt with include:

- (a) How to cut costs.
- (b) How to develop quality (specifically how to increase relevance, efficiency and equity in UPE).
- (c) How to solve the dilemma of terminal and continuing education within one system.
- (d) The necessity for all government policy to support UPE and link it with other development areas.

GROUP SESSIONS

The following guidelines, under 7 themes, were prepared by Mr Smith for group discussion and distributed to members:

1. Pupils

- What measures might be taken to encourage girls' attendance and the attendance of other under-represented groups?
- Can fees be suspended or ameliorated for the poor?
- How can nomadic groups be catered for with respect to access or delivery?
- Is there a place for transporting pupils and feeding them at school?
- Can school timetables be made more flexible?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of shift systems?
- Would alterations to entry and leaving ages be advantageous?

2. Teachers

- What level of qualification is essential?
- Is there more than one way of training teachers?
- Can auxiliary teachers be recruited from the rural community?
- What arrangements can be made for in-service training?
- Is there a place for "mobile" teachers?

3. Buildings

- Are "good" buildings used to capacity? Could more than one school meet on the same premises?
- What level of building is essential?
- Are churches, mosques, or meeting halls available for use with portable equipment, or mobile teachers?
- To what extent might the homes, gardens and workshops of the community be used as teaching spaces?

4. Teaching Methods

- How might peer-group and collaborative learning methods be used?
- How are children best grouped - horizontally or otherwise?
- What useful new media are being developed, e.g. modules, work cards, self-instructional materials?
- What school-community links are being developed?

5. Materials and Curriculum

- How "local" are teaching materials and what might usefully be "borrowed" from other countries?
- How are materials distributed and teachers kept up-to-date?
- What are the links between the curriculum and pupils' experience and probable future?
- Which groups are able to contribute to the curriculum development process?

6. Administration

- Is schooling organized for delivery or for access?

- To what extent are parents and local leaders involved in school administration and support?
- Is the inspectorate sufficiently well-trained and numerous, and is it supported by advisers and co-ordinators?
- Do financial arrangements such as salary payments, orders and requisitions, work satisfactorily?
- Is there adequate machinery for gathering accurate statistical data?
- To what extent can additional school financing be raised by (local) taxation, levies or employers etc.?

7. Out-of-School Education

- Do any agencies successfully provide compensatory programmes for school-leavers, "drop-outs" or adult learners?
- Are employers encouraged to operate literacy and skill training schemes?
- To what extent are mass media and distance teaching used to promote out-of-school programmes?
- Once out of school, is it possible for pupils to return?
- Are groups of parents, employers and students ready to be mobilized to extend the school system?

In discussing these questions, seminar participants should be prepared to share their own experiences, seek means of co-operation and develop plans for continued mutual support.

REPORT OF THE SMALL COUNTRIES GROUP (Chaired by Mr S Prasad)

The group decided to concentrate on only four of the themes suggested by Mr Smith.

At the very out-set, the group expressed the view that it firmly believed in the implementation of programmes of universal primary education and that member countries of the Commonwealth should continue to take appropriate steps towards achieving universal primary education as soon as possible. The group was aware that in most smaller Commonwealth countries UPE had already been almost achieved. This was mainly due to the smaller size of their school population and the easier availability of necessary resources and manpower. However, there were still many areas within their UPE programmes where action was necessary to improve the quality of education. Members appreciated the problems that larger Commonwealth countries, especially India and Bangladesh, were facing within the implementation of this programme and agreed that because of the enormous size of these problems, it was necessary for them to accelerate the provision of conventional schooling and also look into other alternatives such as "out-of-school programmes".

The group recognized that many countries are economically handicapped because of illiteracy; it also recognized that primary education plays a more important general role in society than secondary and tertiary education.

Therefore the view was expressed that a small reduction in high school and university education expenditure should be considered so as greatly to expand the provision of primary education.

The fact that in a number of Commonwealth countries girls' education is lagging far behind that of boys' caused the group to discuss measures that might be taken to encourage girls' attendance and also the attendance of other under-represented groups. The need for adult education was felt to be urgently needed, not only in countries where school enrolment was low, but also in those countries in which UPE was already a reality. The group believed that it was because of certain prejudices, including cultural differences, customs and beliefs, that many parents were unwilling to send girls to school. In such countries, there was a need to launch suitable adult programmes to help parents to appreciate the need for education for their girls and appropriate steps need to be taken to get as many girls as possible enrolled in schools. To make such an adult education programme successful, it was necessary that as many educational agencies as possible be involved in the programme. Adequate publicity should be given through the various media in encouraging parents to respond to the need for UPE, especially in communities where parents are unwilling to send girls to school.

UPE cannot succeed only by enrolling all pupils. It must be made a practicable proposition. In this regard the group strongly felt that measures should be taken to reduce the costs of education to parents, especially poor parents. Financial assistance should be considered by:

- (a) Providing exemption of tuition fees. Some countries have introduced fee-free education scheme in stages. There are also schemes such as full or part-remission of fees.
- (b) Providing transport facilities, especially in inaccessible areas.

Other matters discussed and conclusions reached were as follows:

(a) Pupils

- Teachers should be made available to the children in remote places where there is no school and for this they might be given a special allowance. School holidays should be arranged according to the needs of the community particularly for children in rural areas.
- School meals may be arranged, particularly in areas where children suffer from malnutrition.
- There should be enough flexibility in the school timetable to allow lessons to be presented in as relevant a manner as possible.
- Where there is a shortage of accommodation, a shift system should be considered.
- There should be flexibility in the age of children entering and leaving school.

(b) Teachers

- People best qualified for the skills they actually have to perform should be employed as teachers.
- Teachers should all be trained, though all may not necessarily be trained in the same way.
- Auxiliary teachers should be recruited from persons who are likely to be dedicated to their work.
- Teacher training courses incorporating teaching skills might be introduced into the curriculum of Higher Secondary Schools to help solve the teacher shortage problem.
- In-service training should be made available for all teachers using the resources that are available within the school system. Regular in-service courses of appropriate duration should be organized to up-date teachers' knowledge and enable them to teach new curricula as they are developed.
- Staff in teachers' colleges should be involved in organizing in-service education.
- Teachers' Associations should be encouraged to organize in-service education for their members.

(c) Teaching Methods

- Peer-group methods may be applied to enable pupil teacher ratios to be improved.
- Horizontal grouping of children should be reviewed in order to adjust the unequal distribution of children in upper classes where drop-out occurs.
- New media, like modules and self-instructional materials should be developed.
- Meaningful school-community links should be encouraged.
- Teaching aids should be made by teachers, students and others using locally available low cost materials.
- Schools should be made available for community education when children are not in session.

(d) Administration

- For administration and support of the school, community involvement is necessary. For this to succeed, adult education is necessary for parents and others in the community.

- Parents should be offered adult education to enable them to give their children support in the things they are learning at school.
- Publicity should be arranged to make parents aware of what is going on in the school and also of their duties with regard to helping the school to fulfil its purpose.

REPORT OF THE LARGE COUNTRIES GROUP (Chaired by Dr P N Dave)

Before tackling the topics proposed by Mr Smith, the group engaged in preliminary discussion on what members envisaged by UPE and concluded that UPE should provide a minimum of five years education in which the following goals were pursued:

(a) To enable children

- to communicate effectively orally and in writing.
- to read with understanding written or printed material. the content of which is within their intellectual grasp.
- to carry out the basic kinds of calculation required in daily living.

(b) To help children to acquire such manipulative (psycho-motor) skills as are necessary for undertaking socially useful and productive work.

(c) To inculcate in children the attitudes and values needed to become good citizens.

In the light of these objectives, it was felt that the minimum age for entry to such a course of education was five years or over.

The group then examined briefly the seven topics suggested for discussion and reached the conclusions which are outlined below:

(a) Pupils

In order to encourage the enrolment and regular attendance of girls and under-represented groups, public enlightenment programmes should be conducted to make the parents of such children fully aware of the benefits of education. In addition, every attempt within the resources available should be made to reduce those factors that deter such children from attending school. For example, more female teachers might be recruited to teach girls, and mobile teachers, or vans, or residential facilities might be provided for those children who have too far to travel daily to school. Free schooling for at least five years and free school meals should be provided for poor children. Help with this aspect should be sought from the local community and from other Ministries concerned with health and social welfare. Where community activities require the participation of children from time to time, the timetable and school terms should be made flexible so that the school and the community are not in conflict.

(b) Teachers

- In general, the group felt that the minimum qualification for teaching should be ten years of education and two years of professional training. However, in crash programmes such as those necessitated by UPE policies, the requirements might be reduced to eight or nine years education with still two years of professional training.
- Incentives should be built into the training system. For example, training might be offered on an in-service basis using correspondence teaching, with opportunities for face to face teaching during vacations or weekends; or other incentives such as salary increments, promotion or diplomas, might be built into the programme.
- Community artisans should be utilized for teaching children those skills which will enable them to undertake socially useful and productive work.

(c) Buildings

- Shift systems should be considered if buildings are insufficient for the numbers of children. In any case the fullest utilization of the buildings should always be the aim. Where shift systems are used, the same teacher can teach for both shifts if the length of each shift is no longer than three hours. If the shifts are longer, two teams of teachers need to be used.
- School buildings should be designed to make use of as much local human and physical resources as possible. Thus every attempt should be made to use local building materials and community co-operation in the construction of schools.
- Suitable alternative places for children to learn should be sought if purpose built schools are not available. For example, churches, mosques, temples, community halls, homes, workshops and even gardens might be pressed into use.

(d) Teaching Methods

- A variety of teaching methods should be considered. For example peer group teaching or monitors can help to increase the number of pupils under the tuition of a single teacher. At the same time, teachers should be trained to operate more as facilitators of learning than as instructors and to use both formal and informal methods where appropriate.
- Where possible, some attempt should be made to introduce learning materials of a modular and self-instructional type.

(e) Materials and Curriculum

- Practising teachers, headteachers, teacher educators and inspectors should all be involved in curriculum development and the materials they develop for teaching the curriculum should allow for geographical and cultural variations that may exist within the country.
- The distribution of teaching materials is probably best organized on a centralized basis working through the administrative network to local areas.
- Where curriculum development is active, it is important to ensure that in-service training is given to the teachers so that they can adapt to it. Such training can be provided by distance teaching methods (radio, television, correspondence) or by face to face contact.

(f) Administration

- In education it is important to ensure effective administration both at local and ministry levels. At local level, encouragement can be given to local community leaders and parents to take greater responsibility for their schools. At government level, the inspectorate should be strengthened in quantity, and machinery should be established for the collection and retrieval of essential data.
- Where funding is inadequate, other sources of revenue may be explored such as taxation, parental contribution, voluntary local labour and materials.
- The whole of the school system should be organized to facilitate both access and delivery.

(g) Out of School Education

- The group expressed the view that not enough was being done at present in out of school education. Therefore more avenues should be explored to find ways in which non-formal education can be utilized to meet the needs of UPE. For example, national and voluntary agencies active in NFE should be used as much as possible. This may include those that are engaged in literacy and other skill training programmes or those concerned with drop-outs. Greater use of mass media might be made than at present.
- In non-formal education, it is important to encourage where possible the re-entry to the formal system of those students who wish to return.