

EDITORIAL

Once upon a time, almost three years ago, an expatriate teacher arrived in Addis Ababa en route for the town where he was to take up his first appointment in Ethiopia. Having no more information about the town than an atlas could provide, he sought information from a Government official. The official, a sympathetic and kindly man, was horrified to learn where the poor ferengi had been posted, and solemnly counselled him to make sure that he bought everything he was likely to require in that distant outpost before he left Addis Ababa. The list that he dictated included a bed, a mattress, a drum of kerosene and a year's supply of non-perishable foodstuffs. The teacher was therefore rather surprised, though also greatly relieved, to discover, on arrival at his destination, that the town, a provincial capital about one hour from Addis Ababa by air, was reasonably well supplied with the necessities of life, including electricity.

The anecdote is offered, not as another piece of folklore about officialdom, but as an illustration of the point that it is perfectly possible for an intelligent citizen to be hopelessly uninformed about conditions in a town of his own country only one hour's journey from his home — in spite of all the efforts made by Ethiopian Airlines, the Telecommunications Board and the Highway Authority to overcome the physical obstacles in the way of communication. Not that these agencies have failed — far from it. But the mere creation of the means of communication does not automatically ensure that a free flow of information will instantly occur.

Teachers, too, may be shockingly ill-informed about educational developments going on almost on their own doorsteps — and teachers are not the least intelligent section of the community. But we are an uncommunicative lot — outside our own classrooms, that is — and unless we are prepared to make use of the means of communication, of which the Ethiopian Journal of Education is one, the mental gulf between one school and another or between the University and the Teacher Training Institutes is likely to remain as impassable as the physical gulf between one amba and the next.

Of course, it is fairly easy to persuade Faculty members to contribute to the Journal. The whispered words, "Publish or Perish" are usually enough to do the trick. But the Faculty of Education by itself cannot give a complete picture of the Ethiopian educational system and the developments going on within it; it cannot voice the thoughts of the rural teacher ten hours on muleback from the nearest town or report at first hand on new ideas being developed in other countries. The view that we present is necessarily one-sided, perhaps even, as our detractors would suggest, cock-eyed. But who is going to supply the necessary corrective?

Dear Reader, please write.

THE CURRICULUM-ESLC SEMINAR OF 1967

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Likely no event in recent years has had an impact on Ethiopian education comparable to that of last year's seminar on curriculum development and the school leaving examination. While some participants are disappointed that more dramatic changes have not occurred during the twelve months since the seminar, the effect on both curriculum and testing, not to mention in-service training, textbooks, and cooperative planning on various levels is truly significant.

Sponsored jointly by the Ministry of Education and the Faculty of Education at Haile Sellassie I University, the seminar was attended by educational leaders and subject-matter specialists from the Ministry and the University as well as teachers from the Government schools. Participants from various parts of the Empire convened in Addis Ababa between January 10 and 14, 1967. Sessions were divided into commissions on Amharic, English, geography, history, science (with committees on biology, chemistry, and physics), and mathematics.

While the agenda was initially limited to an evaluation of the secondary school curriculum and the twelfth-grade school leaving exam, every commission felt compelled to consider related matters which seemed ultimately to impinge on instruction received by secondary school students.

IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS OUTSIDE THE PROVINCE OF CURRICULUM AND TESTING

Some of the seminar's significant recommendations grew out of discussions on "peripheral" matters. Each commission recognized that the successful implementation of new curricula depended on the solving of many nagging problems. Inevitably, then, these difficulties received almost as much attention as the syllabus or the examination.

Probably the most difficult of these problems to resolve include the general lack of qualified teachers; the inadequate supply of books, materials, equipment, and audio-visual aids; and the badly crowded classrooms. Several commissions agreed that one of the most crucial problems was that of the woefully inadequate teacher salary in Ethiopia. The appropriation of increased funds for education would obviously be needed to remedy most of these ills.

A less costly recommendation—one made by group after group in the seminar—was that the distribution of texts and materials be improved. From every part of the Empire came reports of outrageous delays in the delivery of books and supplies. It was felt that a well-planned and adequately supervised distribution program by the Ministry could quickly solve this serious problem.

A textbook recommendation of even greater significance was made by several of the commissions. Because certain texts were culturally biased, inaccurate, out of date, and difficult linguistically, it was urged that sound texts be prepared in language appropriate to Ethiopian secondary students.

Strong recommendations were also made in support of intensive in-service training programs both on the elementary and secondary level. It was likewise felt that special orientation and training should be provided for newly-arrived expatriate teachers.

Considerable support was also given the proposal that subject-matter inspectorates be instituted.

Improvement and better use of library facilities was urged.

The employment of television and radio as adjuncts to instruction was advocated.

Finally, the development of subject matter associations and journals received multiple-commission support.

COMMISSION OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Proceedings, papers, and reports of the several commissions have been printed in a 295-page Final Report. Regrettably, publication of the Report was delayed until the latter part of 1967, thus preventing the implementation of some recommendations until 1969 (since, for example, ESLC changes require a year's notice to the schools). Organization of the individual sections leaves much to be desired, and lack of uniform content is quite noticeable (one-third of the report being devoted to English, one-tenth to science, and less than one-fortieth to geography). Nevertheless, the fundamental recommendations of each commission are clearly set down; these plus supporting evidence and arguments constitute a valuable reference source for Ministry and University officials, curriculum planners, and test makers. The following paragraphs set forth the key observations and recommendations made in each subject group: curriculum, ESLC examination, and related areas.

AMHARIC COMMISSION—Unfortunately the seventy-seven page report of the Amharic Commission was published only in Amharic. Thus non-Ethiopian educators were deprived of information that might have complemented that brought to light by other commissions. For instance, some of the common problems in teaching Amharic and English suggest the possible value of a permanent language commission designed to cope with matters ranging from textbook production to in-service training.

CURRICULUM — In the area of curriculum, the Amharic Commission focused on the 1956 (Eth. Cal.) Amharic syllabus for secondary schools. Members criticized its inclination towards teacher guidance rather than towards the subject matter. They were disappointed to see the syllabus hadn't been modified even though the preface indicated that this would be done. Moreover, they noted with dissatisfaction that the syllabus had no connection with recommended Amharic texts. It was felt the subject matter lacked proper organization and that the syllabus failed to provide satisfactory guidance for each grade.

It was therefore recommended that a new syllabus be developed by utilizing the findings of the commission and modifying the existing syllabus. In addition, it was decided that a teacher's manual should be prepared from the present syllabus. A third recommendation was that translation be taught in secondary school Amharic classes. (A surprising suggestion, unless confined to providing techniques for translating badly needed materials into Amharic). Fourth, it was

felt that a vocabulary list of difficult words and their meanings should be included in the new syllabus.

ESLC — Turning to the ESLC test, the commission agreed that the Amharic examination was based on the existing syllabus. The test appeared neither too difficult nor too simple, and ample time was provided. However, there wasn't much choice permitted in the paper. Those who corrected the test were lenient.

Other. Since the test seemed to be satisfactory, commission members probed to find reasons for student failure in the Amharic portion of the school leaving exam. They concluded that the inadequate supply of teachers and Amharic texts, poorly prepared Amharic teachers, excessively low teacher salaries, and crowded classes were the primary causes. Part of their suggested remedy consisted of one to two years of methodology and a screening examination for teachers plus a boost in salary.

Surveying the textbook situation, participants disclosed not only that there was a textbook shortage but also a dearth of up-to-date Amharic texts. The texts in use were found to be full of errors. There was also considerable disagreement between Amharic grammar texts on explanations, description, and other matters. And no texts were available for those who learn Amharic as a second language. Nor were there any books on Amharic handwriting. Consequently, it was recommended that new Amharic texts be written, including an ideal Amharic grammar, and an Amharic dictionary, as well as a textbook on remedial work based on common errors of students for whom Amharic is a second language. In the meantime, a committee was selected to study and select available texts; and the establishment of other committees was recommended to assure the proper distribution of books, the correcting of errors in existing books, and the improvement of Amharic disseminated through the mass media.

Finally, it was proposed that a language academy be established as soon as possible. Until the academy is established, loan words from other languages for which equivalent Amharic words can be found were to be collected and issued to the public. It is the opinion of the writer that while greater uniformity is desirable in Amharic grammars and dictionaries, "legislation" in an academy is a questionable means of achieving this end.

ENGLISH COMMISSION — Both language and literature were covered by this commission, but the required subject of English language understandably received most attention. The English Commission was unique at the seminar in that it concentrated almost exclusively on the ESLC examination. Nevertheless, the decisions regarding the examination had far-reaching implications for the curriculum.

Curriculum. The existing language curriculum was found to be unsuitable; thus it was recommended that an immediate revision be made. There was not sufficient time during the seminar for this undertaking, but it was felt a detailed outline of the forthcoming Oxford texts would be suitable as a syllabus. (Unfortunately, the text-as-syllabus curriculum neglects such important areas as speaking, listening, and reading, except when touched on incidentally as in science, mathematics or history.) Specifically, précis writing was to be dropped from the curriculum along with the writing of uncontrolled compositions. Controlled composition writing was to extend through grade twelve. Extensive reading of modern prose was to be required.

Certain methods were recommended as indispensable in teaching this curriculum: an oral approach to language, more extensive drill of basic structures, and oral practice prior to writing—in the early grades.

The problem of the literature curriculum was so serious that for all practical purposes literature instruction was to be suspended until it could be decided what literature to teach, whether to stress reading or literature, how to test this material, how to secure adequate texts, etc.

ESLC. Following intensive study of virtually every facet of language testing, the English Commission made these recommendations regarding the language test: both the précis question and the free-essay question should be abolished, the comprehension section considerably modified, the structure section greatly expanded in size and scope, an objective section added on the testing of composition skills, and possibly a piece of controlled writing. A detailed outline of the proposed test was presented to and accepted by the Commission. The most striking change would be the format: a shift from a predominantly essay test to an almost exclusively objective test.

Equally dramatic was the recommendation on the literature test: This exam was to be suspended as of 1968, until the problems outlined above, under literature curriculum, could be resolved.

Other. It was agreed that the "state of English teaching in Ethiopia" was "critical." Needs on the elementary level included: specialist training in English as a second language, a crash program of in-service training, a much improved system of textbook distribution, and improved salaries. Needs on the secondary level included: a subject inspectorate, intensive in-service training including full use of radio and television, improved coordination between teacher training institutions, and TESL training for incoming expatriate teachers.

A thoroughly sound but controversial conclusion by this commission was that: if free essay writing was unsound in English classes, it was equally inappropriate in other subjects and equally indefensible in other portions of the ESLC. Though unpopular in other commissions, this pronouncement nevertheless promised to hasten the transition to objective questions on the ESLC.

GEOGRAPHY COMMISSION — Noting that geography affords practical application of mathematics and science while providing skills needed in such subjects as history, economics, and sociology, members of this commission spotlighted the importance of geography in developing countries. Their first recommendation was that geography should be a basic rather than an alternative subject.

Curriculum. Before setting down recommended changes in the secondary curriculum, the commission turned its attention to needed changes on the elementary level, notably sharper definition of content, identification of basic concepts and skills, activity-centered instruction based on local geographical phenomena.

On the secondary level, it was recommended that the curriculum be revised to include the study of natural regions and man's activities therein as well as the role of man in changing the natural landscape. A new syllabus was recommended for grades nine and ten—the study of continents being replaced by that of natural regions. It was also felt that more time should be spent on integrated mapwork and direct observation. Unlike the English Commission suggestion of an inspectorate to insure proper implementation, members recommended the circulation to teachers of detailed guides.

ESLC. Following a heated discussion, it was recommended that ESLC examiners review test questions in the light of model answers; that more time

be allowed for the test, a wider choice of questions be permitted, a compulsory section of objective questions be included, and if possible a question on photograph interpretation.

Other. The language, geographical approach and content of existing textbooks were found to be unsuitable. Newly prepared or recommended texts should be reviewed by a geography textbook committee (consisting of teachers and specialists in geography, English, and education) and should be tried out in the classroom. The very unsatisfactory system of book distribution should be remedied so that supplies can be received on time; teachers should not be held responsible for books. Teaching aids, including maps, are essential.

Active student participation, a variety of teaching methods, use of up-to-date information and teaching of current developments were listed as vital. Special recruitment, orientation, and in-service training were suggested to help alleviate the shortage of well-trained geography teachers. The development of suitable radio and television programs was recommended, as was a geography teachers association.

HISTORY COMMISSION — Curriculum. Because the 1956 (Eth. Cal.) syllabus was unsatisfactory, a new syllabus was prepared. Major aims included conveying a sense of continuity in history, appreciation of earlier societies, understanding change and progress as well as movements towards nationalism and international organization, understanding of government function and citizen obligation, and a grasp of contemporary developments.

The new and detailed syllabus eliminated unnecessary duplication, introduced occasional new topics, and shifted difficult material to later grades. Thus the difficult matters of feudalism and enlightenment were moved from grade seven to a higher grade; beginning with Christianity and Islam, instruction was extended to World War I to make room for civics in grade eight. Ninth grade subjects ranged from prehistoric times to 600 A.D.; parallel development of ancient civilization, continuity between East and West, the Roman legacy, and early documented Ethiopian history were included. Grade ten covered the period from the seventh to the seventeenth centuries—in the Mediterranean World and Europe, Ethiopia, and Africa; exploration and discovery included such matters as the fate of the original inhabitants of America and the first European attempt to westernize Africa. Grade eleven covered Ethiopia, Africa, and the world—from the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. Grade twelve covers essentially the period from 1850 to the present in Ethiopia, Africa, and the world—most time being spent on Ethiopian history.

ESLC. Several recommendations were made relative to the history portion of the school leaving examination; the time for the test should be increased; current affairs questions should be made optional; students should revise, write neatly, and avoid ambiguity; questions should be 60 per cent essay and 40 per cent objective; the test should concentrate on material covered in grades eleven and twelve with 40 per cent on Ethiopia, 30 per cent on Africa, 20 per cent on the rest of the world, and 10 per cent on current affairs. It was also suggested that a special paper be prepared for those intending to enter the Faculty of Arts at the University. This suggestion seems contradictory to a very sensible History Commission recommendation that the ESLC "not be used to serve the twin purpose of testing the students' achievement and recommending his entrance to the University." It was also suggested that the ESLC be held in March

in order to provide students "a longer period of coaching." But at the same time it was considered alarming for the whole system of education in the Empire to be subordinated to the "idea of examination." Finally, it was felt the Ministry should ultimately take over from the University the responsibility of producing the ESLC.

Other. The Ministry of Education was urged to prepare textbooks on Ethiopian and African history; in the interim, information was to be compiled on these areas, then mimeographed and distributed to teacher. It was thought that teaching would be improved if teachers were provided with reference books, teaching aids, and up-to-date details on current events. The Commission went on record in favor of an increased number of history periods in the school schedule; current events radio broadcasts for students, avoidance of premature specialization (one of the ills frequently noted by the current Presidential Commission at the University), and in-service training—particularly in the form of seminars.

SCIENCE COMMISSION. — This commission covered the areas of general science plus the three pure sciences: biology, chemistry, and physics.

Curriculum. Considerable time was spent "reorganizing" all science syllabi. The revised curriculum for pure biology included elementary histology (including plant and animal cells from physiology, and function of plants); review of the animal kingdom; mammalian foetus, functions of the placenta, and parental care; parasitic mode of life, genetics and evolution; and applied biology, including personal observation.

The revised pure chemistry curriculum included all of the general science chemistry items plus additional material for those planning to take the pure chemistry examination. The following are the major areas covered: chemical and physical properties, chemical and physical change; simpler properties of acids, bases and salts along with methods for the preparation of salts; laws of conservation of mass, definite proportions, multiple proportions, Boyle's law, etc.; concept of atoms and molecules, symbols and formulae; electrolysis; acidity and alkalinity, ionization of water, etc.; reversible reactions, effect of temperature on rate of reaction etc.; air, hydrogen, water, nitrogen, carbon, allotropes, chlorine, sulphur, phosphorus; general properties of metals and non-metals; and simple test for radicals.

From the discussion on the physics examination, it became apparent that the following general areas were covered in the physics syllabus; properties of matter and mechanics; heat, light, and sound; magnetism and electricity. However, no physics syllabus was included in the final report.

The revised general science syllabus was likewise omitted from the Final Report (with the exception of the chemistry section).

ESLC. Examiners regretted the tendency to teach "only towards the ESLCE." They indicated that "understanding based on factual knowledge" should be sought—not just factual knowledge. Practical application of knowledge, ability to convey ideas, logic, planning of answers, and appreciation of cause and effect were regarded as related to success on the science test.

It was agreed that there should be no change in the general science examination. Paper I (an excellent predictor of overall performance) was to be a prerequisite for an overall pass.

The pure biology exam was to be allotted three hours in the future. The com-

pulsory first portion would be an objective test covering the entire syllabus and worth 20 to 30 per cent of the total paper. Candidates would select and write on five out of eight essay questions, no single question being compulsory.

The pure chemistry and pure physics examinations would follow the format for pure biology, except that students sitting for the latter test would answer six out of eight essay questions from three branches of physics.

Moreover, it was urged that practical examination questions be included at the earliest possible date in the science portion of ESLC tests.

Other. A number of handicaps to efficient instruction were catalogued: inadequate laboratory facilities, inadequate supplies (often due to administrative bungling), improper scheduling, lack of reference books and library facilities (again often due to poor administrative procedure). It was suggested that an inspectorate be set up to evaluate the science needs of schools and to devise means of meeting these needs. A regular budget for equipment and expendable materials was requested along with the employment of junior lab assistants; recommended, too, was a central materials and equipment store together with a qualified traveling science equipment repairman.

Commission members also requested that the following actions be taken: 1) enforcement of the ruling that pure science require five to six periods weekly, 2) inauguration of double periods for science work, 3) improvement of library facilities, 4) cessation of automatic promotions, 5) inauguration of a tenth grade achievement exam, 6) proper correlation between subject offerings and staff capability, 7) use of specialists primarily in their fields of specialization, 8) adequate training of candidates in examination technique, 9) restriction of "regular" ESLC candidates to only those examinations for which they have been properly trained, 10) distribution to the schools of University entrance requirements, 11) inauguration of in-service training to acquaint biology teachers with Ethiopian ecology, 12) cautious and simultaneous introduction of new syllabi, 13) revision of the Kirby biology books, 14) commissioning of textbooks, laboratory manuals, and field manuals—particularly in physics and chemistry, 15) an immediate survey to determine which science syllabus each school is following, 16) resumption of *Science News* publication, 17) possible nationwide competition in biology, 18) the organization of future seminars, 19) the improvement of science teacher salaries.

MATHEMATICS COMMISSION. — **Curriculum.** The 1956 (Eth. Cal.) curriculum was declared to be quite unsuitable for the secondary schools. It was decided that the old curriculum should be completely disregarded. Delegates recommended that Entebbe maths be introduced in all ninth grades in Maskaram 1960 (Eth. Cal.) providing texts are available and teachers prepared for the new mathematics. It was further ruled that elementary and secondary schools concentrate on the metric system. Elementary schools and TTI's were urged to introduce Entebbe mathematics as soon as possible; these schools should give adequate stress also to mental arithmetic.

ESLC. Like other commissions, the Maths Commission suggested likely reasons for student failure on the ESLC: poor standards in elementary school, carelessness in reading instructions, automatic promotion, allowing too many to sit for the examination, and weak teachers.

Delegates were satisfied with the "content and conduct" of the examination, but felt that "think" questions shouldn't be extended. Formal proofs of geometrical

theorems, they felt, led to mere memorization. It was recommended that objective tests be tried out experimentally during the school year to determine whether or not they should be used in future ESLC mathematics test. Formal proofs of theorems would not be included "as from 1960 E.C." and it was felt that plans and elevation drawing should be eliminated. Various constructions, however, were to be included.

The more highly specialized Maths B test would include more thought questions, certain constructions, volume computation, cosine and tangent rules, ambiguous case, and cofunctions and sine rule up to 180 degrees.

Other. Commission members decried the textbook situation: Not only was there a shortage of texts but available books were out of date. Teaching materials were also in short supply. Rote memorization was too prevalent.

It was recommended that 1) an Entebbe maths seminar be conducted during the summer, 2) Entebbe books and other texts and supplies be supplied the schools before the school year begins, 3) briefing sessions be held for new teachers, 4) mathematics specialists visit the schools and consult with teachers, 5) mathematics texts for grades seven and eight be in simple English, 6) area seminars be held for maths teachers, 7) automatic promotions be discontinued, 8) Maths Department heads be selected to help guide teachers, 9) efforts be made to attract and hold good teachers, 10) periodicals and books on mathematics be made available in school libraries, 11) audio-visual aids and television programs be provided, 12) ESLC examiners visit schools to acquaint themselves with problems and difficulties to be found there.

SUMMARY — Curriculum specialists would certainly applaud the 1967 Seminar not only for its efforts to up-date the curriculum but also for the approach used. Soliciting the contribution of **secondary school teachers**, as well as Ministry and University educators and subject-matter specialists was psychologically and educationally sound. In addition, the seminar provided an excellent opportunity for feedback on previous school-leaving exams, not to mention a valuable group of resource persons for prospective tests. Then, too, the seminar was a constructive means for funneling, collating, and evaluating individual complaints and recommendations.

Despite the soundness of the seminar and the remarkable efficiency with which it was conducted, some improvements might well have been made. For one thing, officials should have provided for a careful evaluation of the seminar itself in order that future conferences might be still more successful. Secondly, the Final Report, as suggested earlier, should have been issued promptly; a uniform format provided, and a synthesis made of parallel suggestions. Moreover, plans should have been formulated for follow-through on various projects ranging from local textbook production to projected revision of syllabi, recommended in-service seminars, and administrative decisions on textbook distribution, for instance. Failure to act promptly on matters economically feasible convinces some participants that the Ministry is indifferent to their suggestions. Fourth, a follow-up report should be issued to seminar participants, outlining the progress that has been made on commission recommendations. And, lastly, provision should be made for periodic seminars of a similar nature, since curricula, texts, examinations and the like need constant re-evaluation and modification.

In conclusion, what were some of the major accomplishments of the seminar? For one thing, there was established—often for the very first time—

genuine communication between secondary school teachers and University teachers; between university people and Ministry officials. While this was true in most, if not all, commissions, it was specifically referred to in the Maths report:

'The Seminar on Mathematics was an extremely fruitful one. Several misunderstandings were cleared up, leading the way to closer cooperation and understanding between the schools and the University'.

This same spirit of cooperation has been in evidence ever since the seminar. Coordination and cooperation between various agencies and institutions has also been stimulated. Still another accomplishment is the curricular changes that have occurred as a result of seminar recommendations. Significantly, the more concrete the recommendation the more likely its implementation. Suggestions for curriculum study or re-evaluation tend to be postponed.

Changes in the examination are also being made, along the lines laid down by the seminar; for instance, the sweeping changes recommended by the English Commission are being totally implemented (since early notice was given to the schools). Changes in other subjects will continue in subsequent years. Moreover, progress is being made in local textbook production, though admittedly some of these efforts antedated the seminar.

Most encouraging is the attitude of the Ministry of Education (as well as that of the Faculty of Education) towards seminar recommendations. Not only have certain curricular and test changes been put into effect but even such minor suggestions as the re-issuing of **Teaching News**. Nor have the participants simply waited for changes to occur. Individuals have written articles and lobbied for changes. The English teachers have organized an informal association featuring monthly meetings of practical demonstrations and discussions, plus an excellent journal now in its fifth issue; this entire effort has stemmed directly from the seminar.

It is to be hoped that the 1967 Curriculum Development and ESLC Seminar will be simply the first in a continuing series of efforts to pool available resources in order to perfect the educational process in Ethiopia.