

for
Jeanes
Report

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF AFRICAN EDUCATION

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At such a conference as this, attended by educators from various parts of Africa representing all shades of educational opinion, it seems advisable at the outset to suggest a few fundamental principles on which any system of African education must be founded.

I. Education as Change.

Reduced to its lowest terms, education is the process by which a human being is changed from what he is to something that those in authority wish him to be. It follows that all the forces that set upon an individual are part of his education—a fact that has great significance to the Jeanes educator, who by no means regards the school as the sole educating agency. The African home, the village, the elders, the political officer, the trader, the church, the hospital, the mine are all factors with which the school as the chief educating agency must take ~~into~~ account.

II. Characteristics of Indigenous African Education.

It is, of course, ~~absurd~~ ^{incorrect or thinks} to say that the African received no education before the white man came to Africa. Indeed, in some respects indigenous African education ^{was and} is more effective than the education given in the mission or government school, inasmuch as the instruction springs directly from the every day needs of tribal life, and the method is one of doing and not ^{of} listening.

Two characteristics of ^{indigenous} African education deserve special attention.

(a) African education is non-progressive. What was desired was that the young men and women should be as like their fathers and mothers as possible. Education was regarded as a transmissive process by which the culture of the tribe was handed on to the next generation.

(b) The very greatest emphasis is placed upon what we call moral or character education. The well known etiquette of the Africans, their behavior patterns, as the ethnologists call them, were quite as important elements in their education as the practical arts of ^{earning a} ~~daily~~ living. If we Western educators really believe that the development of people of good character is the chief aim of education, we have strong indigenous foundations on which to build.

At any rate, we are, are we not, prepared to accept the fact that indigenous education is a real thing and that the less disruptive and disturbing we can make our foreign systems, the better?

III. Is There an "African" Education?

Modern research seems to point to the fundamental oneness of mankind. Differences of pigmentation, size, skull measurements and the like seem to have little or no correlation with mental ability and general educatibility. More and more we are compelled to incline to the belief that there is no such special thing as Chinese education or Negro education or African education, any more than there are such special ^{& different} things as English education or Scotch education or French education. All there is, is education.

This does not mean that Chinese education need have the same content as French education, or African education be the same as English education, but it does mean that education need not be different merely because the pupil is black and has been born on the African continent.

Any defensible differences between English education and African education must be based on differences other than those of race. Because Africans have a different history and a different cultural background, because they are for the most part rural dwellers, because their present day needs are different from those of present day Europeans, differences in curricula are today not only desirable but imperative. But these differences need not be permanent because of racial differences, and experience shows that the fewer these differences ^{in a rapidly contracting world} the better.

IV. The Good African and not the Imitative European as Objective.

As far as British policy at least is concerned, the objective of education in Africa is to produce the good African--the Native who is proud to be an African, appreciative of the finer elements in his culture, willing and anxious to accept European culture in so far as it is complementary and supplementary to his own, quite unwilling to be an imitative or unoriginal white man. Good Native education would have its roots in African culture with leaves and branches of the best that the West has to offer.

V. Community Education.

The African is much more conscious of his community than is the individualistic European. It is almost a truism ^{to say} that in African Society the group is everything, the individual little or nothing. Indeed, even in European systems of education, and especially in democracies, the importance of community education is being recognised, as is evidenced by the spread of adult education and the growth of debating societies and educational forums and clubs.

Community education is therefore desirable and easy in African Societies--a fact worthy of notice by Jeanes educators whose philosophy of education postulates ^{and not only those working among} the close relationship of the school to the community. ^{indigenous people,} Educators all the world over are deploring the difficulties caused in family and community life where the children are European-schooled and the adults only tribally educated.

VI. The Task of the African School.

There seems no doubt that the pattern of future African education is and will be largely European. Western civilization everywhere is, in the words of Leonard Woolf, "belligerent, crusading, conquering, exploiting, proselitising", and the Bantu, unlike some indigenous people of Asia, have little ^{of} significant in the way of political power, religion, economics and culture with which to resist.

The school in Africa thus becomes the totality of the new civilization which is being thrust upon the Africans. In the Western world the school is but

one of the agents of education. In Africa it has been said that the school is "meat, drink, lodging, father, mother and family" to the indigenous people. ~~its~~ ^{its} responsibility is therefore far greater than that of the European school. To do its work effectively it needs the help of the African ^Communities, the missionaries and the governments.

VII. Control and Administration of African Education.

Inasmuch as the whole of the African continent, with the exception of Abyssinia and Liberia, is under the dominion of European powers, the control of education cannot rest, as it ordinarily does, in the hands of the people who are to be educated. This throws a tremendous responsibility on the governments of these powers—a responsibility which it is safe to say has been nowhere adequately shouldered, as the relative amounts spent on European and Native education in Africa clearly show. In some parts of Africa an attempt has been made to give the indigenous people some share in policy making by representation on the Advisory Boards, which are supposed to help the governments to form educational policies. It is becoming accepted that the more use that can be made of Africans in ^{the} control ^(and administration) of ^{the} education the better. It seems particularly important to see to it that the views of both the tribal and the detribalised African be regarded in educational policy making.

Except in West Africa, the appointment of Africans to administrative positions in education has been slow. Practically all elementary schools and some high schools are under African principals, ^{but their} administration of their own schools by Africans usually ends. In West Africa there are African inspectors of schools and in most parts of British Africa we now have Africans as school supervisors. The highly desirable movement to give Africans a greater share in the administration of their own schools is being fostered by the training of Jeanes Visiting Teachers. Yet there seems a danger of moving too slowly rather than too rapidly in this direction.

VIII. Mission Schools and Government Schools.

Inasmuch as the question of the employment and control of Jeanes Teachers

is bound to crop up at this Conference, it seems advisable to give a few minutes to the question as to whether education should be under the auspices of Government or Missions or both.

Whatever theoretical views one may hold on this question, the fact remains that the control of education will ultimately rest with the authority that has the political and financial power, viz. the governments. Indeed, few would dispute the right and indeed the responsibility of the authority charged with the rule and development of backward people to determine what kind of education the people should receive.

At the same time, we must remember that the missionaries were first in the field and up to the present have borne the heat and burden of the day in Native education. Their vested interests in education deserve the full consideration of the governments. Moreover, since the missionaries have, on the whole, done such an excellent piece of work and since they are ^{generally} better able than governments to provide education in Christian character, so necessary now that tribal sanctions are breaking down, it would be the part of wisdom as well as of gratitude for governments to support missionary education.

With their flair for the middle way, the British both in the mother country and in the colonies have developed a dual system of education. There are the government schools, conducted directly through public agencies, and the state-aided schools, conducted by the churches. This system is working admirably and should be continued as long as possible. In the end, no doubt, history will repeat itself and the task of education will ultimately devolve upon the governments. It is to be hoped that they can accomplish it with the religious emphasis, the devotion and the efficiency that has characterised mission educational work in Africa.

The question of the control of the Jeanes Visiting Teachers is sure to be raised at this Conference. Without prejudging the issue, it may be pointed out that the necessity for the Jeanes teacher to cooperate fully with government officials

and the existence of denominationalism in schools as well as in churches suggest that the Jeanes Visiting Teachers should ordinarily be government officials.

IX. The Functions of the Jeanes Visiting Teacher.

One of the purposes of this Conference is to determine, if it can, what are the proper functions of the Jeanes Visiting Teachers. There is so much to be done in the improvement of health, community life, agriculture and other aspects of Native life as well as of ^{education} ~~the schools~~ that we find the name "Jeanes Teachers" applied to health officials, nurses, community workers, agricultural demonstrators as well as to school supervisors.

While there is everything to be gained by having trained Africans ready to take up the most pressing tasks confronting their societies, it seems better to restrict the term Jeanes Visiting Teachers to the men and women directly engaged in dealing with the schools. Other names such as health officials, district nurses, community workers, agricultural demonstrators are available for other social workers and have connotations more in keeping with the work they do. Moreover, the problems of control and administration would be easier if the visiting teachers, while always willing to cooperate with other departments, were directly under the Department of Education.

Maybe the Conference would wish to consider the advisability of retaining the non-connotative term "Jeanes" for these visiting teachers. After all, the name only sprang up in the United States because the salaries of the visiting teachers were paid by the Jeanes Fund. Would it not be enough to call them "African School Supervisors" or "African Visiting Teachers" and so save ourselves the necessity of explaining an unusual and meaningless title?

The essence of "Jeanesism" is the recognition of the close link between school and community. As Dr. Jackson Davis points out in his admirable paper on The Jeanes Visiting Teachers in the United States, these teachers have never failed

to stress the relationship of school and community. There are areas in the United States that still need the same approach that Miss Virginia Randolph made in 1908. In other areas, general community development has been undertaken by other civic agencies so that the Jeanes Teacher limits her activities almost entirely to the schools. But she is still expected to see to it that the school work bears a visible relationship to the needs of the community. As soon as she becomes merely the supervisor of academic school subjects she ^{seems to me to} forfeit her right to the term, "Jeanes".

Of course, every school teacher and every school supervisor should see to it that school instruction bears a close relationship to community needs. Indeed, one may reasonably look for the day when all teachers will be Jeanes Teachers. Then perhaps there will be no necessity for the special Jeanes Training Schools we have set up in Africa.

X. The Essentials of Education

We owe it to Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones and his colleagues of the Phelps-Stokes Educational Commissions to Africa that the Jeanes Teacher was brought to Africa. It was Dr. Jones and the British Government's Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies that gave our African schools the task of raising whole communities by placing emphasis on the "essentials of education", namely the improvement of health, family life, use of the environment both human and material, recreation and religion.

There are two thoughts that we may care to consider in this connection. These
The first is that ^{these} things are the essentials of all education everywhere and should not be limited to so-called "backward" peoples. Indeed as we from the United States and the Union of South Africa know so well, it will not be easy to induce the colored people to accept these ideals until the dominant white people accept them also.

The second thought is that, while we are entirely right in thinking first of our African communities and of the needs of the masses of the African people,

we must never forget the necessity of making provision for the individual and for the minority of the people who desire and need further education and development than is provided by the community schools ^{which} we are primarily concerned with at this Conference.

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