

CHAPTER 2

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Introduction

In many countries the desirability of expansion of the formal education system has been widely accepted and during the last two decades universal education has been a popular political cry. Such expansion has, however, rarely stemmed from or been accompanied by a reappraisal of the objectives of the system and its underlying philosophy. The implications of this omission on the part of many governments has led to widespread problems in terms of the preparation of young people to lead a satisfying life after leaving school. In some instances, for example, university graduates have much greater difficulty in finding employment than, say, a secondary school drop-out.

The aims of the education system in Cyprus are, in the words of the Minister of Education,

"to crystallize in the consciousness of our young people the need for self-knowledge and humanitarianism and at the same time to help them arouse their creative powers latent within themselves. Parallel with this, they will be helped to acquire an alert, enlightened power of thought and to mould an honourable and ethical character, as well as free convictions enabling them to develop into strong personalities, worthy of their national and religious traditions, and well-integrated creative citizens, capable of drawing satisfaction and joy from the continuous struggle that adds beauty to life."

The achievement of these aims is sought through not only the formal systems of education and training but also an increasing number of out of school activities, and the importance

placed on education by the Government is indicated by the large increase in public expenditure in this field between 1965/66 and 1969/70. The percentage of the National Budget which was allocated to education in 1969/70 was 13.4%, whereas in 1965/66 it was 12.9%. Of the £5.4 million spent on education in 1969/70, it is interesting to note that expenditure on public primary education amounted to £3.2 million, on public secondary to £2.8 million, on private secondary to £0.8 million and on post-secondary to £2.3 million. (Of the last figure, £1.7 million was estimated to be the amount spent on Cypriot students studying overseas.)

Formal education

Responsibility for formal education in Cyprus lies largely with the Ministry of Education. A number of training activities are also organised by other government bodies.

(a) Primary education

Cyprus provides free primary education for all its citizens from the age of $5\frac{1}{2}$ to 6 years extending to the age of $11\frac{1}{2}$ to 12 years. Every community, however small or remote, has a primary school, a situation which leads, unfortunately, to the existence of small units in the rural areas which are quite uneconomic if high quality education is to be provided. Though the increasing occurrence of urban drift is creating problems in some directions, this tendency is at least facilitating the creation of larger, more viable school units.

The curriculum includes the standard basic subjects and in addition covers cultural and recreational areas such as music, art and physical education.

In an effort to provide further education for those young people who for a variety of reasons might be unable to enter secondary education, the Government has established nine eight-grade primary schools in the rural areas. These provide an extended course for pupils up to the age of 14 years, the content of the course being of a vocational nature and including such subjects as wood-work, metal work, domestic science and agriculture.

(b) Secondary education

Secondary education in Cyprus is at the present time voluntary.

Plans have been made, however, for extending free (and gradually compulsory) education to the age of 15 years. In September 1972 the first year of the secondary cycle will be free and it is intended over the course of the next few years to make the second and third years freely available.

The selection process which takes place at the end of the primary stage enables approximately 85% of primary leavers to proceed into the secondary system. Apart from the fact that fees are low, the number of scholarships and grants available to needy pupils has increased. Of those who fail to gain a place at a public secondary school, some are absorbed into private secondary schools and others into the apprenticeship scheme. A large number, however, remain without opportunities for furthering their education.

The first three year cycle of the secondary course (the "gymnasium") concentrates on general studies and aims to give pupils a basic foundation for later studies. For those who are academically unable to proceed to the specialisation stage the first cycle is believed to provide an adequate amount of knowledge and skill for a useful and satisfying life.

The second cycle (the "lykeion") caters for pupils of from 15 to 18 years of age and provides specialised courses in certain areas. There exist departments of science and mathematics, classical studies, commercial studies and foreign languages, in addition to technical, vocational and agricultural schools, and, though the emphases are placed on these subjects, general studies are continued to effect the balanced personal development required for every-day living.

(c) Tertiary education

Cyprus has no university at present. Students wishing to study at university level are therefore obliged to do so overseas. The majority study in Greece, since the secondary leaving certificate in Cyprus is accepted as an equivalent to the Greek. University entrance is thus facilitated. Other students continue their studies in other countries in the immediate area, in Britain and in other Commonwealth countries.

Third level education and training is provided in Cyprus in several areas including primary teacher training, which is conducted by the Pedagogical Academy, and forestry courses offered at the Cyprus Forestry College.

Third-level technical training is available at the Higher Technical Institute in a number of engineering fields. Opportunities for other technical training are provided by the apprenticeship scheme, organised jointly by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education, the Technical Evening Classes, run by the Ministry of Education, and the Dhekeli Retraining Scheme, organised by the Ministry of Labour. The latter aims to retrain secondary school graduates for employment in fields other than white-collar work, for which there is a large demand.

Facilities for nursing education are provided at the School of Nursing which operates within the Nicosia General Hospital and also at the School of Mental Nursing. Courses for training as health inspectors are organised by the Ministry of Health.

The Hotel and Catering Institute and the Central Hotel Training School provide training in many aspects of the hotel trade, and assistance with private and public enterprise is available through the courses and other services organised by the Productivity Centre which is supervised by the Ministry of Labour.

Out of school education

Courses are available in a number of activities, including foreign languages, service as tourist guides, agriculture and horticulture. Evening centres in the rural areas provide opportunities not only for educational courses but also for recreation and social activities. Within the Community and Youth Work Programme a number of youth centres have been established which provide similar facilities but are, of course, intended to cater essentially for young people.

Such, then, are the facilities provided under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour for education and training in Cyprus.

An overview

The seminar considered the objectives of the education system and the extent to which they were being achieved through the various institutions. Although the general view was that within the formal system the aims were being adequately met in quantitative terms, there was some disagreement about qualitative achievements.

Within the primary sector, the seminar recognised the problem of curriculum content. Although for a number of children education ceased at the primary stage, the curriculum is related wholly to preparation for further education at secondary level, rather than to being an education in itself. Drop-outs from the education system at this stage were, the seminar agreed, inadequately catered for and the need for an increased number of eight-grade primary schools was recognised. The seminar welcomed the proposals for free secondary education and agreed that provided such a decision could be rapidly implemented the problem of providing for primary drop-outs would be reduced.

The two stages of the secondary system were believed by many to be insufficiently inter-related. Though the benefits of exposure to a general course in the first cycle could not be doubted, the seminar felt that for those for whom the course was terminal many difficulties were raised.

The need for sound vocational guidance at this stage was marked, since pupils then reached the point at which decisions had to be made about the type of second cycle they wished to pursue. The seminar recommended that the vocational guidance services of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour should be expanded and improved in order that all school pupils might benefit. The seminar stressed the importance of making counselling services available at an appropriate stage before decisions were made. Frequently changes from one type of course to another were difficult, if not impossible.

In considering the kind of society which Cypriots declared they wished to see and in examining the contribution which education and training could make to the evolution of such a society, it became clear to the seminar that there would be need for a major re-appraisal of the content of education at the various levels and for much closer articulation among various parts of the system than there appeared to be at present.

It was agreed that societies were dynamic and that education systems should be likewise. Today's 13 year olds would be in the prime of their lives at the dawn of the 21st century and in so far as it was possible to anticipate the nature of the society in which they would then live, there was a responsibility for preparing them adequately. All of this could not be achieved within the formal systems and the need for serious consideration to be given to non-formal systems of education was emphasised. The seminar agreed that the imbalance between the present formal and non-

formal elements had to be redressed, and recognised that through a well-structured approach to out-of-school education and training the investment could yield richer dividends in a shorter time.

It was agreed that re-appraisals of content or structure would not necessarily achieve the desired results unless reconsideration was also given to the quality, status and role of teachers. Their preparation for the new demands that were likely to be made in the light of the evolving society would have to be taken care of in their training programmes. This matter was viewed as being of the highest priority.

While the re-orientation of the curriculum at primary and secondary level was taking place, it was also important to re-examine the scope and purpose of higher education. The seminar felt that it was necessary for such institutions to see themselves as functioning much more effectively as instruments of development, and agreed that if they were in fact to operate in this way the time was right for this to be taken into account as new institutions were being conceived.

The seminar agreed that it was necessary for continuous evaluation to take place. This was necessary not only at various levels but also of the system as a whole. Although it would be difficult to assess objectively whether all of the stated aims were being achieved, the seminar felt that this should be no excuse for not attempting to assess the degree to which education was contributing to the production of well-integrated, creative citizens. It was important that citizens should not only grow in knowledge and in humanitarianism but that they should feel secure and in tune with the society which they themselves help to fashion.