Discussion Group III (German Speaking)

Chairman: W. Kienitz (E. Berlin)
Rapporteur: W. Rocksch (Potsdam)

The activity of the German speaking group was characterised by lively and searching discussions.

The following questions arose in the discussion of Professor Eckstein’s report:

1) Do the research results presented take account of the particular social background of the four cities which were the subject of the comparison?

2) Must the results of comparative research be so practical that they can be applied directly by education authorities for the benefit of schools?

3) Are the facts and problems which were noted in New York, London, Paris and Amsterdam typical of other cities? (The discussion showed that they did not apply, for instance, to cities, like Moscow, of Socialist countries because of the different social and cultural background.)

... In the discussion of the report given by Professor Robinsohn and his colleagues, as well as of Dr. Rocksch’s contribution on the aims of teacher training in the G.D.R., the causes of the crises in teacher training in various West European countries were first examined and means of overcoming them discussed. The following views were expressed:

1) The crisis cannot be overcome within teacher training alone, but depends on comprehensive social and cultural changes.

2) Changes in teacher training are of significance in so far as they really help to develop schools as effective instruments of progress in society.

3) In dealing with the aims of teacher training one must bear in mind the differences between a retrospective and a forward looking attitude. In this matter different circumstances exist in the Western and the Socialist countries. Present reforms of teacher training in the West are largely aimed at overcoming existing shortcomings in education. On the other hand, the main purpose of teacher training in the Socialist countries is to influence the future development of society.

Here another point of discussion arose, and was looked at in the light of the different educational developments in the G.D.R. and the F.R.G.: what possibilities exist in a bourgeois society compared with a socialist one for teacher training to remain faithful to its forward looking task of contributing to the progress of society?

In the discussion of this question the two sides were presented: on the one hand, the picture of a pluralistic society which by its nature excluded directive authority, yet could not circumvent the need for planning; on the other hand, the picture of a socialist society where, based on a unified ideology, a clear vision of the future existed which with careful planning was being made a reality even in the realm of teacher training.

From this comparison a discussion arose about the advantages and irritations of planning, about the relationship between prescribed rules and free play for individual...
creative initiative and between education by consent and concerted action as variants in teacher training curricula. In connection with these points, it was made clear, by reference to a lecture given at the C.E.S.E. Conference in Prague, that teachers in the G.D.R. not only carry out educational policies issued by the central school authority but also play an active part in formulating them.

... The discussion on the contributions of Dr. Holmes and Mr. Cowen began with a consideration of the concept of a dual binary system of teacher training. Dr. Holmes wanted to bring to light with this concept the existence in England and other West European Countries of two kinds of institution for teacher training. On the one hand teacher training in these countries takes place in universities which give greater freedom to formulate educational policy, and on the other hand in special colleges of education which do not enjoy University status and possess fewer possibilities for a qualifying training.

In the course of the discussion it became clear that the differentiation between teacher training at university and at special teacher training institutions (for example, pedagogical high schools) must be seen and evaluated under several headings:

1) as a reflection of a binary educational system which makes a division in status between teachers at folk high schools and grammar schools;

2) as part of the problem of the relationship between academic and pedagogical training;

3) as a purely didactic distinction of training methods for teachers of the lower, middle and upper parts of the comprehensive school.

In the Netherlands, for example, it was made clear in an informative report of its school system that the most important thing was to overcome the differences in status between teachers in folk schools and those in other schools and to achieve in this way a unity of teacher training.

In the G.D.R. and the U.S.S.R., however, it is of little importance whether the future teacher is trained at a university or pedagogical high school as a similar training is given in both institutions. Moreover, the pedagogical high schools de facto as well as de jure have university status. A much more important problem in socialist countries at the moment is that even academic training is oriented towards the professional vocation of teaching.

In all the discussions, the conditions of work of teachers and their role in society were noted. In the course of this and taking, among others, Denmark and West Germany as examples, the opinion that the majority of teachers are conservative was refuted. This opinion was felt to be particularly untrue of young teachers.

... The participants of the discussions considered the possibility of exchanging ideas and further information about the seminars in small groups. This would have enlivened the conference. It was thought that, in the preparation of future conferences, an effort should be made to ensure that participants received informative material from all countries which would give them a brief résumé of new developments, important publications, etc. The wish was also expressed that, both in the seminars and the preceding research, more notice should be taken of developments in socialist countries, so that more comprehensive information is given and a further comparative analysis is possible.
La conférence du professeur Eckstein amena une discussion sur les limites dans lesquelles les milieux sociaux des villes mentionnées dans l’enquête avaient été pris en considération, dans quelle mesure la possibilité d’application immédiate était une caractéristique essentielle de la recherche comparée et dans quelle mesure les éléments concernant les villes ayant fait l’objet de l’enquête étaient applicables à d’autres villes.

Pour ce qui est des conférences présentées par les participants allemands on a eu l’impression que la crise actuelle dans la formation des enseignants dans les différents pays ne pouvait être résolue sans des changements sociaux et culturels; et que les changements dans la fonction des enseignants pouvaient seulement aider en agissant sur l’efficacité de l’école comme instrument de changement social; que tandis que les réformes de la formation des enseignants à l’Ouest ont en grande partie pour but d’éliminer les imperfections existantes, celles des pays socialistes visent à un développement dans l’avenir; et que les sociétés pluralistes ne pouvaient échapper au besoin de planification mais qu’une planification objective ne pouvait pas être organisée avec autant de précision que dans les pays socialistes.

Lors de la discussion de la conférence du Docteur Holmes la différence entre la formation des enseignants à l’université et dans les instituts spécialisés fut considérée comme reflétant le système binaire d’écoles, la dichotomie entre l’enseignement d’une discipline et l’enseignement pédagogique et l’existence de méthodes de formation distinctes pour les enseignants selon l’âge de leurs élèves.

À la fin de la discussion les participants ont demandé à recevoir une documentation préliminaire plus complète pour les groupes de discussion, en particulier en ce qui concerne les pays socialistes.