Programme for Adult Basic Education

The office of adult basic education has continued to support the adult literacy programme in the Republique of Sao Tomé and Principe, both in the form of material aid (texts, exercise books, pens and pencils, etc.) and in financially supporting my own work there, which was begun under the auspices of Paulo Freire. I visited Sao Tomé and Principe in April 1980, October 1981 and January 1982. In the course of my visits I collected material for the Fifth Notebook, used in the government-sponsored literacy programme. Recently I have completed two additional books to be used by agricultural workers in collaboration with a programme of the ministry of agriculture. One of these, which is to appear in a bi-lingual version (Portuguese and Creole) is a collection of oral literature and personal histories of people who have lived under the colonial regime. Its publication will provide a unique written record of what has been until now an oral transmission of the history of the people.

I would like to outline the most important points of my work programme for the next year. I would first like to stress that my pedagogical work continues to be influenced by the pedagogical, political and educative principles of Paulo Freire and that my first task will be to continue the work which he started during his service here in Geneva.

First, in order to make an assessment of the work that has already been done and to set up a work plan on education, it would seem to me useful to establish a documentation of the most important experiences made in the field of literacy and post-literacy (books, brochures, periodicals, teaching aids, monographs, information and newsletters, etc.) by WCC member churches, independent organisations offering solutions such as "alternative education", and the most important pedagogical experiences of such international organisations as the ILO, UNESCO, OECD, etc.

We might consider the publication of a periodical (perhaps annually) for the use of the churches which would help to make known their most interesting pedagogical experiences, thus enriching the exchange of points of view on various pedagogical theories and praxis. We would publicise the most well-conceived and innovative education programmes and lend encouragement to them.

In this context it is important to underline the need for literacy and post-literacy programmes which are conducted in the vernacular languages of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The recognition of the right of a people to its culture and to a decent existence should be one of the priorities of the church.

The desk for adult basic education will follow up the work already started in the Republique of Sao Tomé and Principe.

The desk will lend its assistance and expertise to those member churches who wish to set up adult literacy programmes or to those already engaged in such undertakings, in a spirit of sharing which should be mutually beneficial to all of the parties engaged in the work of literacy.

Finally, it seems to me important to continue to encourage the work of the member churches in the field of literacy, so that they may better respond to the needs of the millions of illiterates (children and adults) throughout the world, thus opening up for them access to the cultural, economic, political and religious life of their countries. It will collaborate with the desk for renewal and congregational life in establishing contacts with the Reformed Church of Equatorial Guinea in order to assist with the development of a literacy programme there. It will also work with the office of family education in assessing the needs of churches in Zaire, and with the desk for women in church and society to look at the needs of this group as they relate to literacy programmes. This work cannot be accomplished without the aid of a pedagogy for liberation which allows the individual to develop his full personal potential and the potential of the society. In this way literacy programmes can aid in the creation of a new society.

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