

024

368

E AFRICA

22079

DATE

May 1925

REC
RE 15 MAY 25

Advisory Committee on Native Education

15th

Meeting of the Committee
at the C. O. on May 21, 1925.

MINUTES

Resolution agreed.

at the C. O. on May 21, 1925.

Advisory

no.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NATIVE EDUCATION IN

TROPICAL AFRICA.

Draft Minutes of the 14th Meeting held at the
Colonial Office, 21st May, 1925.

Present:

- Mr. Strachey (Chairman).
- Bishop Bidwell.
- Miss Burstell.
- Major Church.
- Sir James Currie.
- Sir Frederick Lugard.
- Mr. Oldham.
- Sir Michael Sadler.
- Mr. Vischer. (Secretary).

- Mr. Hottelley. (Colonial Office.)
- Mr. Seel. " " "

Captain and Mrs. Brereton. (Education Dept. Kenya.)

Rev. E.W. Smith. (British and Foreign Bible Society, formerly Rhodesia.)

Professor Alice Werner. (London School of Oriental Studies.)

Major the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore was present for a short time towards the close of the Meeting.

1. It was explained that the Chairman, Major Ormsby-Gore, was prevented from taking the Chair as he had to attend a Meeting of the International Conference on Sleeping Sickness.

2. Sir Frederick Lugard took the Chair. He introduced Miss Burstell as a member of the Committee and thanked Professor Werner, Captain and Mrs. Brereton and the Rev. Smith for coming to the Meeting.

3. The Secretary made the following announcements:-
(a) The Chairman of the Committee had received a letter from America stating that the Carnegie Trust had appropriated a sum of money for Native education in Kenya. The amount was about £7500 payable in five yearly instalments of £1500. In reply to a question it was stated that there was reason to believe that this money was intended for the Government College for training Jeanes Teachers and that this had been indicated in a despatch sent by the Secretary of State to the officer administering the Government in Kenya.

(b) The Secretary had been asked to attend a Meeting at the Board of Education at which representatives of the Colonial Office and India Office were also present. He was asked to state the views of the Advisory Committee regarding the Teachers' (Superannuation) Bill, and he had explained to the Board of Education that the Committee considered it essential that "Teachers" required for short term service in Government schools or schools approved by the Government, should come under the Act and not lose their pensions right; and further that the Committee did not see their way to supporting any particular amendment they believed that the necessary provision could be made under Clause 20, 1, (c) of the Bill between the Colonial Governments and the Board of Education and the Treasury.

4. The Chairman informed the Committee that the next Meeting had been fixed for June 4th, and that Mr. Fraser would be present. The Meeting would be devoted entirely to discussing the various proposals regarding Achimota College.

5. The Committee then proceeded to consider the Memorandum on the Place of the Vernacular in Native Education, and the Chairman called upon Professor Werner to state her views. At this point Mr. Strachey joined the Meeting and took the Chair.

6. Professor Werner stated that she had read the Memorandum carefully and that she agreed with it entirely. The only note she felt able to make was with regard to the third point raised in paragraph 6, page 7, which reads as follows:- "When a vernacular is confined to a small community, or is too poor in vocabulary to form an adequate medium of instruction, should the child be taught an alternative African Language as well as his Vernacular? If so, at what stage should English as the child's third language, be introduced?" She thought Rabei and Ribe might be cases in point. Here the people themselves seem to be disusing their local dialects in favour of Swahili (a process probably assisted by the influx of - first fugitive and afterwards freed - slaves from a large number of different tribes.) In 1911-13, she had found that the M-Rabai school-books prepared by Krapf and Rebmann were no longer used, the Kisulutini school being entirely taught in Swahili. To a less degree this seemed to be the case with Pokomo. The Neukirchen Missionaries, having provided translations of the New Testament and psalms, a hymn-book, a first reading-book and one or two other quite elementary works in Pokomo, thought it unnecessary to proceed further in the language, and the work of the upper classes was carried on in Swahili. There was a great demand among the native teachers (a very intelligent and able set of men) for Swahili books beyond the immediate needs of the school; and probably that language would be used increasingly as a medium of instruction. She doubted whether it would entirely displace Pokomo - perhaps they would amalgamate in time. In the case of Giryama and Kikuyu, Swahili might be desirable as a second vernacular for the upper classes - but she strongly deprecated any attempt

to make it take their place. In Uganda, a stand had been made, and quite rightly, against the introduction of Swahili as an official language, and it seemed quite unnecessary to have it taught in the schools. The same applied to Nyasaland.

In the course of the ensuing discussion the Hon. Member stated that Swahili was increasing in the Likuyu districts in Kenya and also in Northern Rhodesia, where it was undoubtedly becoming the lingua franca. He considered that by concentrating on studying these problems and taking thought progress in the right direction would be greatly assisted. In Nyasaland for instance, where four or five languages were spoken, a union language had been introduced which would become a school language. The same thing was happening in certain places of the West Coast. It was now making considerable progress in Nigeria. There were at least fourteen dialects in Swahili. He said that already Swahili was spoken and understood over a great part of West Africa and it would be difficult to estimate the exact number of natives who used this idiom.

8. In reply to a question from Sir Michael Sadler as to the necessity for improving the teaching in the mother tongue in East Africa, Professor Werner said she thought Swahili might be taught better. In Tanzania there was a great dearth of books in Swahili, a point which needed much attention. Mr. Rivers-Smith and Dr. Foster were doing their best to supply those. As far as she knew nothing had been done in Kenya except a text book of hygiene published by Mr. Orr.

9. Referring to Europeans learning Native languages Sir Michael Sadler asked if it was better for anybody going out to learn something of the language beforehand. Sir James Currie was of opinion that a certain amount of preliminary work here was an absolute necessity, and Professor Werner explained that formerly people began to study the language after arrival in Africa. She was sure, however, that some language study here was necessary. African languages could be studied at the School of Oriental Studies in London. There was also a Professor at Cambridge who could give instruction in Bantu languages. The different languages might also be learnt privately from returned missionaries.

Rev. Smith considered it particularly important that people should receive a grounding in phonetics before going out.

10. In reply to a further question, Professor Werner stated that she did not think the Memorandum exaggerated the importance of children receiving their first lessons in the mother tongue.

Discussing the great number and variety of various languages and dialects often found in very limited areas, and the advisability or necessity of teaching in a language or dialect slightly different from that spoken by the children in their homes, Sir Michael Sadler wanted to know which was the more important - the logic, the structure of a language, or its vocabulary. Mr. Vischer explained that as far as he could see, African languages were not limited to a number of words contained in a

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CONTINUED ON NEXT FILM

CO 533/338

TOTAL EXPOSURES → 652