

University Report

BBC AFRICAN SERVICE, LONDON

45 4/57/112

UNIVERSITY REPORT

No. 130

Broadcast 10th, 12th & 14th January 1971

COSMO PIETERSE: Hello and welcome to my first edition of 'University Report' - I'm very happy indeed to be here and will be trying hard to be a worthy successor to John Bankole Jones - whose life has now become so busy with his job at the Sierra Leone High Commission here in London that he has regretfully had to give up the programme.

And for my first University Report from Kampala news of the Inter University Games held there just before Christmas. But first to that ever-present problem of which language is it better for our children to be educated in - their own mother tongue or the national language - be it English, French or Swahili!

For a number of historical reasons the 'language question' is a problem that looms large with evermore queries, doubts, explorations and more questions. Often the state language is, from a very early school age, the language of formal instruction. And, immediately educational worries, confusions, and searching of the conscience arise: do domestic and institutional education ever meet and integrate in a situation where the child's informal home education is through one tongue and formal instruction in another language medium?

Well many universities in Africa are now beginning to study the problem from a number of different angles. In Nigeria, at the University of Ife, just about a year ago the Department of Education started a project to test the effectiveness of using their children's mother tongue as the medium of instruction throughout the primary school.

COSMO PIETERSE: In Ife Akin Euba talked to one of the researchers from the Department of Education - Mrs. Juliet Macaulay for us. First Mrs. Macaulay explained to Akin the scope and specific aims of the project.

MRS. MACAULAY: We are hoping to make Yoruba the medium of instruction throughout primary school, and we also hope to have English taught as a second language by a specialist teacher of English. Through this we hope that the children will be better in their spoken language of Yoruba, and also they will be better in English.

AKIN EUBA: Can you give me some idea of the needs that lead to the project?

MRS MACAULAY: Well actually we all believe that a child learns better in his own mother tongue. The child learns faster and has a better understanding of the knowledge required. Besides, we have discovered also that in the primary schools although the pattern is supposed to be Yoruba for the first year or two and then English as a medium of instruction from year two to year six. It's always the case to find teachers switching from Yoruba to English or vice-versa, and in cases like that it's not uncommon to find such translations being miscarried. Sometimes the contents of the subject being taught isn't well translated, either because the teacher hasn't got the correct vocabulary, or because he himself doesn't understand enough of the content of the material to be taught. So there has been this sort of unsatisfactory system, especially in the rural schools.

AKIN EUBA: Of course most of the schools that we have in the Western State are rural schools, isn't that true?

MRS. MACAULAY: Yes that is true and we are concentrating this project on a typical rural school.

AKIN EUBA: This seems to me to be a project of some magnitude and complexity. How do you plan to proceed? What is your line of action?

MRS. MACAULAY: Actually the project started in January. There was a lot of spade done before then, but as from January we've had two streams of experimental classes, and we've also had what we call a 'Control Class'. In the 'Control Class' everything goes on as before, which means, Yoruba for the first two years, and English as a medium of instruction from year two, or three, up to year six. But in the experimental classes the pattern we're going to adopt is to teach Yoruba right from the beginning, and then teach English as a special subject also from the beginning, so the children have now been receiving intensive English courses from when the year started.

AKIN EUBA: It's too early to talk about results, but has there been any points that have become evident since you started in January?

MRS. MACAULAY: Yes indeed. To begin with this project has involved a review of the original syllabus. We have had committees sit and examine these different syllabuses, and they have all been re-fashioned. It has also involved the use of modern methodology, some in-service training for the teachers and also some writing workshops. We've had to provide text books for teachers, work books for children, new working materials for children. Now we're also going to help teachers to understand how to use these materials. Now we mustn't overlook the fact that since the medium of instruction is now going to be in Yoruba, all the materials we are going to use will have to be translated from English into Yoruba. Writers are making the effort of writing them direct in Yoruba instead of writing them first in English and then having them translated into Yoruba.

AKIN EUBA: Mrs. Macaulay, one of the criticisms that people have raised about your project is that it will become a dividing factor within the multi-lingual structure of Nigeria, that is to say, that English, as a common

AKIN EUBA:
(CONT'D.)

language among Nigerians, tends to constitute a unifying force. What can you say to answer this criticism?

MRS. MACAULAY:

Well that's a big joke actually, because sometimes the public don't understand a particular project and they raise criticisms without finding out what is involved. The project does not in any form or shape wish to eradicate the use of English from schools. What were trying to do is to use Yoruba as a medium of instruction, or any vernacular, for that matter that is practicable through primary school, and along side this English will be taught more effectively, so we are hoping by the end of the six years not only will the children know more English, they will be able to express themselves better, and using English later on in secondary schools will be no problem whatsoever. In order to make sure that this is done we have already arranged with an existing secondary school to absorb these children as a class, at the end of their six years. And we do hope that we will be able to prove to the public them, that the children will still be able to use English. But it is an experiment, we hope it will succeed, and we are doing our best to make it succeed. But we always remind people that it is an experiment.

AKIN EUBA:

Some people have also said that the task that you have set yourself is formidable, and that it just cannot be done.

MRS. MACAULAY:

I agree with you it is tremendous, but it's by no means impossible. After all, there are many parts in the world where the mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction, and it's very effective. Can you just imagine a six year old child struggling with a language which is not even used in his home environment? This constitutes a problem because then the child regards his education as being related to the walls of the classroom alone, whereas, if the same language which was used within the child's home environment is used

MRS. MACAULAY:
(CONT'D.)

within the class-room, his education then becomes something for living. It has a greater meaning and he himself has a better understanding and can communicate better and more effectively with his society. So all things considered I just cannot see how it will not work.

COSMO PIETERSE:

That was Mrs. Juliet Macaulay talking to Akin Euba. Mrs. Macaulay is in charge of the project to investigate the value of the six years of primary education being done in the children's mother tongue - of course in this case Yoruba. And we shall certainly be following the progress of this vital experiment - you know as an ex-teacher myself I do find myself already more than half persuaded by Ife University's project. And so from the tongue, that most unruly member of the body, to the rest of the body. In fact, to the entire body, in fully discipline sporting action.

At the end of last year it was Makerere University's turn to be host to the annual University Games held in East Africa. Makerere, it seems, took full advantage of being on their home ground, and appear to have almost swept the board this year! But more about that later.

The Games started in 1957 and then only Nairobi and Makerere competed - in 1960 Dar-es-Salaam joined in, later Zambia. This year even more competitors. Well the extremely contented President of the Games Union at Makerere, Austin Pereira, has been talking at the games to Elizabeth Keeble - and, going back to earlier days Austin began by explaining how they used to be organised.

AUSTIN PEREIRA:

At that time the games were organised in the point scoring system, whereby all the games were competed for and the points were added up to the games and there was a trophy for the overall championship. But about two years back we admitted Zambia, only after we found out that the point-scoring system was a bad thing if you wanted to invite other universities.

ELIZABETH KEEBLE: Why was that? Why a bad thing?

AUSTIN PEREIRA: There was a lot of tension and people started not competing for the games, but fighting, you see, and we are promoting these games to promote friendship among competitors.

ELIZABETH KEEBLE: What has happened this year?

AUSTIN PEREIRA: More colleges were invited, in fact, we invited about nine universities, but only seven turned up this year. Zambia could not turn up because of exams which fell at the same time and Congo Louvanium could not come because of transport difficulties.

ELIZABETH KEEBLE: And who were the other new universities apart from the three old colleges of East Africa.

AUSTIN PEREIRA: The University of Ruanda came, they came by bus - all sixty of them, University of Khartoum and the University of Malagasy.

ELIZABETH KEEBLE: So you had some French speakers around the university.

AUSTIN PEREIRA: Yes, we had some French speakers. We had difficulty communicating with them, but we had some French speakers from Makerere who stayed to help them.

ELIZABETH KEEBLE: What are your plans for the future? Have you got plans to make the games bigger and better?

AUSTIN PEREIRA: Yes. I don't think the language is going to be a problem here. Makerere's aim is to expand the games so that in the future we get all African inter-university games.

ELIZABETH KEEBLE: Austin, can you give an idea of what happened during this years Games? What would you say were the highlights?

- AUSTIN PEREIRA: I think the most important one, and exciting one, was the football matches, whereby Khartoum and Makerere displayed the highest standard of football seen in Uganda, that is what the reporters commented on in the papers as well as on the radio.
- ELIZABETH KEEBLE: Did you get a big crowd to this match?
- AUSTIN PEREIRA: Yes. The crowd was fantastic, especially for the first opening day when Khartoum and Makerere played. I think I would estimate to about 10,000 people.
- ELIZABETH KEEBLE: What other sports attracted a large amount of the general public?
- AUSTIN PEREIRA: Volley-Ball was very exciting, and people seemed to be interested in this because Malagasy, which was a new team, displayed high standards. In the finals they really taught us a lesson!
- ELIZABETH KEEBLE: And what about Boxing? That's another popular sport in Uganda.
- AUSTIN PEREIRA: In this sport for the last two years Dar-es-Salaam has dominated. But this year Makerere had all the boxers in all the weights, and Dar-es-Salaam had about six boxers. Two of them were knocked out in the semi-finals and only four went into the finals. In our all over points system, Makerere got sixteen points, Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam both got six points, and so we took the boxing as well.
- ELIZABETH KEEBLE: What about the quieter games, Table-Tennis and games like that?
- AUSTIN PEREIRA: Table-Tennis was dominated, especially in the male section, by Malagasy who used the Japanese or Chinese style I think it is called.

ELIZABETH KEEBLE: And you got good crowds at all the sports? I believe the entrance was free?

AUSTIN PEREIRA: Yes, the entrance was free.

ELIZABETH KEEBLE: Well, where did the money come from?

AUSTIN PEREIRA: Well you see if you are going to have the games it is very expensive. I think with these games we went to about \$160,000, it could have cost us more in fact, but we budgeted for \$160,000 and the government helps us with this.

ELIZABETH KEEBLE: The Uganda Government will help you?

AUSTIN PEREIRA: Yes.

ELIZABETH KEEBLE: You've mentioned some of the results, and you've mentioned Makerere a lot. What about next year? All the competitors are determined to set about Makerere. After all, Makerere played on their home-grounds, so next year at Dar-es-Salaam?

AUSTIN PEREIRA: The other boys are saying that since we have clean swept most of the trophies this year, next year is going to be really tough for us, they are going to work together to topple us.

COSMO PIETERSE: Austin Pereira, President of Makerere's Games Union talking to Elizabeth Keeble.

And even if 160,000 Ugandan shillings, or about £8000 sterling seems a lot of money as I say it - I think the value is inestimable.

And in a years time we'll be reporting on the Games in Dar, when the other competitors hope to have their revenge on Makerere!

But for now that's just about it - so until next week from me Cosmo Pieterse it's goodbye for now.