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REPORT ON A VISIT TO THE REPUBLIC OF THE MALDIVES

BY

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AS EDUCATIONAL ADVISER FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM

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1. Introduction

At the request of the Maldivian Government, I visited Male', the capital of the Republic, for two weeks in May and June, 1971, to review the educational provision and make recommendations for its development. I should like to record my very sincere gratitude for the thoughtfulness and complete efficiency which characterized every aspect of the arrangements made during my visit. Nothing was too much trouble; and my work was made much more pleasant by the unfailing courtesy and helpfulness extended to me.

The subsequent sections of this report must be set against the background of tremendously rapid progress in education in Male' in recent years. It is only 10 years since education in the English medium was instituted, and the development of three large and smooth running schools, with a total of over 2,000 pupils, some of whom reach G C E standards, is a very considerable achievement. That there is a great deal more to do before the opportunity for a proper education is available to all Maldivian children scarcely needs stating.

The population of the Republic is 114,469 (1970), of Male' 13,610. The age groups in Male' rise fairly consistently from 195 (16 years) to 536 (4 years), with a subsequent drop. Details are in Appendix D.

There follow the facts about the present state of education in the Republic, an assessment of the situation, and some recommendations. I have added a summary of the main recommendations, and four short appendices.

2. The present state of education, in summary, is :-

Male': Government schools (English as medium of instruction)

Nasiriya (Montessori) 564 pupils, age 2½ - 6.

Pupils attend either a morning or an afternoon session. Most of the teachers are from Ceylon, either untrained or with some Nursery or Montessori training. Those in charge of a class in the mornings help with a class in the afternoons, and vice versa.

Majeediyya 792 boys, age 5 - 20.

21 classes of the youngest pupils only have half-time schooling. Of the staff, almost all are Ceylonese (1 is Indian, lent by the Indian Government; Maldivians teach Islam and Divehi language).

Aminiya 725 girls, age 5 - 19.

All pupils have full-time schooling, though much of the accommodation is overcrowded. The constitution of the staff is similar to that at Majeediya (2 Indian male teachers are on loan here).

Private schools:

English Preparatory (English medium of instruction)

Others instruct in Divehi, some teach English.

/Atolls

Atolls: Atoll committees are responsible for providing Atoll schools.

28 schools are registered by the Ministry, but there are no trained teachers and very little governmental control or supervision.

There are a few private schools.

Professional, industrial and commercial education is undertaken abroad.

Nurse Aids have been trained in Male' by WHO.

There are no opportunities for those leaving school to continue their education part-time, nor is there any adult education.

There is a Public Library, well maintained, but not widely used; unlike the situation in most countries, school children are not permitted to use it. It is administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

There are no opportunities in the Republic for technical or vocational education, except for individual apprenticeships.

3. Assessment of the situation:

Nasiriya (Montessori) School provides a large number of young children with a sound early education, in the English medium, on Montessori principles. The devotion of the Principal insures the maintenance of high standards. There is a shortage of equipment, and, especially, of books; an extension of the playground is very desirable.

Montessori methods have for many years offered much which is valuable in the early education of children; however, modern psychological research has pointed many directions in which these methods can be extended and improved, in order to assist children's learning, and, when expert advice becomes available, changes should be made.

Majeediyya School has premises which are, in general, good. Its syllabus, and methods of teaching, are basically those of the recent past in Ceylon, which in turn reflect those of Britain some decades back. Excessive numbers of young boys necessitate half-time schooling for the primary section of the school (21 classes). There are some serious shortages of books and equipment. There seems to be no statement of the fundamental aims and objectives of the school. Very few boys yet take the G C E examination; the others receive an education which seems to lack a carefully conceived pattern. This is not only uneconomic, in terms of scarce resources of staff and money, but is also wasteful of Maldivian human resources.

A new Principal from England, experienced in working with boys of secondary school age, has recently taken up his duties; he has plans for development which in general accord with the recommendations of this report.

/Aminiya

Aminiya School, in very recently constructed premises, is in a similar situation, educationally. There is overcrowding, shortages of staff, and in places very serious shortages of materials, books and equipment. Again, the main objectives of the school are not defined, nor are the special educational needs of girls fully realised. Every effort should be made to utilize fully the Home Science room, despite the absence of qualified staff.

So far it has not been possible to replace with another woman the Principal who returned at the end of 1970 after nine years' service; consequently, the former Principal of Majeediyya has been appointed to the post.

Private Schools in Male' seem to be serving a useful purpose, though all those visited were very short of books and equipment. Educationally, they are not efficient; but the English medium school provides remedial tutoring for failures from the government schools, while the others provide something for those unable to enter the government schools.

Schools elsewhere were not seen. It seems probably that, with no trained teachers nor educational guidance, and scanty financial support, they are unable to make any substantial contribution to the material and intellectual (though perhaps they do to the spiritual) well-being of the atoll people. Education abroad seems to have been of great value to a small number of Maldivians; it is, however, slow and expensive.

Further education in Male' of Maldivian girls, to train them as Nurse Aids, seems to have been successful.

Adult education would provide many opportunities for enriching the intellectual life on Male' and for enabling young people, on leaving school, to continue their education part-time. In the atolls, the degree of success of any agricultural, health, or community development schemes will depend largely on the co-operation and involvement of the adults, which can be obtained only through adequate and suitable adult education, of an informal nature.

Proposals

a. Schools in Male'

Government Schools must be considered under the two main heads of organisation and curriculum. Organisationally, it is clear that the present numbers in school cannot be efficiently educated in the present premises; as it is usually politically inexpedient, as well as educationally undesirable, to reduce the school population, more accommodation must be provided. On educational grounds, there are powerful reasons against attempting the education of young children of 5 or 8 in the same organisation with young men and women of 15 or 20. The inescapable conclusion is that a new school (two might be required) should be built, in which children of primary age would receive an education which could be made more suitable to their requirements. This education could best be achieved by the appointment of an expatriate Principal, preferably from UK.

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With this relief to their accommodation, Majeediyya and Aminiya could do justice to their present courses, and develop new courses where necessary. Discussion and careful thought will be required before deciding the age for the division, the total numbers involved, the educational and organisational advantages and disadvantages of one large co-educational primary school, against two smaller co-educational schools or two smaller schools, one for the boys and one for the girls. When the time comes for the present Principal of Nasiriya to retire, it may be thought desirable to modify the Montessori course, and to introduce changes in organisation, so as to avoid the overlapping in the various schools of the 5-6 year provision.

The curricula of Majeediyya and Aminiya schools are overdue for a revision, to be made after a searching enquiry into the real purpose for which these schools are maintained, which, in turn, should be based on a survey of the man-power requirements of the Republic. Some general considerations, and recommendations, will be found in Appendix A.

In 1970, the Maldivian Government asked for UNICEF aid for the provision of science equipment for these two schools. It is to be hoped that an early decision can be made by UNICEF about this supply, as both schools are very seriously handicapped (physics in the girls' school crippled) for want of basic equipment and material. UNICEF is considering, also, the supply of Montessori equipment for Nasiriya School; this is urgently needed in view of the large increase in numbers in the school.

ii. Of the private schools, the English Prep. will probably continue to serve a useful purpose for some years. The others, which teach in Divehi, need support if they are to make any real impact. When the government can afford to extend the provision of primary education, it would be an economy, in the early stages, to improve these private schools with aid for books and equipment.

b. The development of quality in education

At present, there is no source of advice about modern educational development in the primary field, nor about world-wide experience in extending and improving the provision of education in situations similar to those of the Republic which is readily available to the Ministry, to the Principals or to the teachers. Ultimately, the quality of education is more important than the quantity; and in a country with relatively few resources, where education takes a high proportion of the budget, the importance of ensuring that money and scarce man-power are well used, that the results of education are commensurate with the effort, and that the real requirements of the people are being met, is obvious. I recommend, therefore, that funds be set aside to provide expert educational advice, which will have to come, for some years, from abroad.

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In Appendix B, I set out in more detail my proposals, which can be summarised thus :-

Immediate

(Stage 1) Experienced teachers from abroad to be invited for short visits, to organise in-service training courses for teachers in the English medium schools.

Short-term

(Stage 2) The Ministry to appoint an educational adviser from abroad, to give up-to-date advice to the Ministry on educational developments, to organise a programme of in-service training, to give curriculum advice, to establish an Educational Library, and to make preparations for Stage 3.

Medium-term

(Stage 3) The Ministry to establish an "Educational Centre". Such a centre could develop in any of several directions, depending on the lines along which education in the Republic develops; but it would probably embrace the following functions:-

- i) in-service training of teachers.
- ii) curriculum development, to meet the special needs of the Republic
- iii) initial training of primary teachers for the extension of improved primary education to the atolls (see later).
- iv) training of selected teachers to form an advisory service
- v) development of educational communications throughout the atolls (by radio, newsletters, curriculum guides, etc., and especially by radio).

FAO and WHO might be interested in developing such an establishment into a multi-purpose training centre, to train not only teachers but also all the other community workers, for rural extension work, functional literacy campaigns, health education and other similar work.

c. The extension of education outside Male'

It is vital for the Republic to have a small, highly-trained, highly skilled professional and technical labour force. To produce this is one function of the government schools in Male'; but only a small proportion of the Republic's population has the opportunity of entering these schools. From no point of view can such a waste of potentially valuable man-power be justified. An extension of government sponsored primary education must aim at discovering latent talents, while offering all other pupils the opportunity to contribute to their own development and that of the community. For the majority of the

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people, the traditional skills of fishing and farming have remained until now an adequate education; but the outside world is inexorably making its presence felt, and in changing conditions this traditional education is no longer sufficient. Opportunity for modern primary education for all children is an unavoidable target.

The one kind of education which must be avoided is that which is seen only as a way of escape from the atoll to employment in the wage-earning sector. Such opportunities scarcely exist, and such an attitude can only breed frustration and discontent - as it has already done in many developing countries round the world. An extension of modern primary education cannot be made without new attitudes among the people; a programme of informal adult education, to explain the aims and objectives of "development" - whether educational, agricultural or medical - is a necessary forerunner to the introduction of more formal education. Appendix C discusses what form atoll primary education might take.

I suggest that the first extensions of sponsored primary education might be to those locations which have already been prepared for development by the establishment of the WHO Atoll Health Centres. Atoll Committees would need financial assistance in providing premises; but maintenance would be covered by the fees which would be charged. It should be clearly realised by the local people that education is a costly service and can never be "free".

The training of Maldivians as Community Education Workers, to teach in the schools and to offer education to the adults, would be the responsibility of the Education Centre proposed above. The Centre would plan in conjunction with the Ministries of Health and Agriculture this work of training community workers. A major problem, to which there is no easy solution, lies in the adequate provision of books and other reading matter in Divehi.

d. Teacher supply:

Secondary It will be many years before the secondary level can be staffed by Maldivians. Insufficient qualified pupils are being produced, and there are not many incentives to those who qualify to join the teaching profession. Subsequent overseas training is slow and costly.

In my opinion, there is potential among many of the school pupils, which only requires better teaching of a more suitable syllabus for its realisation. If the schools can function more efficiently, more candidates will qualify, and offer themselves for teacher training. In-service training courses, the services of an educational advisor, and possibly the leaven of a small number of skilled teachers from UK., Australia or New Zealand, all would speed the process. The last proposal would be expensive; in the long term, its cost-effectiveness might be high, if it brings nearer the day when expatriate teachers can be dispensed with.

/Primary

Primary in Male' Similar problems exist here. The idea that primary teaching is simple, and that little or no training is required for it, is entirely false. It could be that the present employment of untrained primary teachers is at the root of some of the deficiencies which show themselves later on in the government schools. The help of the Educational Advisor (especially if primary orientated and from the UK) could be invaluable in raising standards of primary teaching.

Atoll teachers As suggested above, at the end of (c), I consider it feasible to plan an institution (Education Centre) which would undertake the initial training of Maldivians for work in atoll schools. (These trainees would not necessarily have high academic qualifications, but would possess other qualities more necessary for this different kind of work.) Such a centre would be expensive to build and equip, and very expensive to staff with expatriates until such time as sufficient Maldivians have gained experience, and been overseas for a further course in Teacher Training. But no expansion of modern primary education through the Atolls can be contemplated unless a training centre be established. Financial aid from abroad would almost certainly be required. Without knowing the government's policy and proposals for expanding education, it is impossible to estimate the requirements for expatriates for such a centre; four would probably be the minimum number for a viable institution.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Nasiriya (Montessori) School
 - a. The present numbers of children should not be exceeded.
 - b. The supply of additional equipment through UNICEF should be expedited.
 - c. More books should be supplied.
 - d. In due course, changes in methods and age-range should be considered.
2. Majeediyya and Aminiya Schools
 - a. Serious consideration should be given to the essential function of these schools in the community, and in the Republic.
 - b. In the light of this consideration, changes should be made in the curricula.
 - c. For educational reasons, and to overcome the overcrowding, the younger pupils of these schools should have their own school or schools.
 - d. The supply of science equipment through UNICEF should be expedited.
 - e. Severe shortages of reference books and text books, and also basic equipment for teaching the younger pupils, should be made good.
 - f. Full use should be made of the facilities for teaching Home Science.
3. Private Schools
 - a. In due course, governmental aid for books and equipment should be given, as an interim measure.
4. Adult education
 - a. Experimental evening courses should be instituted in Male', such as a class for those who want to improve their English.
 - b. Consideration should be given to plans for extending informal adult education to the Atolls, in co-operation with other Ministries.
5. Quality improvement
 - a. Aid should be sought from abroad for an immediate programme of in-service training courses for teachers.
 - b. A small lending library of educational books (to include modern books on psychology, methodology, curriculum development, and philosophy) should be established.
 - c. An Educational Adviser (expatriate) should be appointed.
 - d. The Educational Adviser, when appointed, should consult with the Ministry in drawing up plans for an Education Centre.

- e. Consideration should be given to the long term cost-effectiveness of a small number of expatriate teachers from countries other than Ceylon.

6. Extension of modern primary education

- a. Plans should be drawn up for the staged extension of suitable primary education through the Atolls, including the training of Community Education workers.

7. Teaching of English

- a. A study of the linguistic implications of teaching English as a second language to Divehi speakers should be initiated.
- b. Accepting that a small language laboratory would be invaluable, and that the technical facilities in Male' are adequate for its maintenance, the practical problems involved in its use should be carefully considered.

8. Buildings and furniture

- a. The UN sponsored organisation, ARISBR (Asian Regional Institute for School Building Research), situated in Bullers Road, Colombo, should be consulted in order to effect economies and improve the effectiveness of school buildings and furniture.

Appendix A

A consideration of the curricula of Majeediyya and Aminiya Schools

A Secondary School in a developing country has a threefold function, to provide its country with :-

1. Cabinet Ministers, Civil Servants, professionals (teachers, engineers, doctors, lawyers), and leaders in commerce and industry.
(The total number of these is very small).
2. Technical experts (especially in engineering, building, agriculture, health).
3. Secretaries, mechanics, nurses, etc.

A survey of the man-power requirements of the country is necessary, if there is to be neither over-production (leading to unemployment and discontent) nor under-production (resulting in a frustration of national aspirations). For example, is the present number of students trained for commerce at Majeediyya adequate for a developing economy? Or will there soon be wasteful over-production? Can boys be spared for clerical posts and should not commercial education be transferred to Aminiya? Facts are required before these questions can be answered. And until they are answered, decisions about curricula changes (which may take several years to implement, if equipment and teachers with special skills are required) cannot be made.

I suggest that the basic elements of the curriculum are:-

1. the art of living (religion, aesthetics, etc.)
2. language of international communication
3. national language
4. numeracy
5. science and geography
6. craftsmanship and practical skills (a very general technical knowledge of handling wood, metals and other materials, and in using electricity and chemistry in essentially practical situations)

Pupils adequately educated in these basic elements would already be fitted for a variety of occupations, and for their leisure, on leaving school. But it may be that an element of pre-vocational bias should be introduced for some pupils, to stimulate their interest and increase their skills, in certain directions where there is a national requirement for increased man-power or augmented skills. Such bias could be towards the practical skills of working in wood and metal, towards the office arts, towards health, nutrition and "mothercraft", towards nautical training (I was unable to obtain in Male' any information about a proposal to establish a Marine Training School) towards applied science. There

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is some evidence of a strong artistic trait in the Maldivian people, and a course biased towards art and craft might be considered, both for its own educational content and also for its vocational value; it might help to revitalize some of the traditional crafts of the islands.

There are strong arguments for suggesting that every girl (not just a few of the less intelligent) should have some education in home economics. She should be helped to raise the standard of life within the home, to produce a more nourishing and balanced diet, to understand something of child rearing and of simple health routines and precautions. (Looking back in some years' time, it will seem strange that boys were not included in this recommendation.)

Any diversification of courses makes additional demands on staff time, while sometimes reducing the number of pupils in each group. This may lead to a situation where skilled and expensive teachers at both boys' and girls' schools each are teaching the same work to a small handful of pupils; it is suggested that, should this situation arise, the boys and girls should work together under one teacher.

Reconsideration of certain aspects of the curricula should not wait for the major review suggested above. Can it be said that a girl whose course consists, in addition to Islam and Divehi, only of English, mathematics and four sciences is receiving a balanced education? Is there any valid reason for including both arithmetic and mathematics in a pupil's course? Should any teacher be restricted by the time-table to teaching English language, reading, dictation and recitation as if they were separate subjects? Is "English History 1865 - 1955", undertaken for examination purposes, a fitting culmination for a Maldivian girl's course in history? Is it sensible to spend some 300 hours of school time studying "The British Constitution" in order to obtain an "easy" pass in the G C E examination? Some hard thinking is needed about these and similar questions; it is encouraging that such thinking has already begun.

Appendix B

Proposals for improving quality in education

Stage 1 (Immediate).

Short in-service training courses in developing countries, using experienced British teachers as tutors, have been organised by Britain for several years. For example, Ceylon has greatly benefitted from courses organised by the British Council in high-level science; a small team of British science teachers visits the country in August.

I recommend that the Ministry of Education enquires into the possibility of such help being extended to the Maldives in 1972. Almost certainly August is the only month when British teachers would be free; and foolproof and possibly expensive arrangements for transport would be essential. Arrangements for obtaining additional equipment or materials, which would probably be needed, would require early action.

Three aspects of education which would particularly benefit from such in-service training are :-

- a. English as a second language.
- b. Modern developments in science teaching, at all ages.
- c. The education of young children, in the light of modern psychology.

Stage 2 (Short-term)

The appointment of an Education Adviser is almost essential if there is to be continuing progress in the educational system.

I recommend that the Ministry of Education should try to obtain the services of an expatriate teacher for 18 months or so, who, within a wide experience of education, has a particular interest in the education of young children. Among other duties, the Adviser would organise courses of lectures, study groups and "workshops" (courses where teachers learn through themselves doing things). If a certain amount of simple apparatus, equipment and books were not immediately available for these purposes, it would be impossible to run this vital in-service training effectively. I recommend, therefore, that the Adviser should make a preliminary visit to Male' for a short period, in order to assess the educational situation, make preliminary plans, and estimate the requirements of equipment and books, which could then be obtained before the Adviser returned some months later. The additional cost of the preliminary journey would obviate the possibility of the Adviser attempting his assignment without adequate material support, with all the accompanying ineffectiveness and frustration, while providing him with the opportunity of unhurried preparation for his work after having assessed the situation.

/Stage 3

Stage 3 (Medium-term)

One of the duties of the Education Adviser would be to advise the Minister on the establishment of an Education Centre which would become the centre for professional activities in the Republic, embracing the improvement of education in existing schools through curriculum development, in-service training, and the provision of a library of educational books; the institution of training courses for primary teachers for existing schools, including the establishment of a Practising School; and the initial planning and development of community education in the Atolls, if possible in co-operation with the Ministries of Agriculture and Health, and with the support of FAO and WHO. A later development would be the selection and training of gifted teachers to form the nucleus of an Advisory Service for the Atoll Schools.

Appendix C

Primary education in the Atolls

Since the primary school will be the terminal stage of formal education for the vast majority, it needs to be complete in itself and provide a foundation upon which young people are able to adjust to change and participate intelligently in social and economic development. At the same time, it must be adequate for the few who will go on to Secondary education.

First, it must produce in all children the spirit of enquiry, a desire to question and to investigate, a willingness to accept change.

Then, it must induce a spirit of co-operation, and an awareness of the good life.

Finally, it involves the acquisition of full literacy (speech and writing) and numeracy (understanding the world in its numerical and spatial aspects) through a scientifically biased study of the environment, both immediate and distant.

With these aims, it will include some studies, for example, of nutrition, health, care of tools and machines, and the industrial arts - simple building, fencing, etc. Any traditional skills and arts (for example, lacquer work and dancing) will be fostered; the peculiar traditions of a country make their contribution to its national unity and consciousness. The theme should be to spread literacy and numeracy, and to encourage an open mind, so as to develop the community, to make it healthier, with a more varied diet, more prosperous, maybe in places with a choice of occupations, and with more leisure for devoting to skills, arts of music and dancing, and craftsmanship.

I do not see how English could be taught with efficiency and economy in these atoll primary schools. Those gifted children who will go on to secondary education will have to be given at the Secondary School an intensive course in English, together with other remedial work if required, before they are permitted to join the main stream.

Appendix D

POPULATION OF MALE¹ IN AGE GROUPS 1970

<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Age</u>
212	210	422	Under 1 year
198	203	401	1 year
245	247	492	2 years
237	242	479	3 years
266	270	536	4 years
236	233	469	5 years
186	203	389	6 years
216	255	471	7 years
218	228	446	8 years
165	187	352	9 years
192	207	399	10 years
166	175	341	11 years
157	175	332	12 years
166	159	325	13 years
146	160	306	14 years
121	136	257	15 years
95	100	195	16 years
130	100	230	17 years
115	122	237	18 years
94	110	204	19 years
91	100	191	20 years
2768	3368	6136	Over 20 years
<u>Totals</u>	<u>6420</u>	<u>7190</u>	<u>13610</u>

POPULATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES (INCLUDING MALE¹)
1970

<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Total</u>
53494	60975	114469

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