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HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS IN SYRIA

by

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Dedicated to My Education & Psychology Teachers

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INTRODUCTION

Education in Syria, as well as in all the Arab countries, is far from being perfect. Many interwoven problems have to be solved and settled before we can say that our educational system is a proper one. One of these problems, which has not yet received enough consideration, is that of establishing cooperative and friendly relations between home and school. A subject which is considered to be of prime necessity in modern educational and psychological studies.

The new education seeks to make life a total process instead of isolated sections each independent of the other. Experiences should be arranged so that the child can see the relation of cause and effect. This arrangement can never be complete and positive if there is a separation between home and school experiences. Thus, both, the home and the school should make a unified and harmonised environment for the child.

In the following study we are trying to discuss, as much as possible, the necessity for cooperation between home and school, the present educational condition in Syria and its effect on home-school relations, and how could these relations be improved.

The study is mostly concerned with the role of the school in establishing friendly and cooperative relations with the home. Reasons for that are:

1. The school, especially in Syria, is much more enlightened than the home, thus it should take the leading role.
2. Our contacts, for informations, were mostly with schools and teachers, not so much with parents because:

(a) Parents are mostly illiterate and thus, to get any information from them, they need to be interviewed. Time and other factors would not permit to interview a fair sample.

(b) Social customs and traditions make it difficult for a girl to interview fathers.

(c) To substitute the interview by a questionnaire would give us the attitude of educated parents only. Something which is not fair especially when we know that, in many cases, children of educated parents are sent to private schools, while we are dealing with government schools.

Another point to be made clear, is that, in this study we are more interested in primary and elementary schools because:

1. Children are still in their formative years. Habits are still being learned or unlearned because of the plasticity of that age.
2. Establishing good habits during childhood lessens later adolescent troubles and maladjustments.
3. The child is too young to see his troubles, locate them and correct them. He is young also to be greatly consulted in such matters. Thus the home and the school should take this responsibility.

Unfortunately, some limitations concerning facilities and time stood in the way of making this study more complete. However, our hope is that this step will be followed by many others in the same field, and that the results of such studies will take a practical form, which is the most important.

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An Abstract of a Thesis on
Home-School Relations in Government Elementary
Schools in Syria.

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Cooperation between home & school is one of the most important problems in modern education and psychological studies. Education is no more conceived as only intellectual development which is to come about formally in the school. Education is synonymous with experience. All experiences, no matter how simple or complex they are have their effect on the child's behaviour and development. These experiences are continuous and inter-related. They begin at conception and continue through out life.

Thus since experience is continuous and one with life and since education is a process of reconstruction of experience then education is a whole-life process. There is no time when experiences cease to take place and hence there is no time when education ceases or stops. Because education is continuous and is one with life it should take into consideration the whole individual, all phases of his development whether physical, psychological or intellectual. Modern psychology states that the child is one unit; his growth should be total and all-sided. We cannot have him grow intellectually one day and physically another day. All phases of his growth are related and any neglect to one of these phases will surely affect all the others.

Can this all-sided education be limited to the home or the school alone? or can such an education take place if each of the home and the school follow divergent ways? Both the school and the home should share and work whole-heartedly to provide the child with unified educative experiences. Experiences begun at home should continue in school, and experiences introduced in the school should be practiced at home. Separation between home and school experiences means two different worlds for the child, something which results in frustration and maladjustment.

What system of education does Syria have? Does this system help or hinder unity and cooperation between home and school? The Syrian system of education is very much similar to the French system which emphasises mainly the intellectual factor in education. When the individual is intellectually able he can adjust himself to all life situations. Intellectual development comes about by sharpening the mind with selected facts chosen and designed by educational leaders. These facts are to be studied in school, mainly through books. To help obtaining this educational end complete centralization is practiced in the Syrian system of education. This extreme centralization which limits the work of education to school and books makes a sharp separation between home and school. Parents feel no need and no encouragement to have any relations with the school. Moreover, the system of examination, which is strictly set and carried, makes the whole process of education a means to passing examinations. Examinations are considered to be the only measurement for the pupil's progress. Thus passing these examinations is becoming the aim of education. This results in limiting the work of education only to books and subject-matter which, in turn, widens the gap between school and every day life.

Moreover, tensions and worries accompanying these examinations associate the name of school and education with negative attitudes and feelings in both parents and children.

Another important factor to be considered in relation to the Syrian educational system is that of the teacher. The teacher is, no doubt, the main element in educational success. Unfortunately, we say that we can only depend on very few teachers in Syria to carry on their job effectively. Most are either untrained or uninterested. Teaching, in many cases, is conceived only as a profession to earn a living. Because of the great need for teachers no strict measures are taken to select them. Very few teachers are really interested and efficient in their work to try to establish friendly relations between their schools and the pupils homes.

All these factors result in making Syrian education formal, rigid and remote, thus uninteresting to both the children and the parents. Instead of adjusting the child to his every day life it is, in many cases, creating a gap between the child and his community.

To be more sure of what is taking place in Syrian education in the field of home-school relations, a questionnaire was designed and distributed among 105 Syrian teachers. The aim of this questionnaire was to find out teachers' concepts of the aims of education, the necessity of home-school cooperation, their experiences in such cooperation, and factors helping or hindering home-school cooperation. This questionnaire was answered by 70 Syrian teachers. The following are the main findings:-

1. Education should include more than intellectual development. Therefore, cooperation between home and school is necessary.
2. Present home-school relations in Syria are limited to disciplinary and academic problems. These relations are superficial and done mainly through formal correspondence.
3. Parents' ignorance, teachers' low salaries and over-loaded programs are the main obstacles to cooperation.
4. Lectures, plays in the school, and exchanging visits are helpful steps to friendly relations.

However, new trends are observed, in Syrian education and among Syrian educators, concerning aims, methods and philosophy of education.

In connection with our study in Syria there are certain points to be clarified:-

1. In our study we were mostly concerned with government-elementary-schools.

2. Only the teachers' attitudes were studied, while those of parents were informally observed.

In recommending ways for home school cooperation in Syria certain factors concerning the present situation of the teachers and the parents should be considered. However, the main hope lies in the trained teachers and the educated members of each family to carry on this work as effectively as possible. Cooperation can be done orally through visits, conferences, and simple committees. Oral forms of contact are the most effective. Contact through correspondence can be used to supplement the oral forms but should never replace it because correspondence has many limitations. In all forms of contact the teacher should remember that he carries the main responsibility. When he is able to arouse parents' interest and their curiosity all difficulties will disappear. To arouse parents' interest the teacher should be friendly, helpful, simple, trained, and cooperative.

CHAPTER ONE

MODERN EDUCATIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES NECESSITATING COOPERATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

I. NATURE OF EDUCATION

Is education a set of pre-determined subject-matter to be memorized by the student and recited before the teacher? Is education limited to the study of books? Or, is education purely intellectual? And is the intellectual ability enough to enable the person to adjust himself successfully to life?

If education is only that, then it might be limited to school. If not, then, what is education, where is it obtained and when? What is the relation of the educational process to the child's nature?

II. NEW CONCEPTS OF EDUCATION

A. Concepts of Early Educational Philosophers of the Modern Age

The beginning of objective study of early childhood education originated with the educational philosophers. The first of these Modern philosophers was Comenius. Almost contemporary with Comenius was John Locke. Following these two was Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose influence was great. In his Emile, or Treatise on Education, he wrote, "I wish that some descreet person would give us a treatise on the art of observing children, which would be of immense value to us, but of which our fathers and school masters have not as yet learned the rudiments."⁽¹⁾ He believed that "Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Author of Nature; but everything degenerates in the hands of man."⁽²⁾

(1) Leonard, Miles, Van der Kar, "The Child at Home and School", p. 310.

(2) Ibid, p. 311.

Rousseau stressed a natural rather than artificial type of education, a growth from within rather than a development from without, insisted that education must come through experience. Thus he became the Prophet of the 19th Century. From his teachings came the so-called "Modern Education" based on interest.

Two other important educational thinkers were Pestalozzi and Froebel. Pestalozzi demanded schooling for every child, rich or poor, as a natural right, and emphasized the new purpose in education as the harmonious development of the powers and capacities with which the individual is originally endowed. He insisted that the educational process begins at birth and that the beginning must be made in educating the mothers.

Friedrich Froebel was a follower of Pestalozzi. He valued most highly the play factor in the education of young children. He also believed that inner nature grows and develops through the outward manifestation of creative power.

The most recent articulation of these concepts and the development of modern methods were contributed by John Dewey. Dr. Dewey emphasized two important aspects of education:-

- (1) Education is synonymous with growth, and growth is continuous.
- (2) This growth takes place through reconstruction of experience.

Thus ~~Modern~~ education in its most liberal form is primarily concerned with the answers to the following three major questions:-

- (1) What is the Nature of the Child?
- (2) What kind of education is fit for him?
- (3) How should this education be carried on?

B. Modern Philosophical and Psychological Concepts of Education

1. Education as Growth:- Growth is the product of the interaction between the

organism and its environment. Environment begins to influence the organism from the moment it is created. This process of growth has some principles⁽¹⁾ which might be summarized as follows:-

(a) Growth is a continuous and gradual process rather than a sudden one. Every new step of growth or development should be based on a preceding one.

(b) Growth in all its aspects is more rapid at the early years than it is at the later years of the child's life. To these years we should pay much of our care and attention. Thus guidance here becomes a vital necessity, but this does not mean, of course, that the child should be put under tight restriction. Enough freedom should be granted to the child to enable him to learn by his experiences. At the same time the child should be guided and supervised to prevent him, in a reasonable way, from doing acts which might harm himself or others. This guidance and supervision must for the most part take place at the child's early years (formative years) during which education is most effective because of great plasticity in the child.

(c) Growth proceeds from simple to complex:- It is impossible for a child to walk when he can't stand, or to multiply when he is not able to add. You cannot require the child to do something unless he has reached the time and age for it. His knowledge and learning come step by step. Unless he has gone through the right step it will be impossible for him to continue effectively. Unless he has mastered the first basic act he can't move to the following one.

(d) Children differ in ability from the time of birth. Each is born with his different personality and different abilities. As he grows these differences tend to show more and more.

(1) Skinner, Educational Psychology: P. 22.

Differences in children might be due also to many causes other than hereditary ones. These causes might be physical, social, emotional, and psychological.

Thus true and progressive growth cannot take place unless it takes into consideration these biological and environmental differences. The teacher should have in mind that if children conform to general laws for growth and development it does not follow that they should conform to the details of these laws. For example, if all children have their most rapid physical growth between birth and six years of age, it does not follow that they all have the same rate of growth.

2. Place of Experience in Growth - How does this growth take place? How is it built?

Growth is a continuous reconstruction. "Today's experience revises yesterday's meaning and sets new control for tomorrow's reaction."⁽¹⁾

Thus we see that the fundamental fact about education as expressed in terms of growth is that "Life" is made up of experiences and that all experiences educate in one way or another. Hence a true interpretation of education must begin with experience, with all experiences, and with the sources of all experiences, within the whole community. Most important here is the home, the child's first and immediate environment.

Dr. Dewey defines education as "The process of the reconstruction of experience, giving it a more socialized value through the medium of increased individual efficiency."⁽²⁾

"How is the meaning of an experience increased? An experience is educative, i.e. its meaning is increased when we become more aware of that of which we were unaware, when the unperceived connections become perceived."⁽³⁾ For example, if

(1) Horne, "Democratic Philosophy of Education", p. 96.

(2) Eby and Arrowood, "Development of Modern Education", p. 865.

(3) Horne, op. cit., p. 96.

the child has a candle, he does not begin by knowing that the attractive candle flame is hot and will burn. He reaches and learns. Henceforth he has knowledge. The activity of reaching for the flame has gained meaning. To that extent he has become educated.

3. Continuity in Education:- Thus we see that if education is growth, and that growth comes about by a reconstruction of Experience, then education is a continuous process, a continuous reconstruction of experience. "The end of education is the direct transformation of the quality of experience." ⁽¹⁾ This end is immediate and at the same time links the past with the present. Hence the process of education is a whole life process. "It begins as soon as the child is born, and proceeds throughout life. It is a process of actual living and it is identical with the process of living. There never comes a time when new experiences fail to take place, when learning absolutely ceases. So long as the individual is readjusting himself to the changes in the environment, just so long he is learning and education is going forward. There is, therefore, no final end or goal when education is to be complete." ⁽²⁾

4. Consequently, if education is a whole-life process of growth which comes about by continuous reconstruction of experience, then it should take into consideration the whole-unified individual, especially the time when this individual is having his first experiences that form the basic foundation of his growth. That is the time of childhood. It is not possible for education to take the right path and give its fruits unless it is based on deep, scientific study of the child, in every aspect of his being. Everything the child does, whether right or wrong, could be related to a previous experience that affects his present action.

a. Child as an End-Importance of Childhood:-

The child is not a miniature adult, because a child's experience differs from

(1) Ibid., p. 195. *Demosthenes' Philosophy of Education*, p. 35.

(2) Eby & Arrowood, "Development of Modern Education", p. 367.

that of an adult in quality and quantity. For example, if we give an old student ten Math problems to solve we can't say that the young student could solve only five of these problems. The question is not solved, because the kind of problems which the elementary school student could solve differs from that which the high school student solves.

Therefore, effective education and complete growth is based on understanding and studying the child as a child, an end in himself, and not a means to an end. Rousseau said that nature wants children to be children before they are men.

b. The Nature of the Child:- It should be obvious for those who are concerned with the child's education, teachers and parents, that education cannot give its desired fruits unless it is based on the child's nature as instincts, interests, capacities, and capabilities. We cannot plant things in him as we plant a seed in the ground, neither can we shape him as we shape a piece of mud. The child is not as plastic as most people think, not even in his earliest days.

A new born child's page is not blank. There is something written on it from the moment of conception, and this writing is greatly developed by the time of birth. So, before we add anything to it, we should read what already exists, otherwise we destroy what is there and what is to be added.

The new concept of education assumes that the aim of education is not changing the child's nature or restricting his capabilities and interests. It is modifying only, and guiding these powers, already existing, through a beneficial way which will help the child in his social and individual life.

c. The Child as a Unit:- Another important point to be emphasized here, for an effective process of growth, is studying the child as a whole, a unit which can't be separated into smaller parts; an integrated personality. A change in any

factor which effects his growth and behavior along one line will also effect him along many other lines. Children do not grow physically one day and mentally the next, while the third is reserved for education and social contacts. Growth of all kinds takes place simultaneously.

Thus if the child is a unit of simultaneous growth, and if education is a whole-life process it should try to develop all aspects of his unified, integral personality. This should include:-

(1) Physical Development:- Healthy physical development is very important for a progressive all-sided growth. In order for the children to maintain the best physical health, they must have a happy feeling of belongingness both at home and at school. Any uncertainty or insecurity will have immediate effect upon the nervous and glandular system of the child. For a healthy physical being it is better that emphasis be at all times on prevention rather than cure.

(2) Emotional Development:- Why should education care for the emotional development of the child: Most of the child's early behavior, his fundamental behavior, is built upon his emotional being. His intellectual ability is not well developed as to enable him to depend on his mind. His emotions are ruling and his behavior is a result of his emotional being. And if he is not emotionally adjusted he is not able to be adjusted in other fields of life.

When one sees the misery and the suffering which the human family endures through uncurbed emotions; emotional maladjustments which disturbs and warps the life of so many individuals, then the need for proper training in emotional control is most apparent.

The foundation of a healthy, contributing emotional life is based on the sense of security. Children need above all else to feel safely attached to a background that is stable. To feel that they occupy a place in the family life that no one

else can ever fill. This sense of security, if not felt by the child, produces a decidedly warped personality. Many times it results in a feeling of inferiority or inadequacy. The child's unhappiness and uncertainty, which result from a feeling of insecurity, make him unable to establish desirable relationships with people outside of his family group.

Many elements may enter into making the feeling of security difficult to obtain, such as physical or mental handicaps, accidents, worries and tensions. Conflicts in the home, antagonisms which are likely to arise where more than one generation are living close together, inconsistencies of control, overconcern and sentimentality that hinders the child's independence, expectation of achievements so beyond his interests and capacities that either failure or frustration results. These and many other things detract from a child's sense of security.

"The teacher must differentiate between a child who has lacked emotional guidance and one who is emotionally unstable. Many a spoiled child who indulges in temper tantrum is entirely capable of governing his emotions if directed by a firm but kind personality. This is not true of a child who is emotionally unstable." (1)

(3) Social Development - Whenever we deal with a child we should remember that we are dealing with a social individual. If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction. If we eliminate the individual factor from society, we are left only with an inert and lifeless mass.

The moment the child utters his first cry of life, his complete personal development begins in its relation to the world about him, to be continued as a process of continual growth. The child develops the capacity to control and inhibit and to respond in a socially acceptable way which is necessary for normal

(1) Leonard, Miles, Van der Kar, op. cit., p. 469.

adjustment.

As he grows he should be able to attain and maintain satisfactory human relationships. In his self-adjustment he avoids undue conflicts, stresses, and strains. He achieves his optimum in development, and his reactions to people, things and experiences are personally and socially effective.

Strong, stable personalities are not developed by chance; and the angers, jealousies, fears, and tears of childhood are as intense as are its joy and happiness. Therefore if the positive side of behavior is built up, the negative side will not have to be unbuilt.

(4) Intellectual Development:- As is the case with all phases of growth and development, intellectual development cannot be separated from other kinds of development. If the child is not emotionally and socially adjusted there is little hope in his having a well-developed intellectual ability, even if he is intelligent or very studious. Intellectual ability could never be limited to studying facts from books. It is consistently inter-acting with all situations and all conditions. It is very much shown in the individual's ability to flexible adjustment, understanding, reasoning, and creative thinking.

(5) Discipline and Development of Habits:- The child's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development has very much to do with the kind of discipline the child is subjected to and the kind of habits he forms. Habits of early childhood might become as firm and stable as instincts. Thus if education is to be complete it should aim at establishing good and right habits in the child.

Modern education aims to reduce external discipline to a minimum and believes that a knowledge of right and wrong is one essential to right behavior; that the

pupil behaves properly because such behavior is right, not because someone orders him to. It is a system of internal self-discipline which conforms with the behavior of the adult as a free citizen. It removes the police function from the child's life to help him.

"The rapidity with which children acquire habits is amazing. Every bad habit acquired is a barrier to better habits later; that is why the first formation of habits in early infancy is so important."⁽¹⁾ If the first habits are good endless trouble is saved later. "By the time the child is six years old moral education ought to be nearly complete; that is to say, the further virtues which will be required in later years ought to be developed by the boy or girl spontaneously, as a result of good habits already existing and ambitions already stimulated."⁽²⁾

In these four points and in all the preceding ones we notice that in the modern view education is identical with life. It is mostly successful when it is obtained by a progressive growth which takes into consideration all the phases of the child's development. Thus, if true education takes the child as a whole, from birth to death, then we should think of two major factors that contribute to making each individual what he is, these are:-

(a) Heredity: Through inherited traits, the individual's heredity will determine, to a certain extent, the qualities of his life as he grows. Up till now man cannot do anything concerning heredity.

(b) Environment: By using the environment man can modify and direct hereditary

(1) Russell, B. Education and the Good Life: P. 89

(2) Ibid, p. 101. Education and the Good Life: P. 101

factors.

The child lives somewhere, in the school and in the home, he lives in a social group father, mother sister and brother, neighbours and friends. All these are interacting parts of his whole environment. An individual's environment will exert a powerful effect upon his future development.

The home and the school can do nothing about heredity, but can do a great deal with environmental factors. "All children take what the community has to offer. Adults make the community what it is."⁽¹⁾ "Environment may be considered as the sum total of all the stimuli tending to develop or to destroy the inherited characteristics or capacities of individuals."⁽²⁾ During pregnancy, the physical, mental, and emotional state of the mother affect the well-being of the fetus. Thus environment begins its effect from the period of conception. Both parents should be prepared to receive the new born. Successful parentage is a partnership demanding more than financial cooperation.

When the child is born his environment is enlarged to include his home physically and socially. Everything the child feels or perceives becomes a part of his environment. The home environment is accountable for the greatest percentage of differences in children. It is the home that gives the child his way of accepting persons and events.

As the child grows and his sphere of activities broadens beyond the limits of his home, the community in which he lives becomes a second major factor in his environment.

Acquired characteristics such as information, memories, attitudes, speech, and

(1) Lane, Robert Hill, The Teacher in the Modern Elementary School: P. 57

(2) Leonard, Miles, Van der Kar, op. cit., p. 18.

behavior patterns may be socially "inherited". That is, they may be so repeated in the child's environment that they become an important part of his personality. All behavior patterns, then, are outcomes of either favorable or unfavorable experiences to which the young child is exposed by people around him, his friends, and his family. For, in spite of hereditary tendencies, the thoughts, aspirations, ideals, and satisfactions of a human being are largely the result of environment. When the child becomes physically and mentally ready to go to school, the school becomes a third factor in his environment.

All these factors are of much importance in the effective child education. They all interact in making the child what he is so that the child's personality is the product of the interaction of these factors and not their sum. Moreover, there is something more to be considered in order to make the child love experience and seek it, and thus grow and be educated. An important factor here is interest which leads to stimulation.

5. Interest, Effort, and Stimulation:- Learning can best take place when there is a need or a motivation which stimulates the child and makes him interested in what he is learning, thus making it living and natural.

Rousseau is quoted as saying: "Present interest is the grand motive power, the only one which leads with certainty to great results."⁽¹⁾ "To have an interest in anything means to have a personal concern with regard to that thing; one has to that extent identified himself with it; he will find himself in pursuing it."⁽²⁾ "To seek interest on the part of the learner is on the one hand, to respect the learner as a person and at the same time to utilize the biological dynamic in the

(1) Kilpatrick, Philosophy of Education: P. 271

(2) Ibid, p. 275.

learning process. Thus to utilize interest in education seems psychologically essential alike to democracy and to the good life."⁽¹⁾

If we wish to strengthen a child's interest along any given line we should help him to succeed for "nothing succeeds like success." Make others see and approve what he is doing. Help him to investigate, and grow under this investigation. For that means prolonged interest in this type of activity. In this way the interest will grow stronger by the reinforcement of other interests which it absorbs into itself.

The child's interest furnishes him with motivated effort. So if his interests are not directed in a constructive way his effort is wrongly directed to a destructive way. Here we have to take into consideration an important problem that parents and teachers pay very little attention to. But yet this problem is very important in the process of child's growth and experience. This is the Problem of:-

6. Leisure Time:- If education is to care for the right growth of the individual whether physical, social, mental, and emotional, it becomes its duty to prepare and help him in using his leisure time in a way which will develop his personality and increase his skills.

The problem, if not well thought out is not one of wasting time only. It is more serious, and needs as much care as is needed for any other aspect of the individual's education. Leisure time could be spent either in constructive or in destructive things. It might increase a person's vitality and develop his personality if well used, or it might harm him and destroy his physical and mental

(1) Ibid, p. 275. "Philosophy of Education", p. 275.

capacities, and nullify the good influence of his education, if wrongly used.

If we make use of the child's interests during his leisure time many skills might be discovered and useful habits might be established. Moreover, we would be helping the child to grow simultaneously, in all aspects.

One of the things which might be established through manipulation of the child's interest during his leisure time is developing his aesthetic sense and helping him to feel and appreciate beauty. This follows a way of:

1. Appreciation
2. Self-interest
3. Creative work.

When the child develops a well cultivated taste everything wrong around him whether social, physical, mental, moral, or emotional seems to be distasteful to him. He tries to correct it and thus interacts, constructively, with life and social aspects around.

7. Democratic Education:-

Considering the previous discussion, what kind of education is modern education aiming at in its liberal form?

From all the previous discussion we can be sure that modern liberal education aims at democratizing education in that it:-

(1) Places the tools at the child's disposal, teaches him how and when to use them, provides opportunities for their application, and permits him to grow as fast and as much as he desires.

(2) Recognizes that, like behavior, learning cannot be acquired by thrusting it upon the un-willing child. Mental activities must be performed by the pupil; he must be eager to do the necessary work attached to the process of acquiring knowledge instead of passively receiving it from his teacher.

(3) Emphasizes the place of experience in education and the sharing of these experiences between members of society.

(4) It takes fully into consideration the individual factor of the child; studies his abilities and interests and stimulates him to study things suiting to his ability. The child is not a means, he is an end in himself.

(5) The individual has his own personality. He should be free with some guidance to help his beginning development.

(6) Emphasizes progressive change of ideas.

(7) Sharing in the school, and sharing between schools and outside institutions, especially the home. "Full sharing of interests within the group, and free interaction between groups."⁽¹⁾

If we divide society to higher and lower classes and make this division sharp and constant it will prevent the communication between the two groups, thus causing them, both, a great harm, because it limits the field of their experience, and narrows the path of their education. If the need for things to be shared is not satisfied the mind lacks new stimuli which renew its ability and strength.

III. WHY THESE PRINCIPLES NECESSITATE COOPERATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

The principles discussed make it obvious that modern concepts of education regard education as a whole-life process which is obtained by a continuous progressive growth resulting from a constant reconstruction of experience. Thus modern education can never be limited to books to be studied at school.

Education is identical with life. Life means the social as well as the physical existence. "The means whereby a social group continues itself, renews itself, and maintains its ideals, is, in the broadest sense of the term, education."⁽²⁾

(1) Horne, op. cit., p. 109.

(2) Ibid, p. 7.

And "As biological life maintains and transmits itself by nutrition and reproduction, so social life transmits itself by education."⁽¹⁾

This education is carried on in two ways, formal and informal. The formal is done in a specially arranged environment set specially for this purpose. This is the school. The second is the informal which is done in the whole community particularly in the home. It involves the child's sharing of others' experiences till these experiences become a common property to all. Thus experiences are carried from generation to generation.

At the primitive time there was only one kind of education, the informal. Life was very simple and natural. No complexities resulting from civilization and inventions. Experiences shared and carried slowly from parents to children. Nature was a good teacher. No problems to be solved and no deep questions to be answered. Thus no need for school. This kind of education is still being carried on in primitive tribes.

But with the increase of civilization life becomes more complex so that "children can neither participate in it fully nor playfully imitate it."⁽²⁾ Thus there is a demanding necessity for a kind of education which simplifies, purifies, and balances the experiences and activities of the elders and makes them appealing and easily understood by children. Hence the need for school arises to bridge the gap between the child and the world around him, and make possible the sharing of activities and experiences. But the danger is that either the home or the school may become remote, formal and dead. And they are surely going to be if the school and the home take divergent paths in the education of the child, for in there the school life is separated from real life so that a huge gap is created between what the

(1) Ibid, p. 7.

(2) Ibid, p. 11.

child experiences at home and what he learns at school. A gap which is so wide as to be impossible for a child to bridge. Thus he has conflicts and maladjustment.

This danger was never more real than at the present time, particularly in the Arab World. This is because of the rapid growth of complexity and civilization, and the rapid cultural transition which is taking place. Therefore cooperation between home and school is becoming more and more necessary to make vital and helpful connection between the home which gives the informal education, and the school which gives the formal. By this cooperation both supplement each other making education a harmonious constructive process. It is highly desirable to establish so strong an interrelation between home and school that the evil which now influences the child can be counteracted. The only way to accomplish this unity is by convincing the parents of the need for new tactics in meeting problems. The two agencies, home and school, which are working wholeheartedly for the welfare of the child should find a common meeting ground that will enable them to place implicit faith in one another. The school is the logical center to achieve this purpose.

Little can be accomplished until home and school work together. The need for cooperation is urgent. How can the teacher inculcate desirable social habits and democratic traits of character if her efforts are counteracted by contrary home practice? It is impossible for the school to accomplish miracles without the help of the home. Desirable character traits are taught in the classroom in the hope that their practice will be extended to the child's activities outside of the school environment where he spends most of his life.

Thinking persons will recognize the danger of keeping parents uninformed of modern techniques. Not only are they unable to realize the necessity for changing their own methods in disciplining and teaching, but by their misguided efforts to

assist the child, they may undo all that the school is accomplishing. Parents have been known to do their child's research, write his reports, and do his projects, honestly believing that in this way they are cooperating with the teacher.

Another reason for the coordination of school and home is that instructing the parents in the new ideals is only half the work. The school must also find out how the child applies his new knowledge in his daily contacts.

When we consider education as growth resulting from reconstruction of experience we recognize more the importance of cooperation between home and school. Where does this growth take place? Which factors influence growth most? Could the influence contributed to growth ever be limited to the home or to the school separately? Or, could we have two independent lines of growth one to be followed at home and the other at school? This cannot be done as long as education is dealing with the whole unified child from birth throughout his whole life. Education should not be limited to one of these two institutions because, if limited it is an incomplete education which does not contribute to the fullest growth of the child.

If this growth is most effective during the "formative years", the early years of the child's life, then cooperation becomes most necessary during these years when the child is plastic and can be modified. During these years he is having his first experiences which provide the tool for his future development and behavior. "A primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience by environing conditions, but that they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth. Above all, they should know how to utilize the surroundings, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them all that

they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worthwhile."⁽¹⁾ Thus, we see that home and school should cooperate to:

1. Provide the child with meaningful and educative experiences.
2. Help him understand and get the meaning of these experiences.
3. Make him live his experiences and learn from them.

Of great importance here is the effect of the environment. Any environment which the child comes into contact with, has its effect on his growth and development. The home and the school make the most important phases of the child's environment. The home, being the first environment after the child's birth, is mostly responsible for children's differences in behavior and ways of adjustment. The school should study the home conditions that make the child what he is and try to modify them and build what could rightly be built on them.

Another important need for cooperation comes when the child is physically and mentally ready to go to school. Here the child goes through a very sensitive and important stage. If the school is too different from his home and community a conflict arises between children and their parents, so that the adjustment becomes twofold. The child is not sure which is the right way to follow. He loves his parents and he respects and admires his teachers. What should he do? "A divided world, a world whose parts and aspects do not hang together, is at once a sign and a cause of a divided personality. When the splitting-up reaches a certain point we call the person insane. A fully integrated personality, on the other hand, exists only when successive experiences are integrated with one another. It can be built up only as a world of related objects is constructed."⁽²⁾

(1) John Dewey, Experience and Education: P. 35

(2) Ibid, p. 43. Experience and Education: P. 43

This struggle, that is taking place within the child when faced with a gap that exists between his home and his school, must be understood by the teachers and the parents and they should make all the effort to lessen the gap. Transition from home to school should never be sudden and new. It should be gradual and natural, because the sudden change has a very dangerous result on the child's personality. Children before formally being registered in the school might visit the school with their parents to get introduced to it, and to become familiar with it.

Considering the physical development of the child it is very important for the school to give guidance and direction for the child's nutrition and care. The home sometimes cannot pay full attention to this responsibility for economic reasons, carelessness or ignorance. The school here can carry out a program which might include:-

1. Check visits to the home by the nurse or the teacher.
2. Assistance from public or private agencies in treating children from low income homes.
3. Immunization for preventable diseases.

When we come to the emotional development of the child we recognize mostly the need for this cooperation. "No parent can take care of all of their children's needs. Parents are inclined to read their own needs and desires into what they think are the children's. Then, too, they worry for fear that they are not doing what is best, and in their very concern defeat their ends."⁽¹⁾ The teacher of early childhood has an opportunity which parents lack because the

(1) Leonard, Miles, Van der Kar, *op. cit.*, p. 351. *Child: P. 221*

child is often so used to mother's nagging that her talks are not so much cared for. Moreover the teacher usually studies more Psychology than the parents and thus knows more ways and means of handling many different types of children, thus meeting this situation in a more scientific manner.

"The school helps parents to assume their duties more intelligently. Their wholehearted cooperation is necessary in order to carry over methods of guidance into the home and make the training consistent. They need to get the proper perspective of the young child's place in the home and to incorporate the principles and methods of procedure used in the elementary school, thus bringing about a functional partnership in child education."⁽¹⁾

The teacher must remember that the child entering even this first level of school life is not a novice at living. He has had experiences in the home and out of it. He has acquired a system of habits, skills, and attitudes. He has a fund of learned behavior. His emotional life may be moving toward a harmonious pattern, or it may be already much shattered by the result of inconsistent treatment, frustrations, and tensions. Many abstract ideas are emerging. Even the child under two years of age has developed his own technique for controlling or adjusting to his world. In short he is a person with an individuality all his own. Our knowledge of this age is limited. We are doubtful about the foundations of the many negative behavior responses. It is at this point that home education and cooperation become the most valuable phase of our education.

The school builds upon what the home contributes, and wholehearted cooperation between these two institutions is needed for the child's ideal emotional and social development. This cannot be accomplished through talking. It is

(1) Ibid, p. 353. See also "The Child at Home and School", p. 353.

the interaction between the child and his environment, the product of self-determination and evaluated choices and decisions. The child must have a sense of belonging. It is the lack of this feeling that makes him stubborn and uncooperative. The curriculum must provide enterprises for groups where the personal element is submerged in the cooperative contribution. The child must have a satisfaction of achievement in a united effort so that he may learn to rejoice in the success of others and avoid selfishness, jealousy, personal emphasis, and social maladjustment.

The modern school is striving to discover, examine, eliminate all fears by studying the child's worries, his thoughts, his hopes, his adequacies and his inadequacies. It believes that in developing a healthy emotional life it is essential to know, understand, and appreciate just how the child feels about his experiences and what emotional responses come to him from his daily living; then, only, it is possible for the teacher to guide him in terms of the way he feels rather than by what he does or says.

Thus we see that only through working together can home and school supplement each other's needs. To the child's teachers the parents can clarify the picture of his health and personal habits and his emotional responses in relation to the intimate life of his home. The school can help to organize, integrate, and give points to the parents' approach to their child's training and growth. Both together can work for a type of community living which will most benefit each individual, young or old.

Coming to social development we say that social behavior is traceable to one's environment. The child learns early in life what reactions are expected

of him in certain situations, and these reactions become automatic before he is old enough to question them. Thus we see that social and emotional stability leads directly to a consideration of the adjustment that has or is being made by each adult who comes in contact with the children at home and school. Some knowledge of practical psychology and mental hygiene is important for all such persons, especially teachers who should, in turn, give this knowledge in a simple form to the parents to use it. For how can a child believe what is told him about sharing and helping, if the person telling him feels imposed upon and is basically uncooperative? Most of the social habits such as taking turns, sharing toys, ideas, and materials, understanding and appreciating others are developed by observing those around and especially in the children's play. Thus it is important for the home and the school to know their children's play mates and to observe, indirectly, their play and guide them. Ideal guidance of the child develops a confidence in his own powers of observation, exercises his judgment, and gives him courage to help in the making of his own decisions. School and home should share in providing him with valuable and varied experiences which make possible his participation in all the major functions of social life on his own level of understanding and development, experiences that, too, motivate his thinking and reasoning, and sharpen his creative power of imagination and flexible adjustment. A separation between home and school is a separation of the child's experiences and sharing of these experiences which in turn narrows his field of creative work.

Right habit formation necessitates cooperation at a very early stage because early habits are very effective and strongly established. This should be done in the child's work and during his leisure time. Capacities and skills can be

discovered during the child's use of his leisure time, thus enabling the teachers and the parents to direct him in the right way, using his natural interests and capacities as the best stimulating and motivating power. Children's interest should be taken into great consideration because many homes, especially in the East, are not so enlightened as to distinguish between constructive and destructive interests. They might even encourage a destructive interest thinking that, "Now it doesn't matter, he is a child, he will change." This is very dangerous because habits and interests established in him as a child are the most effective. The school which is supposed to be more enlightened should direct and help the home to see and direct constructive interest in children. These interests should be varied and natural, and should be in line with the continued growth of the child. The home gives the old stimulus and interests. The child, when coming to school, has certain interest to be developed and guided. What are these interests? How can we make use of them? This the school can't know unless there is a fundamental cooperation between it and the home. The school wants to build new interest in the child, for example interest in reading. How can the child feel and respond to that if his home does not supply him with the books and stories that stimulate his interest, or if his parents do not understand and encourage his new interest? Interest might be used very effectively in building right habits in children. Home and school should offer opportunities through which desirable qualities may be learned and practiced until they become firmly established in the child.

Individual differences, as we said, might be due to many reasons other than difference in I.Q. These reasons might be emotional, Psychological,

Physical, and social. The way the child is brought up in the home, the way he has been and is being handled there is a very important factor in forming his personality. To solve these problems the home should be very deeply studied and investigated to know the factors that contributed to making the child what he is, to try and solve these problems with the parents' help, and thus to make his growth very effective and constructive. The home here, and in all other cases, should be honest in giving the information needed, thus shortening the way for the school and cooperating with it to help the child in a normal, healthy, and happy development.

CHAPTER TWO

A CRITIQUE OF THE PRESENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN SYRIA
AND ITS EFFECT ON COOPERATION

In Chapter I it was emphasized that sound education necessitates close and fundamental cooperation between home and school. Effective education cannot take place if limited to one of these institutions alone.

To understand the prevailing practice of home-school cooperation in Syria it is necessary to consider the administration and organization of the official program and the principles and practices of education followed by teachers and educational leaders, and their underlying philosophy. Do these help or hinder cooperation between home and school?

I. AIMS OF SYRIAN EDUCATION

The first article of the Syrian Educational constitution of 1944 defines the fundamental task of the Syrian Ministry of Education as: "Giving a good education to the new generation in all aspects: physical, moral, and intellectual - in order that each of its citizens might develop a strong body, good character, and sound thinking; loving his country, proud of his nationality, conscious of his duties, equipped with the knowledge which he needs in his life, capable of serving his country with his mental and physical powers, and with his productive efforts."⁽¹⁾

(1) Mathews and Akkrawi, "Education in the Arab Countries of the Near East", p. 340.

II. ORGANIZATION OF THE SYRIAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

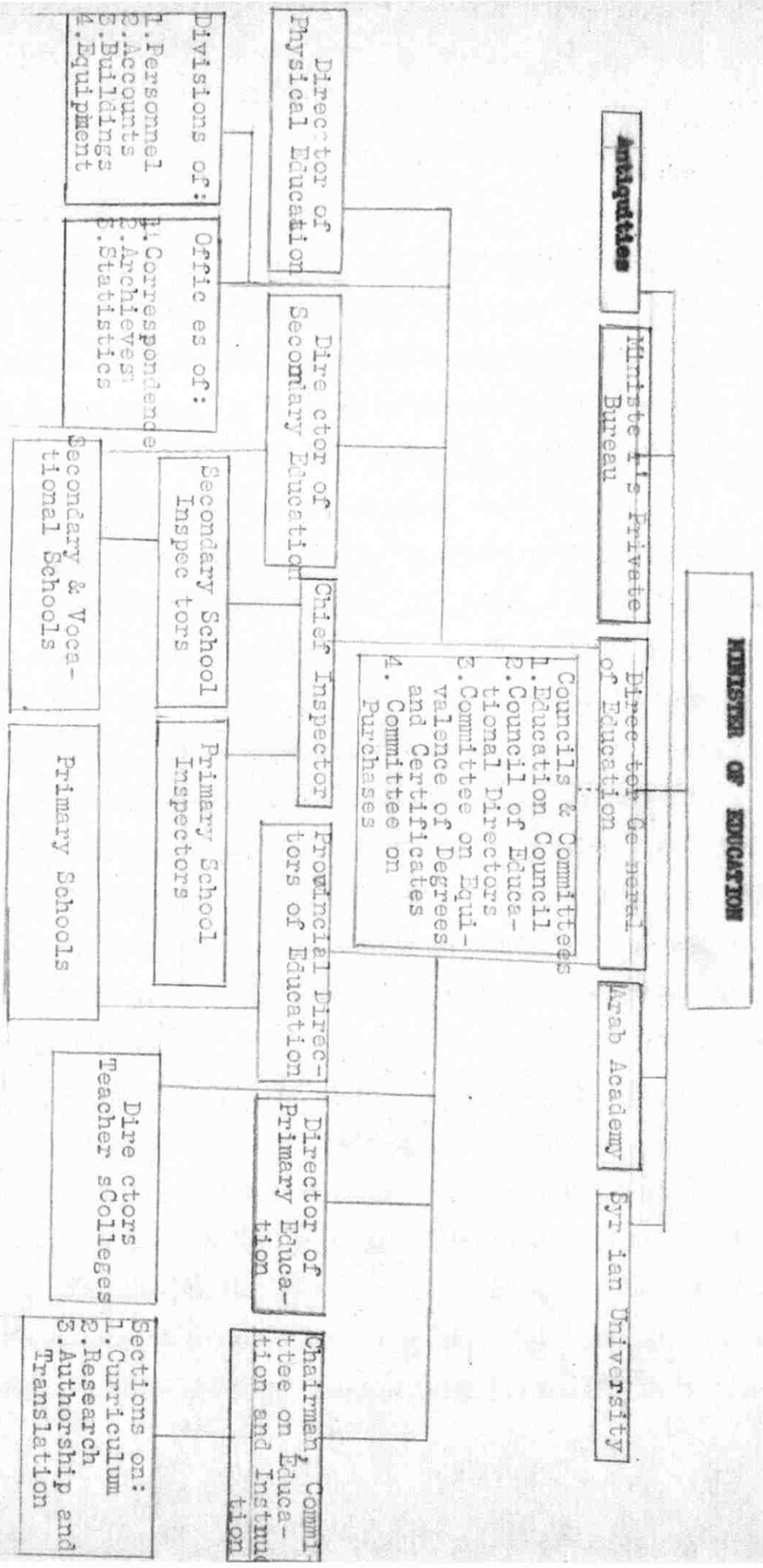
To attain its aims Syrian education has a special system of organization and administration which has many elements remaining from the political organization of the Turkish period as well as from the far-reaching influences of the French mandatory system. This system is almost completely centralized, and a look to the chart on the following page gives us an idea of how it is organized and carried on.

A. Centralization and Examinations and Their Effect on Cooperation.

Thus the present educational system in Syria is highly centralized. Everything has to come from the Ministry of Education whose controlling influence extends to the village as well as the city school. Appointments of teachers, setting of policies, curriculums, textbooks, plans for expansions, examinations, certificates, timing of class sessions and recess, dates of opening and closing of schools, financial expenses, and even appointing a janitor. Regulations governing all these details and many others, such as providing school buildings and equipments, are handed down from the central office of the Ministry of Education. Under the central office there are regional offices which take their orders from the central ministry. The regional offices have very limited influence on the shaping of educational policies. The job of these regional offices is to carry the orders of the ministry to those subordinate to them and see that they apply these orders properly. The local communities have very little or nothing to do concerning any educational matter. This hinders people's interest in the school, their concern about it, or their cooperation in its running. The school is not considered as a part of the community, but as a part of government which is

This chart is taken from Matthews & Ashman p. 328

SIRIA : ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, 1946

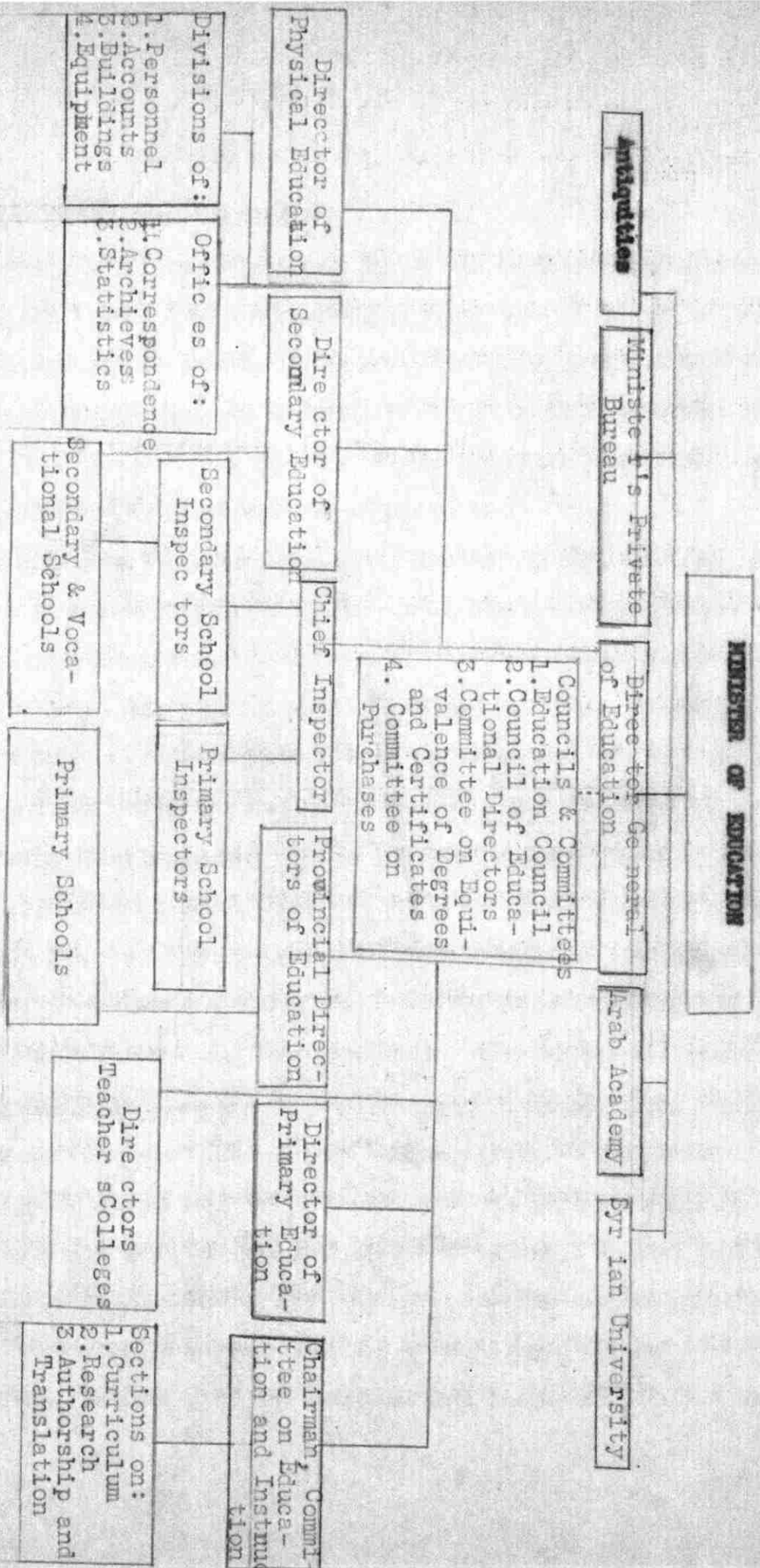


— Solid lines indicate administrative authority.

--- Broken lines lead to councils & committees

This chart is taken from Matthews & Abraham P. 328

SYRIA - ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, 1946



— Solid lines indicate administrative authority.
 --- Broken lines lead to councils & committees

something different from the people.

Students' parents do not share in any of the school's affairs because everything has to come from the Ministry of Education. They have no responsibility towards the school. This, psychologically, develops in them a negative attitude toward the school; they feel that it is a strange place for them. It does not belong to them. People are usually not interested in a thing unless they spend time and effort on it.

The teacher, on the other hand, finds himself rigidly restricted by regulations that make good teaching difficult. Young children must be kept very quiet, something against their nature. Courses of study planned by people far removed from children must be followed strictly. A certain number of minutes of such subjects as reading, geography, and writing must be taught each day no matter what circumstances arise. Teachers are required to use unscientific, mechanical systems of rating and are judged by the standing their pupils make on these unreliable findings. A teacher, therefore, cannot feel secure in his position, even though he is doing a good job. He may find himself hindered from doing things which he knows are for the children's good. All these result in making the teacher uninterested in his job with such a limited freedom and a narrow consideration to what he may see as good for the child. People like to create and originate; this gives them a feeling of self-assurance and self satisfaction, especially gifted people, but when they see that this feeling has to be kept in themselves and find no way out they feel hindered, unsatisfied, and frustrated. Thus they cannot work whole-heartedly and spend their effort and intelligence in their work. Article 40 of the constitutional issue on "Rules and Orders"

states: "The rights and responsibilities of teachers, educational principals and chiefs of education are assigned to them by the Ministry of Education in the form of special rules and orders."⁽¹⁾ With such a limited freedom, which is strictly supervised, how could the conscious teacher or the good educator try to improve educational conditions and begin new projects for that purpose? How could he go deep into basic problems of education and try to solve them? Or, with such a rigid and stated system to be carried on, how would he be able to realize the relations between his school program and his students' parents? There is nothing to connect him with the parents. On the contrary, their interference might be considered as a hindrance to educational success.

One might say here: "But the constitution does not prevent contact between the school and the home. On the contrary, it requires such contact, because it states the following:

"1. Every student's grades and warnings must be recorded in his school record to be sent to his parents or guardians. Comments on the student's behavior and academic success, must be included also. A copy of this card is to be kept in the school. (Article 38)

2. The administration of the school must cooperate with the children's parents or guardians for guidance and direction. Therefore, each student whether boarder or day student should have - if parents are away - a guardian in the town where the school is located. (Article 74).

3. The principal should notify the student's parents or guardians of

(1) The Syrian Ministry of Education, "Rules and Orders", P. 23, 1945.

every important school action taken concerning the student. If necessary, the principal might ask the father or the guardian to come to the school for an interview. (Article 75)

4. Whenever a student is absent from school, the principal should notify his father or guardian unless the student presents a note, signed by the father or the guardian, which explains the causes of his absence. (Article 76)

5. Whenever possible, students' families should be invited to attend parties, plays, and other school activities. (Article 79)

6. The school principal should be in continuous contact with all the students' families to cooperate with them in guiding and directing the students, and supervising their work and progress in a way which makes the school a source of enlightenment, a center of social cooperation, and a stimulus for continuous activity. (Article 80)⁽¹⁾

These articles provide some helpful steps at the beginning, but, unfortunately, they represent the ideal not the actual situation. These rules are not put into practice. The school might invite parents to a play once a year or it might not do it at all. In fact many schools do not. Cases of absence are not reported to parents until they are numerous or serious. Most of school principals and teachers are very rarely, if ever are, in contact with all the students' families or cooperate with them in guiding and directing the children. These facts are shown by informal observation of the writer of many schools, her talks with some teachers and parents, and by 70 answers given by Syrian teachers to a questionnaire distributed

(1) Sati' Al-Husri, "Hawliat Al-Sakafat Al-Arabiya", p. 112.

(1)
to them for this study.

The ministry, which sets these regulations, does not enforce their application strictly. The supervisor comes to the school to check for academic progress only. Contacts with parents are not of his concern or interest.

Moreover, besides the neglect these rules find in most of the cases, there are many limitations to them:-

1. These articles state, mostly, a form of school's duty towards parents rather than strong cooperative relations to be established and encouraged. They are not built on psychological principles. For example, they state that parents should be informed about academic and disciplinary problems instead of asking teachers to study the causes of these problems with parents and try to cooperate with them in solving such problems. Thus the principal might think that his work ends with informing parents.

2. Articles 74 and 80 state that contact should be done for pupil's guidance and direction, but the statements do not go deeper to give some help and direction to what kinds of guidance and contact are best to be followed, how could they be followed and in what cases. Are they to be limited to correspondence for academic affairs? All this information is needed by the average Syrian teacher.

3. Article 80 states that contact should be made for the purpose of cooperating with parents in directing and supervising the children's work and progress in such a way which will make the school a source of intellectual

(1) This questionnaire will be fully discussed in Chapter III.

enlightenment, a center of social cooperation, and a stimulus for continuous activity.

In order to be able to do that there are some points which have to be included:-

- a) All phases of the child's development should be stressed in this cooperation.
- b) The school should interact, in all its affairs, with the community and symbolize it.
- c) Contact should have as one of its aims to raise the family's intellectual and social standards in the possible ways. A very important factor for constructive school-home relations

4. These articles limit contact to be done through the principal. The principal should do so and so. By such limitation the results are:-

- a) That, we either expect the principal in his school, which at least has 150 pupils, to know everything needed about each pupil in order to help him, or, when the principal does not know enough, to have a very superficial kind of contact.

The principal's complete knowledge of all these pupils is not possible especially when we know that he teaches very few of them or non of them. Thus what is actually taking place is the superficial, limited kind of contact.

- b) Even with the superficial kind of contact the principal might either get tired or un-interested in the work thus do not carry it on always.

- c) The teacher's feeling of responsibility towards his students is lessened when these contacts have to be done through the principal in a routine and superficial way. In fact a good number of the teachers who

answered the questionnaire said: "We don't take effective roles in these contacts. They are mostly done through the administration."

Again, all these limitations of contacts and their forms are by-products of centralization and its theoretical system.

Besides limiting the teacher's effort in both teaching and contacts, this complete centralization gives no consideration to individual differences and abilities. Every student has to learn the same thing, and move at the same rate. What the ministry assigns must do for everybody. The child is not taught according to his abilities and capacities but according to what the ministry assigns. Instead of making the laws conform to child's capacities, abilities, and interests, they try to make the child conform to the laws they assign. The fifth item of the issue on "Internal Rules" states: "No book may be taught in elementary or primary schools unless it is assigned by the Ministry of Education".⁽¹⁾ Thus, if we seek by cooperation to discover individual differences and guide pupils according to their differences and abilities, what would be the need for this cooperation in such a system when all children are to be taught the same and are expected to proceed at the same rate?

The curriculum and the method of teaching are too dry and uninteresting to the child and often to the parents who do not see any use of their child's studies in his everyday life. Courses of study are very much filled with logically organized subject matter unrelated to the environment and too heavily loaded and difficult for the average student to be able to master them. The idea of making the curriculum and the standards fitting to pupils'

(1) "Internal Orders", "Al-Nizam Al-Dakhili", The Department of Education, Syrian Republic, Damascus, 1949, p. 2.

capacities and abilities, though always mentioned in theory, does not find much application in practice.

Such an inflexible and rigidly assigned curriculum takes education away from being one with every day experiences. What suits this region does not suit the other. Education becomes uninteresting to both students and teachers; a duty rather than a pleasure. Book learning is the end of this education. This book-learning has to take place in the school, more exactly in the classroom. So how could the parents have anything to do here?

These assigned facts hinder the process of cooperation and make it unnecessary. Because, even if contact has been done, and it was found that certain changes concerning subject-matter and method have to be made to suit the child's ability, centralization would hinder such thing from taking place. Cooperation has, among its aims, to bring together the school and the home, enable both to share in providing educational and living experiences for the child thus helping him be adjusted to his community and his everyday life. But when education is not life like and is separated from life, when the school seems to be a completely different world for the child, what would be the need for this cooperation? What goal would it serve?

Furtunately, these facts have been realized by Syrian Educational leaders. One of them who is the Head of the Educational Committee and the Secretary of the National Committee of Education in Syria, groups the educational problems which Syrian education needs to solve, in the following requirements:-

"1. How to reconstruct the educational curriculum in the Syrian school to make it suitable for the Syrian community and its needs and to make the curriculum serve the process of child's growth and develop him into a well-

educated man.

2. How to enable the school to provide educative experiences for the children, experiences taken from their every day life and their surroundings.

3. How to make education serve its most important aim, i.e., emphasizing the democratic values which are fundamental to the Syrian country".

(2)

The system of examinations followed in Syria gives us another by-product of its centralized organization. Examinations are rigidly prepared and administered and they are stressed in every period of study. No student can pass from one grade to the next without first passing the examinations. Side by side with the examinations held usually by teachers in the school in the different stages of the educational ladder, there are three main public examinations which are prepared by the central office of the Ministry of Education. At the end of the fifth year in the elementary cycle there is the "Public Primary Examinations". Secondary education consists of 6 years of study. It is divided into two stages; the first four years compose the "Intermediate" stage and terminate in the "Public Intermediate Examinations", "The Brevet"; the last two years, the "Preparatory" stage, are divided into literary and scientific sections, with curricula. This stage leads to a public examination, after which the successful pupil gets the "Certificate of Completion of Preparatory Secondary Studies", or, "The Baccalaureat", which entitles him to higher education.

(1) The Arabic Teacher, March, 1951.

(2) a) "Anzimat Al-Imtihanat Al-Ammah", The Department of Education, Syrian Republic, Damascus, 1945.

b) Matthews & Akrawi, op. cit., pp. 347-350.

Public examinations are held under strict supervision so that those who deliver the questions to the students in the examination hall do not have any idea of what the questions might be until they open the signed envelop coming directly from the Ministry of Education. And those who correct the papers cannot know the name of the pupil whose paper they are correcting. Such a system has an element of mistrust of school authorities. There is no dependence on principals and teachers to judge the ability and progress of their own students. All these tend to open a gap and lessen the feeling of friendliness and belongingness between the school, the teachers, and the students. At certain times, the student does not belong to his school and teachers. There is something separating them.

Examinations are regarded as serious obstacles to be overcome because their passing is an essential prerequisite, not only for admission to higher institutions but to many intermediate careers. Thus worries and tensions about them begin to occupy the teacher's, the parent's and the pupil's mind from the moment the child enters the school. This worry about examinations and their product tends to intensify the purely intellectual atmosphere of the school. Students, as a result, do not pay attention to courses that are not included in the public examinations and so some essential courses which relate education to life and which are necessary for life are neglected such as Home Economics for girls, studying the curriculum becomes a means to get passing grades and not to give practical help for meeting new life-situations. Children are separated from their environment and their homes and limited to their books whether at home or at school. Books and facts follow the student wherever he goes. Parents are disgusted with the school which

causes their children so many worries and troubles. The name of the school is mentioned with a repulsive and dreadful feeling instead of loving and friendly one.

One Syrian educational leader writes: "The system of examinations and grades is a wrong one to be followed and applied. The student feels that the ultimate aim of education is passing the government examination and obtaining certain degrees. But for his whole future, whether social, political, or emotional, he has no preparation.

Concepts of modern education insist that examinations, as being applied and stressed, have the wrong effect on the child's character. Their deep secrecy, and the strict measures to conceal everything about them, put the student in a fearful state of mind which tempts him to cheat in the examination. These attempts, no doubt, affect the child's moral concepts⁽¹⁾. So, how could we relate these examinations and their maladjusting effects to modern educational and psychological principles which insist on the kind of education which results in an all-sided growth of the individual? The Syrian educational constitution aims also, besides the intellectual development, at the physical, moral, and social developments. But could we say that our system, with what has been said about it till now, is as successful as it ought to be?

The bad effects of this system of examination on teachers, pupils and parents could be more realized when we are aware of the fact that less than 50% of the students entering the examinations, have the chance to pass at

(1) The Arabic Teacher, April and May 1951, p. 753.

the first session.

Thus such a system of examinations is certainly apt to affect the relations between home and school because as long as education is conceived as an academic preparation for passing the examination, and as long as the teacher and the student are busy in memorizing facts to prepare for the examination, the home will remain remote from the educational process. The school is the school, its main job is to enable the student pass his examinations. In fact the quality of the school is judged by the number of its students who pass the examination, so why to put the home in something that does not belong to it. Parents, on the other hand, see no reason for their interference in something that does not concern them. Thus they keep their distance watching from far with all worries and anxiety about their children's success. All these feelings of fear, unrest, and worries in both students and parents widen the gap between them and the school and makes it a source of tensions and frustrations to parents and children.

This is a brief discussion of the centralized Syrian system of education and its effect on cooperation between home and school. However, to have a better understanding of this system, something has to be said about its underlying philosophy.

B. The Philosophy of Syrian Education and Its Effect on Cooperation.

The philosophy behind the Syrian education emphasizes the intellectual phase of education most. Intellectual development through getting of facts is the thesis of this philosophy. This is based on the French philosophy which emphasizes logic and intellect. Its main points are:-

1. Man is a rational being, by educating his mind you enable him to

solve all his problems whether social, intellectual, physical, psychological, and economic.

2. Education consists of a body of facts which it is necessary for every citizen to know in order to develop his intellectual ability. These facts can be determined by educational leaders and put into a program which is handed down from the central ministry, through the inspector, to the school principal, to the teacher, and finally to the child.

The best means for finding out whether the child has learned these facts or not is by means of an examination centrally directed and controlled.

This system is greatly related to the theories of faculty psychology, disciplinary theory, and the old theory of Transfer of Training. These theories today are being questioned by modern psychology.

Thus our educational philosophy is mostly theoretical. Mere intellectual development is its most outstanding aim. Something unwelcomed by modern educational and psychological principles which stress the fact that no phase of development can be sound and healthful if separated from other phases of development and growth, and to be able to obtain this all-sided growth education should begin with life and continue throughout life, i.e., all the child's community is his school and all his experiences no matter how simple they are will have either right or wrong effect on him. Experiences are essential part of his educative subject-matter. Thus our educational philosophy, with its over emphasis on fact-getting and book learning deprives the process of education from being one with life.

In such a system parents feel that the main thing they should do is to send the child to the school to sharpen his mind with facts, and test for

these facts through examinations. If he passed the examinations then his education is effective and you can throw him into the midst of any problem. He will succeed.

School, books and examinations are the first and the last thing to care about. Never mind another things. Now, what, except watching and worrying, could be the home's role here?

The Syrian educational system, with its underlying philosophy does not conform with modern concepts of education. At least not in practice. Modern education does not approve of having a generation in which all learn the same thing by the same method at the same time. Individuals differ, and their education should permit cultivating these differences.

To have some view of the field of education affected by this system, Table No. 1 on the following page shows us the number of government elementary schools operating under the present system of education in Syria, and the number of students and teachers in these schools. These statistics were
(1)
taken in the year 1948-49.

III. THE PROBLEM OF TEACHERS

The problem of centralization and its by-products is not the only educational problem in our system. There are many other problems, one of which is the problem of teachers which is of no less importance than that of centralization. Teachers in Syria should have certain qualifications which entitle them to teach. "No teachers may be employed in elementary and

(1) This table is taken from the "Ministry of Finance", "Office of Statistics", Syria, 1948-1949.

ACADEMIC YEAR 1948-1949

Districts	Number of Students				Number of Schools				Number of Teachers
	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Coeducation		
Elementary Total	153222	114,373	38849	1141	931	185	25	3599	
Damascus	40869	27046	13823	204	151	51	2	957	
Homs	11922	8347	3575	84	53	16	15	286	
Hama	12575	8926	3649	59	47	12	-	261	
Latakia	22982	17788	5194	223	203	19	-	467	
Aleppo	36458	27638	8820	224	181	43	-	844	
Euphrates	6572	5309	1263	70	54	10	6	208	
Jazerah	4443	3874	569	98	89	9	-	209	
Drus's District	9547	8351	1196	99	86	12	1	193	
Horan	7854	7094	760	80	67	13	-	174	

TABLE No. I

primary schools unless they are graduates of elementary and primary teachers colleges. In case of need, however, secondary school graduates may be employed on a temporary basis, but may not be confirmed in their posts unless or until they have had the required professional preparation and have passed a special examination in subjects of education and methods of teaching. Only graduates of the Higher Teachers College or of higher institutions in which they specialized in the subjects they are to teach may be appointed to intermediate and preparatory schools, except in case of emergency need, when temporary appointments may be made. Only candidates who have received a doctor's degree may be appointed to teach in higher institutions. Teachers of special subjects, such as physical education, art, music, home economics, manual arts, may be appointed regardless of the academic level which they have reached, provided they pass a special examination of aptitude in their subjects".⁽¹⁾ But because there is a great scarcity of teachers which results in numerous emergency cases, no strict measures are taken and followed for teachers' appointments. Thus the problem of teachers becomes an important factor in our discussion.

The teacher's success in his fundamental job is not measured by the amount of facts he stuffs into the student's mind, but by the amount of growth and creative thinking he stimulates in the student.

Many times a student comes to school for the first time with wrong social, moral, or emotional habits. His parents did not put any effort toward correcting him. They might not recognize that there is anything wrong with him.

(1) Matthews and Akrawi, *op. cit.*, p. 342. > *Countries of the Near East*, p. 112.

And if they did what could they do? They don't know. Here the wise teacher has a triple job: to see the wrong habit and its causes, to replace it by the good habit, and to investigate the home, help it and seek its help in both processes.

But can we expect our teachers to realize their important role and do it faithfully? Only few might do that. Most either do not know or are indifferent and disinterested. Such conditions might be due to many reasons:-

1. Lack of trained teachers which results in losing the true aim and the right methods of education. Up till very recently, Syria used to have only two Teacher-Training Colleges for elementary school teachers. One in Damascus and the other in Aleppo. Very lately two others were added, one in Homs and one in Latakia. There is only one Teacher-Training College for secondary school teachers which is also newly opened. Thus with so few Teacher-Training Colleges we can't expect all our teachers to have had courses in teacher training.

2. Many teachers look to their profession only as a means to earn a living. They are neither interested in the work nor in the student.

3. Low salaries and lack of appreciation for teachers. Salaries range approximately from L.Syr. 138 as the lowest (a teacher with "Brevet") to L.Syr. 350 as the highest (a teacher with Doctor's degree). Something which makes teachers disinterested and unfaithful to their job. Moreover, that affects the quality of teachers because trained educators try to seek another job which might give them more money or, if they keep in teaching, they look for another part-time job to supplement it.

4. Wrong relations between teachers, students, and parents resulting

from lack of interested, conscientious teachers who seek and try to establish good relations. Many times a student develops a feeling of fear and hatred rather than a feeling of love and appreciation towards his teachers. He does not want to meet the teacher outside of school because, to him, the teacher is like a police man whose presence is unwanted. (I remember that when I was at the elementary school in Idlib the most unpleasant thing to me was meeting the principal or one of the teachers outside of school because whenever they used to meet me playing they would say: "Playing instead of studying! are not you ashamed?" This and many similar remarks would make me hate to see the teachers. Their visits to our home were disturbing to me. I would hide until they left).

5. The attitude and behavior of teachers are influenced by people's attitude toward them. Parents usually expect the teacher to lead a life that will serve as an example for those she teaches, to be somehow not quite a human. They put many restrictions on her, so make it hard for her to be the normal sort of human being that should live with children in the school. It is important for the parents to see the teacher as a person with needs and interests of her own. They must understand that a teacher's experiences have a direct influence upon her ability to cooperate with parents and community agencies in a friendly and active manner.

6. The untrained teacher is not sure of himself, he might develop a feeling of lack of self-confidence if parents are present. Thus he looks to be formal and hot-tempered about every remark they give. He thinks that it is something humiliating to him to have parents interfere with his job.

"How, am I not able to do my work?"

IV. FURTHER DISCUSSIONS

All the factors we have discussed so far in relation to Syrian education such as its philosophy, organization, administration, aims, and teachers, all these as they are conceived and carried on, result in making our educational system what it is. An education which is so rigid and unpractical to the child that it does not serve the purpose of providing him with flexible ability to behave and adjust. So many times the child has to unlearn much of what he learned in school to be adjusted to his every-day life. The child sees his school in a completely different world from his home, and his home, in many cases, does not approve of the education he is getting out of school. What should the helplessness of child do? How to bring the two together? These are questions that occupy the individual's mind and, in many cases, might lead him to mal-adjustment.

One educational leader in Syria writes: "I was chosen to be one member of a committee whose work was to choose the students eligible to the new class of teacher-training which was opened for those having the "Baccalaureate" degree.

Through my discussion with those students I noticed that the education they received in school did not have any relation to their present and future life as citizens. Their minds were stuffed with mere theoretical facts which were required by the system of examination we have. These facts were memorized without any reference to thought or reason. The problems of the community in which they live, the problems of their city or town, of their country, and of their fellow citizens, even the problems of the whole world which were filling the newspapers, magazines, and radio; all these did not

attract their attention and they knew nothing about them. They have never read the Syrian constitution, and they think that the Arab League is a university in Egypt, and that the UNESCO is a city in America. Thus the school in which they were enrolled was like a monastery which the students attend not to help them in solving their every-day problems, but to separate them from every-day life, being satisfied with book-memorization." (1)

How can the individual adjust himself to two different worlds each of which walks in a divergent way? The home does not prepare him for the school, and the school has nothing in common with his home. We cannot have the right education unless the school is a symbol and an example of the child's wider community, unless he feels the relation between both.

The feeling of security which the child needs badly, is often lost at school because the school is such a harsh and strange place to him. Going to school is something uninteresting, but he does it because his parents want him to. "But", he might wonder, "What is the use of it?"

The child can never see any connection between his play, his interests, his vivid activity, his feeling of curiosity, and this education being followed at school. On the contrary, the school might be a kind of punishment to him, because there he feels deprived of everything that interests him.

All this need not be happen if the school, from the beginning, tries to establish informal and friendly relations with the home, inform the home of its work, give the parents a clear idea about it emphasizing their importance in the education of their children, and asking their cooperation

(1) "The Arabic Teacher", December 1950, p. 131.

in improving and getting the best possible outcome of the child's all-sided development.

If the school is to be concerned only with the child's intellectual development what will be the case with his other phases of development, which are of the same importance if not more? Would the child be able to adjust himself and behave intelligently only by means of his intellect? or would his intellect develop separately from other phases of his development, namely: physical, psychological, and social?

Surely it is not the possession of the three R's that counts in life, but one's ability to use them widely in his every-day experience. Few persons might fail in their business or home life for inability to read, write, or figure, but many fail because they lack initiative, originality, flexible adjustment, self-drive, vital interests, and ability to cooperate. Thus education should not confine itself to subject-matter facts; it should give children experience in meeting the problems of every-day living; it should give them a sense of accomplishment. To do that, it is necessary for the home and the school to walk hand in hand for providing these experiences.

Our educational system has many interwoven problems which cannot be solved separately. The basic need to solve them is a new, definite philosophy of education based on a deeper study of the requirement of society and individual together. Our changing world demands on the one hand an increase and extension of educational opportunities and on the other hand the discovery of the right education for the right individual in the best possible way.

School education alone cannot well-prepare the individual to live successfully in such a world of increasing complexity. There is an insisting demand

on a whole-life education to be carried on harmoniously in both the school and the home.

V. NEW TENDENCIES IN SYRIAN EDUCATION

However, new tendencies in Syrian education provide us with hopeful and encouraging factors for the establishment of good cooperative relations between home and school. Some of these tendencies are:-

1. The new tendencies of teachers and educational leaders to study the modern educational and psychological principles. That we could see by some of their written articles and by a change in the concept of education that was clearly seen in the answers given by 70 Syrian teachers to the questionnaire distributed to them for this study. Education is being realized by some teachers and educational leaders as something more than intellectual development. Friendly and cooperative relations between home and school are recognized as important for this new concept of education. One of those educational leaders who is a teacher at the same time writes, "There are many faults in our system of education. We all know that education cannot be limited to either the school or the home alone. It should be carried on in both together. But because many parents in Syria, especially mothers, are uneducated, it becomes the school's duty to take the most responsibility, and to try its best to establish cooperative and understanding relations with the home in order to make the school one with the community. But our school till now has not applied the practical methods which modern education insists upon. The school graduates, having no definite and clear way to follow, does not know how to deal with his community because, throughout his studies, he has been completely separated from it. His school has no relation to his

(1)
home and his every-day life."

2. The Ministry of Education is trying to make some reformation and reconstruction in the educational system. Authorities are being asked to study this system and give their reports and suggestions. Students are being sent outside to study, observe and specialize in new methods and needs. And a good portion of the budget is set for educational affairs. The Ministry of Education has between 20-25% of the whole Syrian budget.

3. Another new tendency is that, as a result of education and social advancements, people on the whole, whether parents, teachers, or students are realizing more and more the need of education; thus they are being willing to do any possible thing to bring about an effective and life-like education.

(1) "The Arabic Teacher", April and May 1951, p. 753.

CHAPTER THREE

DISCUSSION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Chapter II discussed the aims and the organization of the Syrian system of education, and the factors determining its nature. This discussion was followed by a consideration of the effect of this system on cooperation between home and school and the forces which help or hinder this cooperation.

In order to discover and determine more precisely the practical methods followed by teachers and school principals for cooperation between the parents and the school a questionnaire was designed and distributed among 105 Syrian teachers. The present chapter is based on the answers supplied by the teachers to the questionnaire.

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

A. Distribution:

Copies of the questionnaire were sent to schools which are located in the main centers of population in Syria. An attempt was made to choose those schools which represent a cross section both of the teaching profession and of the population.

The following is a description of these places:

Damascus - Capital of Syria. Situated in the southern part. Most advanced city in Syria with the largest number of schools.

Aleppo - Second largest city, more industrialized than Damascus. Situated in the northern part.

Latakia - Main sea-port of Syria with a mixed population.

Idlib - Small, conservative town situated in the northern part of Syria, near Aleppo.

Copies of the questionnaire were distributed as follows:-

<u>Place</u>	<u>Number</u>
Damascus	35
Aleppo	30
Latakia	20
Idlib	20
Total	105

Number of the questionnaire answered:-

<u>Place</u>	<u>Number</u>
Damascus	22
Aleppo	28
Latakia	10
Idlib	10
Total	70

B. Sampling:

The questionnaire was distributed among 105 male and female teachers.

Answers were classified as follows:-

40	answers received by male teachers.
30	answers received by female teachers.

70	Total answers.

All women teachers teach in girls' schools. Men teachers teach in boys' schools and some in girls' schools too.

All schools represented by these teachers are government schools. Their pupils come mainly from middle or low socio-economic level. Schools were both elementary and intermediate.

52 of the answers were given by teachers of elementary schools. (1)

18 of the answers were given by teachers of intermediate schools. (2)

70 Total answers.

Then

38 of the answers were given by teachers of girls' schools.

30 of the answers were given by teachers of boys' schools.

2 of the answers were given by teachers of coeducating schools.

70 Total answers.

C. The Questionnaire:

Both the questionnaire and the directions were given in Arabic. The following is the English Translation of the directions:

"The purpose of this questionnaire is to seek information about the degree and kind of cooperation which at present exists in Syrian education between home and school. It is also intended to discover the influence of the teacher's own philosophy of education on such cooperation. If you find it impossible to answer any of the questions, you may omit them. At the same time if you find that the space provided for each answer is not sufficient, kindly write on the back of the questionnaire or on another paper indicating the number of the question which you are answering. It is not necessary to

(1) The elementary school takes the child from 7-11 years of age.

(2) The intermediate school takes the child from 11-15 years of age.

sign your answers to this questionnaire if you prefer not to.

We trust that, in the interest of education, you will answer these questions clearly, frankly, and accurately."

The questionnaire consisted of two parts:

Part I - Asked for general information about teacher and school:

Name ...

Occupation ...

Name of School ... location ...

Girls' or Boys' School ...

Elementary or intermediate school ...

Part II - Included the following questions:

1. Is there any cooperation or communication between your school and the students' parents? What forms does such cooperation take? When does it take place?

2. Do you discuss your pupils' problems with their parents? Can you give examples of such discussions?

3. What, in your opinion, are the aims of education? Is cooperation between home and school necessary to realize these aims? Why?

4. What means do you suggest in order to establish and improve cooperation and friendly relations between the home and the school?

5. What difficulties stand in the way of this cooperation?

Because time was short and the writer could not go personally to these places, therefore, copies of the questionnaire were sent, with the directions, to responsible and able teachers who, the writer thought, could carry on the work of distributing the questionnaire and collecting the answers, whole -

heartedly. Most of the teachers who were asked to carry on this work were graduates of the American University of Beirut.

70 out of 105 copies of the questionnaire were answered and returned between 15-25 days after they had been sent.

D. Reactions:

Of the 105 copies distributed answers from 70 teachers were received. The others did not answer either because they were indifferent or for some other reasons. 39 of those who answered signed their answers while 31 did not. Some gave very brief answers, others gave more detailed ones.

E. Limitations of the Study:

There are three major limitations to this study: First, the small size of the sample; second, only the teachers' attitudes were studied, those of the parents only informally observed; third, only teachers in government schools were questioned.

To make up for these limitations as much as possible, the questionnaire was sent to schools in representative parts of the country. Furthermore, the system of education in Syria being highly centralized similar conditions prevailed in all schools. Since the parents are largely illiterate, their concern with the activities of the school is quite limited. "Yours is the flesh and mine the bones" is a common proverb in Syria. Indicating the indifference of the parent to what goes on in school and his implicit trust in it.

II. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In the following pages the answers to each question of the questionnaire will be discussed.

Question I

Is there any cooperation or communication between your school and the pupils' homes? What forms does such cooperation take? When does it take place?

a) Taking the first part of the question: "Is there any cooperation or communication between your school and the pupils' homes"? the answers to this part were classified as follows:

<u>Yes</u>	<u>Very Little</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Total</u>
6	39	25	= 70

These answers followed this distribution:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Very Little</u>	<u>Non</u>
Damascus	2	15	5
Aleppo	3	15	10
Latakia	1	5	4
Idlib	0	4	6

This distribution gives the probability that the larger the city the more possibilities for cooperation between school and parents exist. The causes here might be due to the fact that: (1) Mothers are less conservative and thus they can meet men teachers, and (2) More educated people, in general, live in large cities, and these people are usually more concerned about their children's education. At the same time good teachers are usually sent to big cities.

Examining the answers given by the 70 Syrian teachers to this question we notice that all those who indicated that there is cooperation between them and the parents did not really mean cooperation in its true sense. The form of cooperation they talk about was only a mere contact between them and the parents, which, in most of the cases took the form of a written note to the parents. In fact 75.5% of those who indicated the presence of contact between them and the parents, described this contact in the form of records, cards, or letters to parents. This form of contact takes place mostly when academic or disciplinary problems arise. 40 mentioned disciplinary problems as a cause for contact and 30 mentioned academic problems as a cause. In most of the cases it was only to inform the parents about the child's problem and not to cooperate with them in solving it, because most of the answers state: "When such a problem appears we tell the parents about it". And even for this mere contact there is nothing regular to keep it going on. Ten teachers indicated that if they meet parents by accident they discuss with them their children's problems. One teacher writes: "If I happen to meet the parent by accident I take advantage of that and discuss with him the child's affairs". Another teacher says: "When a disciplinary or academic problem appears we, sometimes, inform the parents about it. This information, in many cases, is done through the principal because he is the responsible one". The teacher, here, will not have the chance to meet parents face to face or write to them directly. Thus many advantages are lost which might arise when the two persons most concerned with the child's education meet together, i.e., his parent and his teacher. A female teacher in Latakia writes: "I, personally, do not share in such cooperation or communication

because it is done only through the principal who prefers to do such things in secret. As far as I can observe, cooperation does not exist. Communication is even very rare".

Psychological principles underlying every child's behavior are, in most of the cases, not taken into consideration. Only one teacher indicated that he discusses the child's psychological development with his parents. Another one criticises the present kind of communication between teachers and parents because it does not take into consideration the psychological factors underlying the child's behavior. None of the rest mentioned anything about this factor. Contact is concerned, usually, with the problem child. When this child becomes unbearable, the teacher tries to have contact with the parents to tell them about the problem and may be, in some cases, to ask them to punish the child at home too so that he will no more be a spoiled child. Punishment in most of the cases takes the place of psychological understanding. "The stick was made in heaven", is a common saying.

b) Coming to the second part of question I which is "What forms does this cooperation take?" the answers to this question were classified as follows:

45 out of the 70 answers indicated that there is a contact between them and the parents.

34 out of this 45 or 77.5 % of it said that contact between them and the parents takes the form of records, cards, or letters to parents.

8 out of 45 or 17.5 % of it said that it takes the form of meetings with parents, these meetings either take the form of social visits, or happen by chance when the teacher meets the parent unintentionally. In very few

cases the teacher intends to see the parent or vice versa. In fact only two teachers mentioned that parents come to discuss with them their children's affairs. Two other teachers indicated that they go to parents especially to discuss the child's affairs.

3 out of 45 or 7 % of 45 indicated that contact takes both forms.

Thus we see that most of the existing contact takes the form of letters or cards to parents which is a very limited way of contact and should not continue to be the only means for cooperation. Written documents can be helpful as a supplement to other types of contact. (1)

c) Part three of question I asks: "When does this contact take place?"

The following table gives us an illustration of the answers given by 70 Syrian teachers to this question:

<u>Cause</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1. Disciplinary problems	40
2. Academic failure	30
3. Absence or being late to school	13
4. Social misbehavior with others	7
5. Parents complaining about educational expenses	4
6. Physical matters or uncleanliness	4
7. Parents complain of child's misbehavior at home	3

We notice in this table that disciplinary problems and academic failure are considered as the most serious problems in Syrian schools.

(1) A fuller discussion of written documents and their limitations will be given in Chapter IV.

The reasons for that might be:

1. Being a conservative, Moslem country, the word moral is very rigidly and strictly used. Many kinds of normal behavior might be considered immoral such as:

- (a) Walking alone in the streets (in the case of girls).
- (b) Being out of home after sun-set.
- (c) Not being completely submissive to parents or teachers.
- (d) Going to movies.
- (e) Talking to members of the opposite sex.
- (f) Expressing one's ideas freely and frankly.

2. Considering man essentially a rational being whose intellectual development is most important, education in Syria stresses mastery of subject matter as the most important task of the school. Thus academic failure is an important problem.

None of the teachers mentioned that he communicated with the child's home because he was interested in the child and sought better ways of furthering his development. What are the factors which are at work influencing his development? In what kind of home does he live? What experiences are provided for him? How does he spend his leisure time? What are the things he is interested in? etc...

All these questions must be answered if the teacher is to be most helpful to the child. To promote the all-rounded development of the child and all factors contributing to it, should be the teacher's first concern. He must realize that the information and help which he can get through meeting with parents and discussing with them their children's problems and

needs will not be provided by any other means. Unfortunately, however, many teachers and many parents have not realized how important it is to sit down together in groups, or as individuals, and discuss in a friendly way their views and practices. Both groups tend to be on the defensive when meeting each other.

Parents seldom consult with the teacher except in cases of difficulty. The difficult child is the only pupil whose parents come to school. Since the parent of the good child rarely enters the building, he has no idea of the kind of life his child leads for five or seven hours every day.

However, it is not the intention here to minimize the value of what is taking place by way of contacts between parents and teachers; on the contrary, such contacts provide a helpful first step. But this step must be followed by other more constructive measures.

Question II

Do you, usually, discuss the pupil's problems with his parents? Can you give examples?

Answers here were classified as follows:

<u>Yes</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>No</u>
5	40	25

The following points are observed in these answers:

a) Most of the teachers who indicated that there is contact or cooperation between them and the parents were teachers of schools situated in Christian districts and having mostly Christian pupils. This increased contact might be due to the fact that Christian families are more liberal and they meet with members of the opposite sex while Moslems are conservative.

A girls' school teacher says: "When important problems arise, fathers come to ask about their daughters' difficulties. They would stay at the door and call the principal to talk to him. They consider it wrong to enter a girls' school."

b) 45 teachers indicated that, sometimes, they discuss the child's problems with his parents. 28 out of these 45 were teachers in boys' schools and 17 were teachers in girls' schools. Consequently, it follows that contact takes place more in boys' schools. Such results might be due to the fact that most of the parents in the Arab countries are more interested in boys' education. Thus they are more careful to know about boys' progress or failure and the causes behind this failure. Besides, fathers are, usually, more educated than mothers and thus feel more responsible for their children's education than mothers do. And because fathers are apt to meet men teachers more, and because they care more for boys' education it follows that such contact concerns boys more.

Another important factor here is that since contact concerns mostly disciplinary and academic problems, and since girls are more strictly observed and kept at home, they present less problems. At the same time their being at home gives them more time to study. Thus girls' disciplinary and academic problems become much less than those of the boys. Of course this is only a hypothesis which needs to be verified by more study.

e) A third fact which was shown through the answers to this question might be stated as follows: "There is more cooperation between parents and teachers when schools are situated in higher socio-economic districts than when they are located in the poorer communities. This might be a result

of the fact that richer districts are mostly inhabited by more intelligent, educated and professional people who are more interested and careful about factors influencing their children's education. At the same time these people have more influence in government affairs, thus they ask for good teachers. Furthermore, good and well trained teachers themselves ask to be sent to the wealthier and more advanced districts. Less able teachers are left to villages and poorer places.

d) Parents' attitudes were not formally studied and observed because this study is more concerned with the teacher's role in establishing co-operative relations. Yet, teachers' answers and our informal observation provide us with an idea of some parents attitudes and reactions to both their children and the school.

One teacher writes: "When I wanted to consult the father about his child's laziness he said: 'You are free to take whatever measure you wish to correct him. Do not consult me. I am powerless to reform him.'" There might be many reasons for such a parent's answer. Such parents might be either indifferent, irresponsible, have no time because they are working hard to maintain a living, or they feel inferior because they are intellectually and socially backward; they do not see how they can help their children. Such help looks to be above their ability. On the other hand, they are not prepared or accustomed to feel responsible for taking an active role with the school. The teacher is to them above criticism. He knows everything and he has the right to do everything. Education is his own business. One teacher writes: "It seems obvious that parents, in general, have put the whole responsibility of their child's education upon the

school's shoulders." Such parents are used to feel that the school is the school, the work of education is limited to its doors, thus they have no reason to interfere with it.

Some parents are mainly critical of the school. They dislike most of the things the school does. If their child fails or is unjustly treated (as seems to them) or behaves in a way which they don't like, they put all the blame on the teacher and the school: "There is something wrong with the whole school."

Being so critical and unsatisfied with their children's schooling might be a result of parents comparing the schools they were educated in with the schools their children are being educated in. Difference in school experience affects the parents attitude towards the school so that some of them feel that when the child does not have much home work to do, or when he enjoys going to school, something is wrong. Without recognizing it they say, in effect, "I went to a school which was very strict and hard. It was not very pleasant. I did not enjoy it. But look at the way I have turned out. That is the kind of education I want for my children."

"Be grateful to him who makes you cry and not to him who makes you laugh" is a common saying to many parents.

The critical attitude of some parents is also shown in their reactions towards any activity which the school makes. One elementary school principal said to me: "We say that school-plays and activities are good means to bring the school and the home together. The previous principal of this school gave a play for the parents last year, and till now they did not stop criticising her either for giving them back seats or for giving their

daughters small parts in the play. 'She gave my daughter a servant's role and somebody else's daughter a princess's role'. The principal continued saying: "The result was that I gave no play in the school this year to avoid such a headache."

Such critical and unfriendly attitudes might be lessened a great deal if the teachers and the principal entertain the parents in a friendly way when they come to attend the play and explain to them that there are so many people and very few places, and that the school is for them and for their children. Providing one or two places in the front rows for each family is a helpful way.

Many parents want their children to behave as grown ups. Other parents neglect their children and treat them as though they are rejected and unwanted. One teacher says: "I noticed that a pupil is always absent from class. When I investigated the matter I knew that his mother leaves the house every day at the time when the child comes home to have his dinner. The father is at work so the poor child has to prepare everything for himself, eat, and come back to school."

Other parents gave discouraging answers to teachers when they tried to consult them and cooperate with them. One teacher says: "When I consulted the father about his child's constant absence from school he answered: I cannot deal with this child." Another woman teacher writes: "Many times I call the pupils' mothers to meet me but they refuse."

However, some parents were ready to help and cooperate in some cases. One teacher writes: "Parents call their children's misbehavior to our attention. We try to correct them." The following answer was orally given

to me by a first-grade-primary school teacher, when I asked her "Have you tried to have any contact with your children's parents?" She said: "I have twenty children in the class room, ages 5-6. After being with them for ^a few weeks I felt that there is something missing in the school. I felt the need for knowing the parents of my pupils. So, I drew a plan to work with parents as much as possible. The school did not have any such program, yet the principal was open minded and he agreed to what I did.

Parents come in the class room during the day, I visited them at home, I wrote them notes, I had simple conferences with them to talk about their children.

At first, I wasn't sure how the parents would react to my plan, however, I was so encouraged by the cooperation and interest they showed. Some of them had very little education or none; yet, they were thrilled to come to the school and learn about their children. They were happy to see how interested I was in their child, and how much I knew about him. The parents became my friends. The atmosphere in the classroom was a happy one." Here it is important to say that the school was a private school, and this teacher's answer is included to serve as a clue for other teachers. However, there are three factors which helped the plan to be successful and gave a happy atmosphere to the classroom:

1. The teacher was interested in the job. She realized the importance of cooperation with parents for her success.
2. The principal was helpful and encouraging.
3. Parents were active and willing to discuss their child.

The teacher cannot escape his responsibility whatever kind of parents he happens to meet. He has to carry the largest share of this job. Another

important point for the teacher to know, is how to differentiate between the right and the wrong type of cooperation. Teachers' answers to the second question provide us with the fact that, though the contact taking place is a pleasant thing to begin with, in some of the cases it took a wrong direction. Examples of that are shown in types of contact where parents are definitely not welcome except when the child is in trouble or has done something wrong. Then his mother or father, are called as though to a police court, charges are brought against the child, and the school insists that the child be punished. Obviously, contacts of this type are on the lowest level and can rarely be expected to give anything except insecurity and resentment. Such types of contact which follow a way of accusation to the child rather than a way of psychological investigations and help, will certainly have a very bad effect on the child's psychological development. What would be his feeling when he finds that his home and his school are conspiring against him? Parents, on the other hand, develop a negative attitude towards the school's contact with them because that is associated with troubles and difficulties.

Thus, it is not enough to believe in the necessity of having contact between home and school. It is more important to know what kind of contact to have, when, and how. Full cooperation should replace superficial contact. In fact many teachers included the following sentence in their answers: "We have contact but not cooperation." Which is true in most of the cases.

Question III

"What, in your opinion, are the aims of education? Is cooperation between home and school necessary to realize these aims? Why?"

The following table gives detailed headings of aims of education as conceived by 70 Syrian teachers:

<u>Aims</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1. Building of national feeling: that is making the individual nationally conscious.	35
2. Social development and adjustment: enabling the individual to be socially adjusted.	31
3. Intellectual development: cultivation of the individual's mind.	28
4. Character development: Morals and ethics.	25
5. Physical development and physical education: giving the individual good physical education and directions so that he might develop a sound body.	20
6. Responsibility: enabling the individual to develop a sense of responsibility.	10
7. Emotional development: helping the child to be emotionally stable.	9
8. Independence: enabling the individual to see, observe, think, and decide for himself. Not to be dependent on others by any means.	9
9. Better family life: through education, the person, should get the means and skills that will help him improve his family relations and standards.	7
10. Development of humanistic feeling: i.e., being sympathetic and loving to all.	7
11. Development of research spirit: developing in the child the	

<u>Aims</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
ability for creative thinking, and love of observations and investigation. Something related to the scientific method.	7
12. Improving the standard of living of the nation.	5
13. Democratic life: teaching the individual the means and ends of a democratic society.	4
14. Better understanding of nature and environment: this is related to science courses.	5
15. Mentioned the aims found in the Syrian educational constitution word by word.	4
16. Growth: total and all-sided development of the individual.	3
17. Knowing how to read and write.	2
18. Industrial training: here it was meant that education should provide the individual with industrial skills and education.	1
19. Developing the sense of discipline and love of order.	1

A new trend is noticed through these answers. It concerns the changing concept in the meaning and the aim of education. None of the teachers limited the aim of education to intellectual ability and development. All included other phases of development, namely: physical, social, and psychological to be important in education.

The following answer was given by a man teacher, elementary school, Damascus: "The aim of education is to enable the individual to adjust himself to his environment and to provide him with experiences necessary to help him in meeting new situations successfully. Cooperation between home

and school is necessary to prevent a clash between the two most important factors in the child's education, namely: his home and his school."

Going back to the table of aims given by the 70 Syrian teachers we see that education for citizenship appears to be of prime importance to them. It was so rated by 35 cases. The next aim in importance was social development and adjustment which was mentioned by 31 teachers. This might mean that educators are being conscious of their national duties and of the political and social chaos spreading in this period of political and social unrest. Next to national and social education comes intellectual education which was mentioned by 28 teachers. Character development received 25 approvals. This supports a former point which stated that a good percentage of contacts between home and school was done in cases of character and moral problems.

A general point which can be noticed in the answers given to this question is that, in many cases, education was conceived as a preparation for something whether social, individual, or national. Education is mostly considered a means for a future end. It is not an end in itself.

However, a point should be made clear here and that is we cannot be exact in judging these answers for the following reasons:

1. We cannot be completely exact in interpreting the underlying meaning of each answer.
2. Many teachers gave inclusive and comprehensive answers which might include many more specific objectives such as: social development, national responsibility, etc...

An important point to be mentioned here is that a good number of the

teachers perceived education as something much more than mere intellectual development, and thus it cannot be limited to academic work at school. In fact, all the 70 teachers agreed that cooperation between home and school is necessary to serve the aims of true education, and to obtain better results in education. Teachers who answered this questionnaire, on the whole, realize that cooperation leads to better and quicker results because "One hand cannot clap alone". One teacher writes: "The aim of education is a full all-sided growth of the individual. Separation between home and school is very harmful to a successful educational process. The school duty and work should never be limited to the academic aspect only leaving the other aspects of the child's personality and life to the home. We cannot divide the child into two independent parts, one to be taken care of at school and the other to be taken care of at home. Thus cooperation is very necessary."

These educational ideas and objectives are of great value as steps leading towards sound education. But, if the child is to live his education, then their value, as they are being taught now, is very limited. For how could the child be really educated according to these objectives and live them while he only studies them as theories in the school. He does not practice them at home, he does not apply them in his everyday life, and he sees no relation between them and his daily experiences. Taking the first objective "Education for citizenship" which seems, to many teachers, to be the most necessary objective of education. The child studies civics in the book. He salutes the flag every morning and he sings national songs. But does he feel and live what he is learning and doing? Is he a good

citizen in his relations with others and with his country? His home might be just the opposite to what he is studying. It might be negligent, irresponsible, and indifferent. Thus how could the school succeed in its job.

The school and the home should have in mind that any side they neglect of the child's education will be shaped by his peers who might lead him to destructive and dangerous way both for himself and for his country.

Some of the teachers themselves are feeling that what is being done is far from perfect. Here is an answer given by a woman teacher in Latakia. She says: "The educational system being followed in most of the Syrian schools is not education in its real sense. Our students need to be re-educated. The aim of education, as I perceive it, is only one and that is growth. A growth which develops the individual's capacities and abilities whether physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social. All to make him a human being before he is a citizen." Then the teacher goes on to say: "Cooperation between parents and teachers is necessary to pave the way for unified effective education, to prevent disharmony in which the child is being tied and pulled by different opposing powers each of which tends to destroy the others. Many times the school destroys what the home is trying to build and vice versa. Cooperation is also necessary to increase the child's feeling of security and to solve his problems."

However, as it was mentioned, these all are mostly theories and ideas. Practice is the thing we are interested in most. The same teacher who gave the above answer indicated, in her answers to the first and second questions that there is no communication or cooperation between her and the pupil's parents. Why? Her answer is that because she is too busy and the over-loaded

and rigid schedule does not permit her to do anything besides lessons.

Now what could be the reasons for having most of the teachers agree on the necessity of cooperation while, in most of the cases, they are not practicing it? The reason might be one or more of the followings:

1. Some wanted to show that they realize the importance of this cooperation, and thus they are fit for their job. Especially those who signed their answers. They might have stated the necessity for cooperation without any tendency to carry it on. Talk is much easier than deeds.

2. Some might have felt the need for cooperation but could not apply it for many reasons such as lack of time, lack of facilities, and being obliged to follow a certain schedule. (We have to remember that these two points are only assumptions).

3. Some of the teachers wanted to cooperate really and have done something in this direction. This fact is shown in the teachers' answers which revealed that some problems, mostly academic, were solved through contacts with the home. The teacher would notice the child's unsatisfactory work. He would notify the home either through visits or through written contacts. The home will take the second step and help the child either by improving home conditions or by assigning a private teacher, depending on the cause of the child's failure. In three cases the teachers stated that the causes were instability in the family. However, as a result of these contacts most of the cases were improved.

Question IV

What means do you suggest in order to establish and improve cooperation and friendly relations between the home and the school?

Most of the answers to this question were similar. Answers were given in points. The following table indicates the means recommended, by the 70 Syrian teachers, to obtain good relations and cooperation:⁽¹⁾

1. Simple educative lectures to be given by the teachers to the parents.
2. Visits by the teachers to the pupils' homes to see the family conditions. This also gives the child a sense of security when he sees his teachers in his home. Moreover, by such visits, the teachers can see and observe the child in an environment other than his school.
3. Records to be sent by the school to the parents and returned with the parents' comments.
4. Communication book, they usually call it the "mailbook". It is a special copy book to be sent back and forth between teachers and parents on which both write their remarks.
5. Assigning a special time each week for parents' visits to school and discussing students' problems. This has to be followed by providing a certain room in the school to receive parents in it.
6. Increasing the number of plays and activities given by pupils in the school and inviting parents to them.
7. When a child comes to school for the first time it is helpful for the teacher to ask to be introduced to his parents. That could be done by sending a note to the parents inviting them to come to school or asking them to assign a special time for an informal interview.
8. Improving the conditions of the homes socially and intellectually

(1) The author's suggestions for communication and cooperation will be given in Chapter IV.

by informal discussions and meetings, simple informations, and interesting talks. This should be accompanied by a program for parents' education to be carried through evening schools, newspapers, libraries and films.

9. Establishing and increasing fathers' and mothers' days: assigning a special day in which all pupils' fathers or mothers visit the school and are entertained by their children and the teachers.

10. Getting the student to be interested in his work to such a degree which will stimulate him to show it to his parents. This might carry the child's interest to his parents.

11. Notifying the parents of all their children's problems in the school and assigning a unified plan to solve these problems cooperatively between parents, teachers, and pupils too.

12. Giving a kind of questionnaire to be filled by educated parents concerning the students' intellectual, physical, and social developments, as they notice them.

13. Establishing of alumni clubs which include former students who are to become future parents.

14. Fundamental change and reconstruction of the educational system.

15. Making cooperation between home and school obligatory through the constitution.

16. Getting parents to be interested in the school work and willing to cooperate with it.

These all are good and helpful means to establish good and friendly relations between home and school. However, the usual question comes again: "How much of these suggestions are being put into practice?"

Not in few cases, the pupil spends the whole year at school and his parents know nothing about what he is doing except through the superficial gradecard on which the child's grades are recorded. Only academic subjects are included in this card. One grade is also included for the pupil's general behavior. Parents sign this card and send it back. In some cases, where the pupil has a failing grade and he is afraid of his parents, he forges his fathers signature and carries the grade-card back to school. A point which emphasizes the stress our educational system put on grades and the effect of this extreme stress. How much the school watches out for such things, we cannot tell.

Continuous communications with the home are necessary to prevent such kinds of behavior which affects the child's morals and character. Who, in a country like Syria, should carry on this responsibility except the teacher?

It is true that the teacher has an over-loaded program to keep to but there is an important point to consider here. The teacher's work will be easier, smoother, and more effective when it is built on a deep understanding of the child and his home conditions. The teacher knows on what he is building thus he knows when and how to add each stone, and how to make it most effective. Parents' cooperation will also have a great effect in providing means and facilities for what the teacher is trying to do. Moreover, the child's interest in his school work increases when he sees that both his teachers and his parents are deeply concerned with it, and are working hand in hand for it. On the other hand, when he sees his parents are indifferent and un-interested in what he does at school, he thinks that this is something secondary and not important.

Thus, even if the teacher finds it difficult at the beginning to establish cooperative relations, he will, very soon, discover that the results are worth while.

Some of the teachers themselves put the largest share of the responsibility of carrying on this job on the schools' shoulders. One of them says: "First of all the school should feel the need for this cooperation and its necessity. Ideas do nothing if they don't come into practice."

Question V

"What difficulties stand in the way of cooperation between home and school?"

Answers here might be classified into four major groups. Below is this classification with some comments on it:

A. Difficulties Arising From Family Conditions and Attitudes.

Ignorance, sickness and bad economic conditions widen the gap between the home and the school. Added to that many conservative ideas and customs. For example, Moslems' custom of marrying a partner whom the other person does not know, or marrying more than one wife might result in disagreement, misunderstanding and hatred within a family. All hinder the presence of a loving spirit which is necessary for cooperation.

Veiling among Moslems, and between conservative Christian families too, is a great hindrance to cooperation. How could a father meet his child's female teacher, or how could a teacher meet his pupil's mother? If they ever meet or talk they will do it separated by the door or the wall.

Even between mothers & female teachers, or fathers and male teachers, contact is difficult either because there might be a conflict between a

parent's free time and a teacher's free time, or, in other cases because parents neglect the school's call for their own reasons. One male teacher says: "I am the guardian of many girls. I expected to have good contact and cooperation between their parents and myself. But it came out to be that only 10% of the fathers ⁽¹⁾ come once or twice a year to ask me about their daughters problems."

Why do so many parents hate to come to school, or participate in any of the school's activities or responsibilities? Many answers might come to a person's mind here. Among them are the following:

1. Parents believe that education is only the work of the school and they have nothing to do with it.
2. Because of their ignorance and low standard of living many parents feel inferior to both their children and the teacher. This makes them withdraw. They hesitate to call on teachers or to call teachers to their home. Moreover, many of the parents are busy struggling to maintain their living and their children's living. Thus they have no time to do and think of other things.
3. Many parents dislike the school because they feel that it is creating a gap between them and their children.
4. Because contacts usually take the form of complaint about unpleasant events so a negative attitude may develop in both the teachers and the parents which hinders the will for cooperation.
5. In the case of educated parents, those might develop a negative

(1) It is taken for granted that mothers do not come to consult a man teacher.

attitude towards the school due to their own experiences when they were students. The unpleasant experiences they might have had affect them psychologically, and make them hate to visit, or have any communication with any school. This effect of past experience might apply to all parents too. Any parent who is made to feel unwelcomed by the school will try to avoid any contact with it.

6. In some cases parents do not want to see their children's faults or misbehavior. They think that this is humiliating to them and to their children.

7. Sometimes, too, a family might have many children which makes it difficult for parents to take the necessary care of them both at home and school.

Many general or specific factors might be added here as making it difficult or uninteresting to parents to make contacts with the school.

All these factors make cooperation difficult, but they all, also, make it more necessary and urgent to enlighten the parents and lessen the gap between them and the school. Present conditions of the families, whether social or intellectual, should be an urge rather than a hindrance to cooperation. The school should try to win parents' interest and confidence by being friendly and loyal with them. Criticism has a bad effect on parents. Instead of pointing out their wrong deeds the teacher should try to show them the right method. One village school teacher writes: "Whenever I meet with parents I try to humiliate their thoughts and ideas." How would parents cooperate with such a teacher?

When the teacher has in mind that the parents are not fit and ready,

or are careless to help the result will be twofold:

1. The teacher himself will be careless when he believes that the parents are indifferent.

2. The teacher, even unconsciously, might develop a negative attitude which affects the parents and makes them withdraw.

B. Difficulties Arising From the Educational System

A good number of the teachers put the blame on the present educational system and the heavy emphasis on memorization. One teacher says: "Our school puts too much emphasis on studying subject matter leaving other phases of education." Then he goes on saying: "May be they have their reasons to do that because when the supervisor visits a school he never asks about the child's social, physical, or psychological development. The only thing he is interested in is the subject matter and how much of it did the child study? Are the pupils up-to-date with the assigned schedule?"

With such rigid schedule to follow, the teacher has no time to care for anything beside the subject-matter. In disciplinary problems for example, he finds punishment easier and shorter than studying causes and trying to solve them.

One teacher says: "In our school it is not allowed for any person, except students and teachers, to enter the school. So how can parents come to ask when they are unwelcomed?" In connection with this point a brief reference to the educational constitution might be of value. Though the educational constitution encourages contacts between home and school, it limits these contacts to a superficial form as was discussed in Chapter II. Moreover, article 99 of Chapter 12 under "Internal rules for Primary and

Elementary Schools", states: "It is forbidden for any person, who does not hold an official job in the school or who has no special business in it, to visit the school or attend a class session except by a special permission from the director of education in that district."⁽¹⁾ This article might count parents among those who have a special business and interest. At the same time teachers might carry it into extreme, as in the example mentioned, or some of them might not understand it well, thus excluding parents out of it, or including them only in very rare cases which makes a parent's visit very difficult and unwelcomed by both the teacher and the parent. The parent is not free to visit the school when he feels there is a need to. The teacher, who is not accustomed to such a visit might get a "headache and become nervous" because of it.

However, to be more practical, we should think of means within our present limits and abilities. There are many helpful steps that could be done in our present situation.⁽²⁾ A fundamental change in the present system as a whole, which many teachers recommend, cannot be obtained now for many reasons. Long time and deep studies are needed before this reconstruction takes place. Such an essential change and reform will come gradually. Improving educational outcomes might be a very helpful step towards it.

C. Difficulties Arising From the Teachers' Side

1. The unsatisfactory condition of teachers, as to lack of training, over-loaded schedule, and low salaries. The teacher has to adjust himself

(1) Syrian Ministry of Education, "Internal Rules for Primary and Secondary Schools", p. 26.

(2) Refer to Chapter IV.

to his work, home, and society before he tries to adjust his pupils.

2. Lack of cooperative spirit and enthusiasm in social welfare and service on some teachers' part.

3. Unfamiliarity of the teacher with the school's community. Many teachers come from outside town or city. They know nothing and nobody in the school's community, and when a teacher has spent enough time to be acquainted with parents and make contact with them, he is suddenly transferred to some other place which, again, he is unfamiliar with.

However, the teacher is the first person depended upon to carry on the program of establishing friendly relations with the home. He has to feel his responsibility and learn how to break the professional barrier between him and his students' homes.

D. Difficulties Arising From Other Factors

1. No room is available in the school to receive parents. No money is assigned for this program, which makes even sending a letter to the parents a source of perplexity to the teacher. "Who is to pay the postage?"

2. No assigned person in the administration is responsible for any arrangement of that kind.

3. The school is afraid of interfering in family affairs.

4. The large number of pupils in each class which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the teacher to deal with each separately and have contact with each home.

Concerning the first two points the teacher, as mentioned before, can do a lot even within narrow limits. Money is not so much a hindrance as to make him stop trying. Every teacher has to feel responsible towards himself

and do his job as faithfully as possible. When it is difficult to deal with each pupil and his home separately the teacher might give general informations to parents by which every one can benefit. Specific problems might be taken up when possible.

Will and interest are the first steps to begin with. One teacher gave the following answer: "I don't think that there is any difficulty which hinders cooperation, if both, the school and the home are willing to cooperate."

III. NEW TRENDS REVEALED IN THE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

What are the new trends found in the answers given by the 70 Syrian teachers to this questionnaire?

Answers reveal that there are some new trends in the minds of those teachers who answered the questionnaire. These trends may be classified in the following points:

1. The first is a change in the concept of education. They are considering education as something much more than mere intellectual development. It is physical, social, and psychological as well as intellectual. This trend is shown in the fact that none of those answering the questionnaire limited the aim of education to intellectual development.

However, it has to be made clear here that Syrian education has never limited its aim only to intellectual development. Thus the new trend shows a difference in the degree of emphasis only.

2. The second trend is a critical view of the present system of education in Syria whether to its organization or philosophy, and a tendency to improve it. This point was included in some teachers' answers. One teacher writes:

"Our school is becoming a factory machine which tries to shape all children the same regardless of their skills and capacities." Another one writes: "We don't have education in its real sense. Our children need to be re-educated."

3. The third trend is the recognition of the necessity of cooperation between home and school in order to obtain effective educational results. Teachers are beginning to realize that the parents of their pupils have an important role to do concerning children's education. One teacher says: "The home might destroy everything the school tries to build if there is no cooperation between the two." Another one writes: "My contact with parents proved to be helpful to the child's development."

4. The fourth trend is a feeling that the teacher's responsibility is not limited to the classroom. It is more inclusive. This was mentioned in some teachers' answers. However, it is not a general trend. May be some teachers do not like to admit it. or are not conscious of it.

5. The fifth is a tendency and willingness of some parents to cooperate with the school for their children's education. They are ready to help when guided or asked. Children's education means very much to parents, and they realize that providing money and physical necessities for their children are not enough. One teacher says: "When we inform parents about helpful means they ask for more help and guidance." Another one says: "Parents inform us about their children's problems and ask for cooperation."

These new trends are very promising for educational reforms in Syria, if they take a practical form. But, unfortunately, most of them are still in the form of thoughts which were not put into practice. And, as it was

mentioned in a former place, practice is the thing we are interested in mostly.

However, our great hope lies mostly in those trained and interested teachers whose interest and effort will simplify most of the difficulties even the financial one, and in those educated and open-minded members of each family. These have to take the leading role.

C H A P T E R F O U R

HOW TO ESTABLISH FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH PARENTS

I. IMPORTANT FACTORS NECESSITATING COOPERATION IN SYRIA

In Chapter I it was emphasized that the child is a unified individual. All phases of his development should take place simultaneously, at the same time. When we recognize the child's unity as an individual, it becomes of first necessity to recognize the importance of a unified environment for him. Disharmony and splitting of child's environment will surely result in mal-adjustment and tensions leading to frustration. The home and the school should proceed together smoothly and helpfully to provide this unity for the child and to make as much use as possible of his capacities and abilities, thus enabling him to grow effectively and be intelligently and flexibly adjusted. Only when this takes place, education is said to be sound and effective.

Can the school or the home, separately, do a successful job in such a complex world? Consider, especially Syria which, in its present situation, has many relative, important factors necessitating this unity of environment for the child's growth and development. Among these factors are the following:

a) The difficult transitional period Syria is undergoing now. Political, social, economic, and cultural transition. The youths in all the Arab world are facing a great, many-sided difficulty. They are searching for political freedom, social improvement, intellectual enlightenment, and economic stability. The kind of education they receive determines their philosophy and the ways they are going to take according to this philosophy, thus this

education should be complete and all sided. It should develop the whole personality of the individual. Such an all-sided education must, surely, include the school as well as the home. It cannot be fully effective if limited to school only.

b) Parent-children relations in Syria, which are mostly built on fear rather than love and respect, are in many cases resulting in children's frustration and maladjustment. Parents are not as creatively interested in the welfare of their children as they should be. They don't share their children's interest, play, and difficulties. A child cannot come to his parents in a friendly way and talk to them about his difficulties and problems. He has strict limits to keep to in his relations with his parents. Thus he develops an attitude of either perplexity and inferiority or hatred and aggression.

Guidance to such parents is very important to bring them nearer to their children and thus save the child many troubles and maladjustments.

c) On the social side, the pattern of the family life is changing and the relationships between its members are changing too. New concepts of democracy, freedom, equality and mutual respect are manifesting themselves. This movement is strongly opposed by the conservative members of the society. Cooperation between home and school will tend to lessen the gap between members of society, between old and young people, between children and parents, and between the school and the home.

d) Not all children in Syria go to school, not even the majority. And of those who go to school very few continue for higher education. The school, in these few years, cannot give all the education necessary to the child. He needs something more comprehensive and inclusive. Here the

home's responsibility is growing larger. The home should harmonize and supplement the school. It should also continue educating the child after he leaves the school. But since most of the parents, especially mothers, are ignorant, how could this home education take place? It needs the warm-hearted cooperation of the school to direct and enlighten it.

e) Parents in Syria, are, usually, very dominant, they want to decide their children's future and fields of education. They don't try to give them any freedom of choice thus lessening their sense of responsibility and self-confidence. The child might grow rebellious, inferior, or maladjusted. The school's cooperation is needed to inform the parents of such things and lead them in the right direction. Moreover, when homes are directed, parents experience and appreciate knowledge, thus they help the school in making their children love school and be ready for it.

f) Cooperation helps to establish friendly relations between the school, the children, and the parents. In our present condition, the school, in many cases, becomes an object of punishment to the child. A mother would say: "If you rest quietly I'll permit you to stay at home tomorrow, but if you become naughty I'll send you to school." Cooperation will bring both, parents and teachers into understanding relations which make the child feel easy and happy both at home and school.

II. KINDS OF CONTACT FOUND IN SYRIA

Chapter III discussed the ways of contact already taking place in Syrian schools. These ways are very simple and they usually take the form of:

a) Rare social visits between teachers and parents in which the child's

difficulties and problems might never be mentioned, or, might accidentally come into discussion.

b) Letters to parents that are sent only in special cases, such as academic failure, behavioral problems, or constant absence from school.

c) Grade-cards with some notices of academic progress are sent to the parents to be signed and returned.

These types of contact, in most of the cases, are superficial and of limited value because they are:

(1) Not based on psychological principles and understanding of the child.

(2) Mere and shallow, they don't go deeply into studying causes and effects.

(3) Not continuous. The teacher will inform the parents now and then forget all about it.

(4) Not constant. Do not take place always, in all cases, there is nothing regular about them.

(5) They might develop a negative attitude in the parents, because, when they do take place, that will be only in cases of troubles and difficulties which disturb parents.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ESTABLISHING COOPERATIVE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE HOMES

In recommending ways of cooperation we should take into consideration the present state in Syria where many parents are uneducated and thus may resist the movement, or where many teachers are untrained and thus they are not conscious of the need for cooperation or are ^{not} enthusiastic about it. We have to take into consideration also the present social and economic conditions

which hinder the tendency for cooperation. Conflicts between teachers' values and parents' values, which result from the unstable social and economic conditions, hinder the process of cooperation in many cases. Principles learned in a good school might seem to have no place in life outside the school. There is a deep clash between the kind of values given through the home and the school.

Thus in the midst of all these obstacles, and in the midst of our present educational system we have to find our way through for establishing a program of cooperative and friendly relations with parents. This program should begin just where we are, within our possible means. It should be stable, continuous, interesting and effective.

How to establish these cooperative and friendly relations?

A. Get Parents Be Introduced to the School

There are many occasions where parents and teachers might happen to meet such as social visits, social gatherings as plays, parties, movies, or such cases where parents come to ask about the child's affairs, or come to accompany the child to school because they are afraid of an accident which might happen, or because the child refuses to go alone. The teacher, in each of these events, might take advantage of the situation and get introduced to the parents. A short moment for greeting and exchange of questions will do much to build up an understanding which will help both parents and teacher to establish friendly relations. In each case, the wise teacher, will try his best to get the parents introduced to the school, to their children as pupils, and to teachers as the other important side in their children's education. It is amazing to see how interested and

enthusiastic parents get in school work, when they develop a feeling of confidence and friendly relations with its authorities.

Increasing the number of plays and activities given by the pupils themselves serve as a very helpful means to attract the parents to the school. Inviting parents to social programs in the school, at which those parents are entertained by their children, is of special interest to parents. When social customs do not permit the mixing of the two sexes, these programs can be limited to mothers in girls' schools and to fathers in boys' schools.

In some schools when there is a play given by the children, parents might be asked to help in preparing clothes, setting the stage, providing what is needed, etc. (Such things were used when I was in the primary school, they are still being used in some schools and prove to be helpful.)

School picnics to which parents are welcomed to join, serve as good means to introduce the school to the parents. With educated parents some occasions may be created for them to observe the children in their classroom activities. (This could be done mostly with first primary grades.) Seeing the work of the school at first hand will be of greatest assistance to understanding and appreciating it.

In each of these occasions parents should be made to feel that they are urged and welcomed to have continuous relations with the school, and that such relations are of great help to their children's growth and happiness. When parents feel that their cooperation is needed and that they are being helped in directing and bringing up their children, their interest in the school, and their whole-hearted will to cooperate with it are very much increased.

B. Oral Forms of Contact

Even though the ways mentioned are good opportunities to meet parents and be introduced to them, chance and rare meetings should not be the only means depended upon to be introduced to parents and have contact with them. Deeper and more effective ways of contact should go hand in hand with these to give their expected, helpful results. Such effective devices might take the form of:

1. Home visits - The teacher might make a special, arranged schedule to visit his students' homes at least once a month. These visits are very helpful in making the teacher get more acquainted with the parents of his pupils, and with the environment which contributes very much to making these pupils what they are.

In all his visits the teacher must be simple, humble, helpful, friendly, sincere, and understanding. His sincere interest in the child's affairs will make parents happy and enthusiastic.

Visits should not take place only when a problem arises. So these visits might become doubtful and unwanted by the parents. They might tend to increase parent's fear of the school. Visits should be of a social not a business type. Their aim, at the beginning is to allow parent and teacher to know each other as human beings, not to emphasize the fact that one is a teacher, and the other a parent. Discussion of child's problems and affairs, will enter the conversation naturally and smoothly. In this way parents are encouraged so that when a special, sudden need to discuss a child's problem arises they may go to the school and settle the matter with the teacher and the child.

2. School visits - Special dates might be assigned, at least, once or twice a month to receive parents in the school. It is advisable that sometimes children participate in entertaining their parents. All teachers must be present at these meetings so that each might have the opportunity to meet her pupils' parents and exchange ideas with them. Some general advice and directions concerning child care and guidance might be given simply and indirectly. Parents should be made to feel easy and at home. They should be encouraged to share ideas and suggestions no matter how simple these ideas might seem to be. Everyone's idea counts.

Some sketches or exhibitions of children's work might be given in these meetings to arouse parents' interest.

These meetings will get parents to be familiar with the school so that they feel interested and welcomed whenever a special, private visit to the school is needed. Besides, school visits by the parents are somewhat more practical in our present situation because:

(a) Some parents do not have to feel shy and perplexed because they are poor or socially backward and cannot receive the teacher often at their home.

(b) The teacher might have a large number of pupils in the class about (40) so it becomes very difficult for him to have regular visits to parents with his overloaded schedule.

3. General conferences - The school might assign three dates per year, first before the opening of the school, at mid-year, and at the end of the year, to hold general conferences with parents for guidance and directions. These conferences might take a session of three days each, during which simple

talks, educative films, illustrating pictures and small plays, might be used as helpful devices to give parents a general and useful knowledge in bringing up their children. "If the teacher, because of deeper study into child growth and behavior, has insights or techniques which can help parents to understand and deal more with children, the conferences provide opportunity to share them for the benefit of the child."⁽¹⁾

4. Private conferences - In every occasion and meeting a friendly relation and trustful atmosphere should be felt by parents to get them more and more interested and have confidence in the school.

Each parent should be made to develop the feeling that it is both a pleasure and a right for him and for the school to have him come, at any time, for discussion and guidance and that the teacher will be pleased to see the parent both in group or in private conferences concerning private matters. It is also important that each parent be made to feel that his own or his child's private affairs will be kept in deep secrecy.

5. Organized groups - Visits and conferences may become the bases for a group organization in which parents and teachers discuss the affairs of children and reach interpretations and assumptions of developments, problems, and procedures. Such groups might, in most of the cases, serve as the most helpful and stable ways of cooperation.

How to start the work? The nucleus of such groups might begin with well trained responsible teachers. Each of those will start his contacts with parents within his community no matter within what limits he has to work.

(1) Kilpatric, "Philosophy of Education", p. 334.

The work might begin with a small, informal committee made of ^a few teachers and some educated and interested parents. Regular meetings might be held either in the school, after the studying hours, or at some of the parents homes. The responsible teacher has to call to these meetings informally and in an interesting and simple form. Parents should not be made to feel that they are joining a tiresome and obligatory program, but a friendly and interesting group which is of great value to them and to their children. To establish a warm, and friendly atmosphere is one of the first and most important steps in the development of effective home-school relationships. Building of understanding plays a great part in changing the attitudes of parents who join these groups. As they work, they can see more clearly what their cooperation gives, recognizing more definitely how important it is for the community to help and support the schools. They are stimulated to share ideas and experiences with the school.

After this small association is firmly established and its results are effectively shown, other teachers and parents are urged and encouraged to come and attend the meetings as a first step. When they get interested enough, the second step will be their joining the committee as regular members. Everything possible should be done to facilitate the presence of any person. Informations have to be given simply and interestingly. All should be encouraged to give their ideas and share wholeheartedly.

To keep these committees regularly and effectively operating, some members might be elected to carry on routine works and some additional responsibilities. Special principles and policies might be set to be followed by all. These principles and policies should not be copied from similar

associations in other countries because what is useful there might not have any use here. Principles and policies should be taken from our needs, our community, and the aims we seek to attain. The National Congress of Parents and Teachers, which is the largest Parent-Teacher-Association in the world, states, in relation to its policies and principles, "The guiding principles outlined here were not developed arbitrarily or quickly but by the slow process of trial and error."⁽²⁾

However, a helpful step which might be taken here is to correspond with parent-teacher-associations in other countries, study their programs and procedures to see which parts of them could be helpful in a country like Syria and, in the light of our present situation see where, when, and how to carry on the work.

These associations, when well established, can carry on a program of counselling and guidance to other parents.

C. Points to Consider Through These Contacts

In all forms of contact whether visits, conferences, meetings or associations there are very important points to keep in mind in order to get out the best possible results of such home-school relations:

1. Contacts with parents should always have the atmosphere of:

(a) Simplicity - everything should be made plain and easily understood.

Parents should feel informal and at ease.

(b) Friendliness and belongingness.

(1) See appendix for more information, p. 104.

(2) The Parent-Teacher-Association Manual of 1950-1953, p. 39.

(c) Sincerety and confidence.

(d) Unity - Even though each one might come from a different background, this difference should be looked at as a means for enriching of experience and ideas. At the same time all should feel that they belong to one thing and serve one purpose.

(e) Understanding - All should try to understand and love each other.

(f) Cooperation - Sharing of experiences and interests.

(g) Stability - Cooperative measures should be constant and continuous.

2. Parents' interest and enthusiasm should be brought about by the following:

(a) The language of discussion and lectures should be very simple and easily understood. Very few parents are well educated. The majority have either very simple, or no education at all.

(b) Meetings should not take the form of criticism and pointing out faults. Humble, informal, and loving spirit should rule.

(c) Parents should be made to take as much an active role as possible, passive hearing is tiresome to them.

(d) Parents should get the feeling that they can do a lot in educating their children, even though they are not educated, and that their help is greatly important and appreciated.

(e) Children should take as much share as possible in these meetings.

(f) It is interesting to parents to hear good comments about their child. Necessary criticism should be at privacy.

3. Special care should be taken for selecting topics of discussion. These topics should be:

(a) Of immediate use, for example, the topic of thumb-sucking might not be of interest and use to parents whose children are between 7-11.

(b) Of general nature which might appear with most children. However, while the topic is being discussed, the speaker might give a hint that private conferences and meetings are welcomed for special cases.

(c) Simple and concrete - Parents who are not highly educated can neither understand nor be interested in such topics as the "Structure of the Mind" or "Philosophy of Ethics".

(d) Well illustrated by films, pictures, stories, etc.

(e) Related to community needs and taken from everyday life.

D. Written Forms of Contact

Besides the oral forms of contact which were discussed in the forms of visits, conferences, social gatherings, and organized meetings, there are other types of contact which are carried on by correspondence such as cards, reports, letters, popularized informations, etc. These types can be used to supplement the oral types, but should never replace them.

A short discussion of those written types of contact might be helpful.

1. Grade cards - These are being used in Syria. They are very limited. Academic progress, as judged by examinations and grades, is the only information they give about the child. A grade judging the child's behavior is also included. Parents sign them and return them.

These grade-cards are being substituted, in some advanced countries, by oral descriptive accounts to parents of the child's academic, social, and psychological adjustments.

2. Teacher's records - The teacher can keep special records of the following:

(a) Past history of the child - Here parents and teacher can cooperate to give all the necessary information about the child's past whether physical, social, psychological or intellectual. All the important events and experiences which affected the child are included.

(b) Present conditions of the child - This includes parents' and teacher's present observations of the child.

(c) Records of specific problems that arise whether physical, social, psychological, or intellectual.

Copies of these records are sent to the parents. New observations are recorded and exchanged both at home and school.

3. Communication book - The teacher keeps a special copybook for each child on which he writes his observations of the child's physical, social, psychological and intellectual developments. This copybook is sent to the parents at the end of each week. They read it, write their remarks and return it.

4. Letters - Letters might serve as the best type of written contacts because they are more inclusive, more friendly, and less formal, thus parents feel more at ease. It is advisable that letters take the place of reports especially in dealing with young children.

These reports and letters, in order to be of help to parents and teachers should be simple, friendly, and informal. Moreover, they should not present only the academic condition of the child. Something of each phase of the child's development must be included.

5. Questionnaire - A kind of questionnaire might be helpful to give the teacher some information of the child's home life, his interests, habits,

and skills. The following form gives an illustration of such a questionnaire, to be answered by the child:

1. Name?
2. Parents occupation?
3. Are your parents both alive?
4. Do you like your parents?
5. Do you spend a lot of time with them?
6. Number of brothers and sisters you have?
7. Do you like them?
8. Do you like your home?
9. Why or why not?
- * 10. Do you like your school?
- * 11. Why or why not?
12. Do you want your mother to visit your school?
13. Do you want your teacher to visit your home?
14. Which of your lessons you like most?
- * 15. Do you enjoy reading?
16. Do you have a library at home?
17. What kind of books do you like best?
18. Do your parents help you in studying your lessons?
19. Do your parents like the school?
20. Are both of your parents educated?
- * 21. Can you play music, paint, draw, or sing?

* Taken from: Schneidman, "Democratic Education In Practice", p. 76.

- * 22. What are your hobbies?
- 23. Do you love other children?
- 24. Do you like to share playing with them?
- * 25. What time do you get out of bed every morning?
- * 26. What time do you retire?
- * 27. Do you eat everything served to you?
- 28. Do you prefer to play or to rest quietly?
- 29. Do you have any physical trouble or pain?
- * 30. Do you help your parents at home?
- 31. What things you like to have now?
- * 32. What would you like to be when you grow up?
- 33. Why?

Other items, which seem necessary may be added.

Parents might be given a type of such questionnaire with different items concerning things which the teacher wants to know.

6. Popularised informations - Helpful informations and directions might be popularised and distributed to serve as the basic facts in guiding parents. These informations should be in a very simple and interesting form of language.

In using any form of these written contacts the teacher should have in mind that even the most complete written report cannot be an adequate substitute for personal contacts. Questions raised in the parents' minds over certain remarks can be clarified only through discussion. Because of that, and because written contacts have certain limitations, they might be used

* Taken from: Schneidman, "Democratic Education In Practice", p. 76.

only as supplement to oral forms of contact.

7. Limitations of written forms of contact

(a) They are limited, deal only with what the teacher wants to know at the moment. Parents and teachers have limited area to work in.

(b) They give no place for informal and intimate discussion which brings out the parents interest.

(c) It is more difficult to take informations in a written type than to take them orally. After writing a thing, the parent might think that he should not give this information to a stranger, and thus cross it out. The information might be necessary.

(d) The friendly spirit can be shown better in informal talks than it can be shown by rigid writing. This friendly spirit affects the parents' attitude.

(e) Only educated parents can share in these forms of contact. So, in a state like Syria, contact will follow a very narrow way if limited to written forms.

In all forms of contact whether oral or written, it is the teacher's responsibility to carry on the leading share. If the teacher is sincerely interested in the child, a good relationship with the parents is easily established. When the parents know that the teacher likes their child, and is interested in his welfare, then, there is nothing to worry about.

Friendliness, humanity, and good understanding of the parents make everything easy. It is interesting to know that once the idea of cooperative planning for the education of the child is believed in, many concrete ways in which parents and teachers can contribute to a more desirable educational experience

for children will become apparent.

E. Steps to Accompany The Process.

These cooperative steps, as mentioned, have to be started with interested, and well-trained teachers. However, ^a few simple and encouraging steps have to be taken by the highly responsible men of education to help the teacher doing his work successfully. Some of these steps were mentioned in Chapter III as, reducing teachers' burden, increasing their salaries to make them interested, and giving them some directions of the subject.

Other points might be added here:

1. Including the subject of cooperation between home and school among the subjects given in Teacher-Training-Colleges.
2. Giving some financial help to the schools to carry on the job.
3. Calling teachers' and parents' attention to the importance of the problem.
4. Assigning women teachers for primary and elementary schools because
 - (a) A female teacher can understand the child more than a male teacher can do.
 - (b) A female teacher is more loving, interested, and patient with children.
 - (c) A female teacher can establish contact more easily with mothers who are of prime importance in the child's life.
5. Setting special sessions, for example, a summer session to give teachers general and important informations and guidance in matters of education.
6. Opening some model schools in which trained and interested teachers

are appointed and new principles and methods of education are practiced. Teachers from other schools will observe and follow.

F. The Parent-Teacher-Association or the P.T.A.

1. Establishment - "The National Congress of Parents and Teachers which was founded in Washington, D.C., in 1897, is an organization of parents, teachers, and other citizens who are interested in the welfare, education, and protection of children and youth. The local unit of the organization is known as a Parent-Teacher-Association or to shorten the title, a P.T.A."⁽¹⁾ In 1897 the movement enrolled 190,000 people. In 1952 the number of members reached 6,582,516 and the number of P.T.A.'s jumped to 37,000.

2. Objects -

"To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, church, and community.

To raise the standards of home life.

To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.

To bring into closer relation the home and the school, that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the training of the child.

To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for every child the highest advantages in physical, mental, social and spiritual education."⁽²⁾

(1) Manual, op. cit., p. 1.

(2) Ibid, p. 12.

The objects as set forth in the local bylaws state the purpose of the organization and form the basis of its program. The objects are the same for all divisions of the congress - local, state, and national - thus providing unity of purpose.

3. Policies -

"Section 1 - The purpose of this association shall be educational and shall be developed through conferences, committees, and projects.

Section 2 - This association shall be noncommercial, non-sectarian, and non-partisan. No commercial enterprise and no candidate shall be endorsed by it. Neither the name of the association nor the names of its officers in their official capacities shall be used in any connection with a commercial concern or with any partisan interest or for any purpose other than the regular work of the association.

Section 3 - This association shall not seek to direct the administrative activities of the school or to control its policies.

Section 4 - This association may cooperate with other organizations and agencies active in child welfare, such as conference groups or coordinating councils, provided they make no commitments which bind their member groups.

The parent-teacher association is the voice of the people, speaking for all children. It is the implement for action in behalf of all children; it is democracy at work - making a place for all citizens regardless of color, race, religious belief, political preference, or economic and social status." (1)

4. Structure - The work of the Congress is carried on through its

(1) Manual 1950-1953, p. 12.

37,000 local parent-teacher associations, in which there is a total membership of 6,589,516 men and women. Each local unit is a self-governing group that plans its programs and activities to meet the needs of children and youth in the community, thus promoting the fundamental purposes of the Congress.

National committee chairmen and the corresponding state chairmen promote interest and stimulate activity in all general fields of parent-teacher endeavor, such as family life, health, safety, child welfare, and school education.

State branches are responsible for the supervision and direction of the local units within the state. National parent-teacher: The P.T.A. Magazine is the official magazine of the organization.

The P.T.A. follows a parliamentary procedure and their rules and policies of order are based on "Robert's Rules of Order".

Principles and policies are put by the process of trial and error. "The guiding principles here outlined were not developed arbitrarily or quickly, but by the slow process of trial and error. Nor have these organizational policies been fixed by any central group working toward uniform administration." ⁽¹⁾ Principles and policies come about as a result of long experiences and observations. If they prove to be helpful and can be adopted in other local units they are adopted. When a principle or a policy proves to be unuseful it is crossed out after it has been tried for a certain time. Problems and difficulties concerning a principle or a policy

(1) Manual 1952-1953, p. 39.

are put forth to be discussed by all members. Special committees are usually elected by the members to discuss and arrange plans of work.

5. Permanent platform of P.T.A. - To provide for children and youths:

- "(a) Good homes.
- (b) Sound health.
- (c) Safety.
- (d) Equalized educational opportunities.
- (e) Conservation of human values and national resources.
- (f) Vocational adjustment.
- (g) Constructive leisure-time activities.
- (h) Civic responsibility.
- (i) Active spiritual faith.
- (j) World outlook."⁽¹⁾

Forms of P.T.A. have been organized in Scotland, Great Britain, Germany, France, Czecho-Slovakia, Switzerland, Finland, Canada, and other countries.

6. Limitations of P.T.A.'s - Results of practices and investigations show that such huge organizations as the P.T.A. have certain limitations which in their turn limit the benefit that is hoped to result from them. The limitations of the P.T.A. as conceived by some educators and as mentioned in some writings about the P.T.A. might be summarized in the following points:

- (a) Not infrequently, groups of P.T.A. become so interested in the "workings" of the organization that they give little time and attention to the development of the kind of activities and relationships most likely to

(1) Manual, p. 176.

build understanding between teachers and parents in their own particular community. Suggested types of activities are given in various publications as "helps". Although the organization urges that each program be developed to meet the local needs, many local associations follow these "helps" without making the adjustments that their local situations call for.

(b) In large associations like the P.T.A., special specific problems might not come to discussion because the organization has to follow a general program which might be of use to all. And even if such problems happen to take place in discussion, that might come too late for certain parents because the organization cannot take every problem just when it appears.

(c) P.T.A. has no authority over the other agencies having educational influences. But it can cooperate with them when they share aims and interests.

(d) Large P.T.A.'s are not as interested and familiar to parents as small, informal groups where all know each other, and where every member feels that he is important and well recognized.

7. Publications of P.T.A. - One of the major services maintained by the National Congress is the preparation and distribution of parent-teacher publications such as:

(a) National Parent-Teacher: The P.T.A. Magazine - This is the official magazine of the organization.

(b) National Congress Bulletin - Contains timely news and information.

(c) Parent-Teacher Manual.

(d) The High School Parent-Teacher Association.

(e) A Reading Guide for Parents.

(f) Everybody's Schools.

(g) How To Organize Parent-Teacher Associations and Pre-school Sections of P.T.A.'s.

(h) A Civil Defense Plan for P.T.A.'s.

(i) Stay-Discussion Group Techniques for Parent Education Leaders.

(j) Where Children Come First: A Study of the P.T.A. Idea.

(k) The P.T.A.'s Concern for Schools and Health in Rural Areas.

These publications are designed to assist local associations in developing effective plans, programs, and activities.

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