

Civil Division

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Dear Mr. Secretary: 33

The General Accounting Office has made a limited review of selected aspects of the educational program being carried out in the public schools of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (Trust Territory). Our review was directed at gathering information bearing on the manner in which the program is being accomplished and was carried out primarily at the Trust Territory Headquarters, Saipan, Mariana Islands. It included work at the district offices in the Mariana Islands, Palau, Ponape, and Yap Districts.

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The Trust Territory is administered by the United States under a Trusteeship Agreement in behalf of the United Nations. Effective in July 1951, the President assigned administrative responsibility for the Trust Territory to the Secretary of the Interior. Within the Department of the Interior, the Trust Territory is under the supervision of the Office of Territories. The United Nations monitors Trust Territory activities by periodic inspections and through the annual reports on the administration of the Trust Territory issued by the Department of State.

Under the provisions of the Trusteeship Agreement, the United States is obligated to:

*** promote the educational advancement of the inhabitants, and to this end take steps toward the establishment of a general system of elementary education; facilitate the vocational and cultural advancement of the population; and shall encourage qualified students to pursue higher education, including training on the professional level."

In fiscal year 1963, following a report by a special study group appointed by the President, an accelerated education program was initiated. Under this program, elementary school enrollment more than doubled, from about 11,000 in

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1962 to more than 22,000 in 1968. A number of high schools were added and high school enrollment increased from about 150 students in 1962 to about 3,300 students in 1968. In addition, in 1966, the Trust Territory awarded 236 scholarships for advanced study.

In a published undated statement of objectives and policies of the Trust Territory quoted in the Stanford Research Institute report on "Planning for Education and Manpower in Micronesia" issued in December 1967, the then High Commissioner stated:

"*** it shall be the responsibility of the Government *** to set educational standards and to support an educational system which will enable Territory students to develop educationally to a level comparable to United States standards ***."

The High Commissioner's statement added that this requires a curriculum and instructional materials of a quality comparable to that found in the United States but adapted to the economic, social, and cultural background of Micronesia.

In our review, we observed that there was a need for the development of uniform sequential curriculums. We noted that generally, each school district in the Trust Territory developed its own school curriculums. At times, the responsibility for developing school curriculums was even left to the individual schools or staff members. Further, we were advised by the Deputy Director of Education that there was no coordination of curriculum between the districts. In addition, an education official advised us there is virtually no coordination between the elementary and secondary school curriculums in the Trust Territory. As a result, the students in the various districts may be exposed to different courses of study and there is no assurance that students who complete the eighth grade or twelfth grade in one district will be at the same level of achievement as those who attend school in another district or that a student who completes the eighth grade will be qualified to continue to the ninth grade.

During our review, a Trust Territory Headquarters educational specialist advised us that because of the type of curriculum development there is a lack of continuity in the

courses offered, the sequence of the courses, and the instructional materials used. Also, officials at the Trust Territory Headquarters stated that students may be repeating courses because of the lack of order in curriculum or may be taking the same course under different titles as they progress through the school system.

On the basis of our review, we agree with the statement in the December 1967 report by the Stanford Research Institute on Planning for Education and Manpower in Micronesia that:

"The most immediately pressing task is to develop comprehensive outlines of subject content for all attainment goals appropriate to each educational level. This implies (1) acceptance of the proposition that there should be more, rather than less, curricular uniformity across the Trust Territory and (2) willingness to specify both content and attainment goals." (Emphasis supplied.)

During the review, we were advised that some action had been undertaken to alleviate the conditions noted. We noted that a coordinator for elementary education was designated in October 1968. In addition, a Trust Territory educational specialist informed us that a Territory-wide curriculum in science was under development and that a workshop on this curriculum had been planned.

We believe that the need for uniform sequential curriculums is of sufficient importance that the Department may wish to review the actions currently being taken by the Trust Territory officials to improve the conditions noted during our review and take steps to accelerate the needed corrective action.

In view of the short period of time between issuance of the Stanford Research Institute report and the period of our review, and in view of the corrective actions already initiated, we do not plan any further reporting on this matter at this time.

We wish to express our appreciation to you for the cooperation and assistance given our staff during the review.

Sincerely yours,

Allen R. Voss

Allen R. Voss
Associate Director

The Honorable
The Secretary of the Interior