

## MOZAMBIQUE X

# A big step forward in primary education

By HUGH KAY

As late as 1958 it was true to say that 95 per cent. of the people of Mozambique were illiterate. Since then, the graph of primary education has rocketed upwards, but the test of Portuguese intentions will turn on the speed with which the Government now develops its secondary and technical grades, and the centres of higher studies.

There are two levels of primary schooling. Most African pupils, and some Asians and mulattos as well, go to Catholic mission schools, run with Government aid. They begin with three years of kindergarten, first and second grades. Here

they learn the Portuguese language and the rudiments of the three Rs.

Then comes primary school proper: third and fourth grades, then a year in the qualifying class for entry into secondary school. The subjects are Portuguese language and history, the Christian ethic, handicrafts and agriculture.

## Teacher training

Few pupils get as far as the qualifying class, but completion of the fourth grade can qualify a student for training as a teacher in Government primary "posts"—as opposed to full-blown primary schools. These

posts have sprung up in scores of outlying villages, and keen young African teachers, by giving up their vacations, manage to keep a year or two ahead of their senior pupils.

White children, Asians and mulattos are supposed to dispense with kindergarten and go to Government primary schools with a five-year course. All primary students, whichever level they come from, are eligible for Government secondary schools, academic or vocational (that is, technical), provided they have passed their qualifying grade.

The trouble is that 13 is the maximum age for starting in primary school, while 14 is the maximum age for starting in

secondary school. Many African children tend to start their schooling late, and do not finish the kindergarten course in time to qualify for further studies. In 1959, there were 392,796 children in this grade, and of these only 6,928 went to primary school.

## Small percentage

The late Eduardo Mondlane recalled that, in a Government high school he visited in 1961, only 40 out of 800 pupils were Africans. Secondary schools were few in number and all were located in towns. Few African parents could afford the boarding fees, even though tuition was

cent. (In Angola the figure was only 45 per cent.)

The latest available distribution breakdown relates to 1966, but the pattern has not substantially changed since then:—

### PUPILS IN 1966-67

All primary .....	445,586
Secondary-Technical (including teacher-training) .....	15,541
Secondary-Academic ..	9,866
Middle-Technical ....	589
University studies ....	632
Various (including seminars) .....	1,348
	<hr/> 473,562

In judging Mozambique's record it is fair to say that in 1960 the general illiteracy level for Africa as a whole was 81.5 per cent. and as much as 88.2 per cent. in West Africa. In the 5-19 age group, Mozambique was schooling 26 per cent. of the school age population in 1964, an improvement on Sierra Leone (16 per cent.) and Tanzania (21 per cent.). But Uganda showed 31 per cent., Congo-Kinshasa 39 per cent., Ghana 61 per cent., Kenya 43 per cent., and Rhodesia 54 per cent. As regards the figures for secondary level alone, the differences were smaller.

Schooling at primary level in Mozambique has made dramatic strides, and the great stress now

is on technical schools. But secondary education generally is still at a high premium.

This may be partly due to fears that an educated élite will develop before the jobs are ready to give them employment: the political curse of other African states. But there is also the problem of taking secondary education out to the bush, with roads to be built, transport to be provided, and sophisticated buildings to construct.

The other major criticism is that Portuguese education is heavily European, with scant attention to African history and anthropology. It is true that African cultures tend to be lived rather than written, but the traditional heroic epic, passed from mouth to mouth, does not receive the attention it does in the African States.

The centre of university studies, opened in 1963 in Lourenço Marques, is extremely up-to-date and staffed by highly trained teachers. It is, concentrating first on civil engineering, biology and physics, medicine and veterinary medicine, agronomy and now on language departments as well.

The standard of the university courses at Lourenço Marques is equivalent to that of Lisbon University, but this is to undergo reform; at present, Portuguese courses are too long, too theoretical, and involve too

many subordinate subjects, and the Rector of the Centre, Dr. Veiga Simão, who secured his physics doctorate at Cambridge, is one of the most earnest reformers.

It may be said that there are political motives behind the postponement of faculties for law and political science. Yet the fact remains that Mozambique, like other African countries, is less in need of lawyers than of men who want to build dams and bridges, prospect for minerals and develop agriculture.

## Top level intake

The country's political future will depend in no small measure on what is done with the African graduate. At present only 15 per cent. of the centre's intake is non-European: Asian, Chinese and African. There are doubtless many mulattos in the other 85 per cent., whose mixed origin is too distant to trace as such. But until the secondary grades and teacher-training receive an adequate boost, the African intake at top level is bound to be slow.

On an optimistic scale, the current Development Plan proposes to spend 2,700m. escudos on overseas education, more than five times as much as its predecessor.