

FEDERATION OF MALAYA

CENTRAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON EDUCATION

Report

on

THE BARNES REPORT ON
MALAY EDUCATION

and

THE FENN-WU REPORT ON
CHINESE EDUCATION

10TH SEPTEMBER, 1951

.

MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL ADVISORY
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AS ON
10TH SEPTEMBER, 1951.

1. The Acting Director of Education (MR. L. D. WHITFIELD)
(Chairman).
2. The Deputy Financial Secretary (MR. J. E. PEPPER).
3. The Assistant Director of Education (Girls) (MISS M. LOMAS).
4. Bro. Visitor, Christian Brothers Schools (REV. BRO. BARNITUS).
5. HON'BLE MRS. CHEAH INN KIONG, M.B.E.
6. MR. CHONG KHON LIN.
7. MR. G. P. DARTFORD.
8. Educational Secretary, Methodist Mission Schools
(REV. R. KESSELRING).
9. MR. T. B. GOPALKRISHNAN.
10. MR. LEE MUN YU.
11. HON'BLE MR. LEUNG CHEUNG LING.
12. PROFESSOR F. MASON.
13. HON'BLE DR. MUSTAPA BIN OSMAN.
14. MR. K. MUVAGANAM.
15. MR. P. F. PEREIRA, M.B.E.
16. The Principal, College of Agriculture (MR. O. M. LEE).
17. The Principal, Technical College (MR. E. BUCKLEY).
18. TUAN SYED SHAIDALI, M.B.E., F.D.
19. CHE TAMUDDIN BIN UDA ISA.
20. CHE ZAINAL ABIDIN BIN ALI, F.D.

REPORT OF THE CENTRAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON EDUCATION ON THE BARNES REPORT ON
MALAY EDUCATION AND THE FENN-WU REPORT
ON CHINESE EDUCATION.

I.—PRELIMINARY.

The Central Advisory Committee on Education held three meetings to consider and report on the Barnes Report on Malay Education and the Fenn-Wu Report on Chinese Education.

2. At our first meeting on the 23rd and 24th July, Prof. Mason, University of Malaya, Rev. Bro. Barnitus, Bro. Visitor of the Christian Brothers Schools, and Mr. E. Buckley, Acting Principal of the Technical College, Kuala Lumpur, were unable to be present.

3. At our second meeting on the 13th and 14th August, Prof. Mason, University of Malaya, Tuan Syed Shaidali, and Mr. O. M. Lee, Principal of the College of Agriculture, were unable to be present.

4. At our third meeting on 10th September, Prof. Mason, University of Malaya, and Mr. Pepper, Deputy Financial Secretary, were unable to be present.

II.—THE BARNES REPORT ON MALAY EDUCATION.

5. Early in our deliberations we accepted and endorsed the beliefs expressed in paragraph 2 of the Foreword to the Barnes Report:

“We believe that Malay education ought

(a) to foster the growth of individuals towards the best in knowledge, skill and character which they have it in them to attain;

(b) to encourage and enable the Malay community to occupy its rightful place in relation to other communal groups in the mixed society of Malaya;

(c) to assist the formation of a unified citizen body, or nation, composed of all such groups”

and decided that these basic purposes are not peculiar to Malay education but should also be the essential purposes of all education in Malaya. We look forward to the time when every Government and Government Aided primary class in Malaya will be multi-racial and will receive an education of a nature designed to achieve these purposes and of a quantity which will make their achievement a practical possibility.

6. **Primary Education.**—We commend the educational principle referred to in Chapter IV, paragraph 16, of the Barnes Report and in Chapter VI, paragraph 2 of the Fenn-Wu Report that a child's earliest education should be in its mother tongue and consider that if educational principles and educational principles only are to determine the curriculum in our primary classes that curriculum should prescribe, during the first two years of the primary course, instruction in and through the medium of the mother tongue and instruction in no more than one other language. We are divided on what the other language should be, a large majority of the Committee considering that it should be English for all pupils and

a minority that it should be English in the case of Malay pupils and Malay in the case of other pupils. Still considering a curriculum based solely on educational principles we are agreed that no serious harm would be done to such principles by requiring all Chinese and Indian pupils to learn their mother tongue and Malay and English from the beginning of their third year.

7. We recognise, however, that in the present day circumstances and conditions in Malaya it may be necessary to take into consideration other factors in addition to educational principles when framing a curriculum for primary classes. In that event we recommend that the curriculum should direct that all pupils should learn Malay and English throughout the six years of their primary course and that, in addition, provision should be made in all primary classes for Chinese and Indian pupils to receive instruction in Kuo Yu and Tamil respectively. We believe that during the first two years this instruction should take the form of one period daily of approximately half-an-hour spent in conversation lessons based on events and circumstances of particular and immediate interest to young Chinese and Indian pupils and that additional instruction in the written forms of Chinese and Tamil should be introduced gradually from the third year of the primary course. We are agreed that in a primary school working to such a curriculum the medium of instruction should be Malay or English or, perhaps, in the later years, both these languages and that experience would show which medium or media of instruction would most help each school to achieve the objects set out in paragraph 5 above.

8. We are perturbed that the Barnes Report should have been so interpreted as to have caused two widespread fears in different sections of the community. The first of these is the fear that all Government assistance to vernacular schools will be withdrawn in the near future; the second, a corollary of the first, that many teachers in vernacular colleges and classes would be thrown out of employment. We recommend that every means and opportunity should be taken to assure those who entertain these fears that there is no intention of withdrawing Government assistance to vernacular schools until there are sufficient acceptable National Schools to take their place, "acceptable" being interpreted to mean schools which provide instruction in Malay and English and for instruction in Chinese and Tamil as in paragraph 7 above; also, that the process of re-organisation will be so carried out that no one's "rice bowl will be broken" and no teachers in vernacular schools, training colleges or classes will be thrown out of employment. We also recommend that the authorities in charge of Aided Schools should be assured that it is the intention of paragraph 6, Chapter IV, of the Barnes Report that the primary departments of the existing English schools should become primary National Schools and not that the accommodation which they occupy should be taken over for the use of post primary classes.

9. We doubt the feasibility of the informal selection of the "upper twenty per cent. of the intelligence range" at the age of 9 plus contemplated in paragraphs 31 and 33 of Chapter IV of the Barnes Report but recognise that this must be tried in the circumstances envisaged in paragraph 19 of Chapter XI. We endorse the recommendation in the last sentence of paragraph 33, Chapter IV.

10. Muslim pupils should receive skilled instruction in the elementary principles of their faith as an integral part of their primary schooling and we point out that it will be necessary to obtain from the authorities in charge of Mission Schools permission for such instruction to be given on their premises if such premises are used for primary National Schools.

We consider that character training should be an important part of the primary course and direct particular attention to paragraphs 36 to 38, Chapter IV.

11. **Post-Primary Education.**—We are in general agreement with Chapter V of the Barnes Report and wish to stress the importance of the flexibility of transfer between vocational and academic courses referred to in paragraphs 3 and 5 of this Chapter.

12. We recommend that all pupils in the academic stream should be required to continue their study of Malay or of their mother tongue.

13. We ask that consideration should be given by Government to accepting suitable L.C.C. Examination Certificates in commercial subjects as a qualification for appointment to certain types of clerical posts as an alternative to the School Certificate.

14. **Girls' Education.**—We warmly endorse Chapter VI of the Barnes Report and particularly agree with the sentiment expressed in paragraph 6 that, speaking generally, women make the best primary teachers.

15. **The Training of Teachers.**—We wish to stress that an adequate supply of well trained teachers is the first requirement for any improvement in or extension of primary education. We therefore acclaim the proposals in Chapter VII of the Barnes Report, particularly those relating to The Permanent Training Scheme, and urge that the very highest priority should be given to providing residential training colleges. We agree that those admitted to such colleges should have done a one year post-School Certificate course and should have obtained a qualification in Malay in the School Certificate Examination and recommend that applicants for admission who have obtained a similar qualification in Chinese or Tamil in addition to Malay should be especially welcomed. We should like to see all teachers trained in such colleges directable for service in any part of the Federation subject to the agreement of the States and Settlements concerned.

16. We believe that these residential training colleges should be open to both men and women and that there should be women members on the teaching staffs of all such colleges. We recognise the importance of periodic short refresher courses overseas for members of the staffs of these colleges and look forward to the time when the colleges can be completely staffed by locally educated men and women who have received further training and teaching experience overseas. In the meantime we recommend the early recruitment of staff so that they may have an opportunity to become familiar with the work and the problems of our schools before the training colleges open.

17. **The Inspectorate.**—We accept whole-heartedly the recommendations in Chapter VIII and advise that enquiries should be made at once to see if it would be possible to obtain the services of a team of H.M. Inspectors on secondment from the United Kingdom for a period of at least six months to assess the present standard of teaching in Malayan schools and to make recommendations for improving it.

18. **Local Responsibility.**—We accept the principle of Local Authorities but consider that this question should receive careful and expert consideration. We believe that any system of local responsibility should provide adequate safeguards for the interests of the children and the teachers and should not interfere with the transferability of the latter.

19. **Community Development.**—We would welcome all genuine responsible assistance in the work of education and in the wiping out of illiteracy.

20. **Re-organisation.**—We consider that when National Schools have been established each child should, in the ordinary way, be admitted to the National School nearest his home irrespective of whether it is a Government or an Aided School. One obvious exception to this general principle would be the case of a parent who wished his child to enter his old school.

III.—THE FENN-WU REPORT ON CHINESE EDUCATION.

21. **Vernacular Schools.**—The last racially segregated Vernacular primary school in Malaya will cease to exist when the parents of the children attending it believe that a local National School would provide a more acceptable education. The Fenn-Wu Report, Chapter III, paragraph 23, suggests that day may never come. We believe it will come. We also believe its advent may be hastened by persuasion and inducement but delayed by dictation and compulsion. It is an event of the undated future so that in contemplating the problems of Vernacular schools in their present form it would be unwise to regard them only as short-term issues. Any satisfactory solution of those problems should help so to modulate existing Vernacular schools that their eventual transmutation into acceptable National Schools will be natural and voluntary and welcomed by the parents of those who attend them.

22. We wish to make it quite clear that we consider that Government aid to Vernacular primary schools should continue so long as there are not enough acceptable National Schools to take their place. While recognising this responsibility of Government to Vernacular schools we call attention to and endorse the last sentence of paragraph 4 on page 75 of the Barnes Report.

23. We further recommend that even when a sufficient number of acceptable National Schools are available Malaysians of any race should be permitted to operate as private institutions such schools as they consider to be actually needed and as they can maintain at a standard of which they can be proud and which is approved by Government. We believe that the number of such private schools will be small.

24. **Malaya and a Malayan Culture.**—We desire to direct attention to the first sentence of paragraph 3 and to paragraph 14 of Chapter II of the Fenn-Wu Report and to point out that the suggestions they contain fit in well with the recommendations we have made in the earlier part of this report concerning the nature of acceptable National Schools and the curriculum to be followed in them.

25. **Malayan Education and Chinese Schools.**—While recognising that there is some truth in paragraphs 4 and 21 of Chapter III in so far as they refer to Vernacular schools we consider that English schools (in which the classes are multi-racial) have been and are being, on the whole, successful in promoting a Malayan outlook and we believe that acceptable National Schools such as we have already recommended will extend and accelerate this process.

26. We accept the need for post-primary courses in which the emphasis is on vocational rather than on academic work and advise that experiments should be made by introducing in some English schools classes

or "streams" with a vocational bias which would be parallel to and of equal standing with the academic classes and "streams". Our recommendation in paragraph 11 above would apply to these parallel "streams".

27. It is not our experience that there has been any prohibitive financial control, as is implied in paragraph 8, Chapter III, of students wishing to proceed overseas for higher education. We note with pleasure that the University of Malaya is about to form a Department of Chinese Studies and hope that Chinese students will there find adequate opportunities for higher education.

28. The effectiveness of new methods and techniques and of audio-visual aids depends largely upon there being teachers available who are trained and who are willing to use such aids to the best advantage. Considerable progress has been made in Malayan schools in recent years in the use of audio-visual aids.

29. We note that the first increase of 100 per cent. in the Grant-in-aid recommended in paragraph 30, Chapter III, has already been given some six months ahead of the date suggested and that further assistance has been given by the payment of the salaries of teachers of Malay and English in Chinese schools. We are not opposed to the further increase of 100 per cent. recommended in the Fenn-Wu Report but we advise that consideration should be given in 1952 to the payment of this additional subsidy from January, 1953, in the light of the use which has been made towards the opening of National Schools.

30. We accept the conditions given in paragraph 32 (1), (2) and (3), Chapter III as reasonable for the payment of Grant-in-aid but recognise the very great practical difficulties in ensuring that conditions (2) and (3) are fulfilled.

31. We commend the counsel offered in paragraphs 33 to 40, Chapter III, but suggest that it would be better first to organise a Committee for the Improvement of Chinese Schools in each State and Settlement and that a Pan-Federation Committee might later develop from these.

32. **Text-Books.**—After much consideration of the recommendations concerning text-books made in both the Barnes and the Fenn-Wu Reports we are agreed that the whole question of books for use in the classrooms and libraries of all types of Malayan schools is of such importance, magnitude and complexity that it should be separately studied and reported on. We accept the principle that the basic content of text-books for all types of schools should be the same but warn that translation of text-books from one language to another is not sufficient. Skilful adaptation, amounting in many cases almost to re-writing, rather than translation is necessary.

33. We commend the suggestion in Chapter IV, paragraph 3, that social, ethical and moral values should be taught in schools but consider that ethical and moral values can be better taught by example and practice than through text-books. A series of readers dealing with social customs and civic duties would be of great use in all types of schools.

34. **Teacher Training.**—We have given our views on this subject in paragraphs 15 and 16 above but would here add that we regard the ability to read and understand English as indispensable if a teacher is to keep up to date in teaching methods.

35. We do not consider that the proposed Chinese Training College at the post-secondary level is necessary and believe that the proposed Normal Schools, one of which is now under construction, will be able to make a considerable contribution towards providing better qualified teachers for Chinese schools.

36. We acknowledge the defects of the present three-year week-end Teacher Training scheme but cannot regard as practicable in the present circumstances of Chinese schools the three-month Training Institutes recommended in paragraph 9, Chapter V. The holiday Refresher Institutes suggested in paragraph 12 are, however, practicable and should be encouraged.

37. We agree that the approach to the problem of improving teaching standards in Chinese schools should be qualitative rather than quantitative. It might well be based on a team of experts holding intensive week-end courses and spending the rest of their time supervising, guiding and demonstrating in Chinese schools.

38. **Conditions of Service of Teachers.**—We recognise the most unsatisfactory conditions under which very many teachers in Chinese schools work and acknowledge gratefully the good work which many of them have done in these adverse conditions. Satisfactory conditions of service for teachers in Chinese schools would, we believe, do much to improve the tone of these schools. We recommend that the Committees for the Improvement of Chinese Schools suggested in paragraph 31 above should, as soon as they are formed, address themselves to the task of formulating draft Schemes of Service for teachers in Chinese schools and that these should then be submitted to Government for examination in the light of paragraph 49, Chapter V.

39. **The Language Bridge.**—In view of our recommendations for the curriculum in acceptable National Schools we feel that comment on this Chapter is unnecessary. We emphasise, however, the importance of taking advantage of every modern method of language teaching which has proved successful in any part of the world.

L. D. WHITFIELD,
Chairman,

Central Advisory Committee on Education.

10th September, 1951.