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EDUCATIONAL POLICY

STATEMENT OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
ON THE REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL
POLICY TOGETHER WITH THE REPORT OF
THAT COMMITTEE

1954.

STATEMENT OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ON THE REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Towards the end of 1953 the Federal Government, which was faced with a deficit of over \$200 million in the Federal Estimates, 1954, was advised by the Treasury that, notwithstanding the admitted need for a vastly increased provision for education, Government was making the maximum contribution possible for Education in 1954 (about \$100 million) and could not significantly increase that provision in 1955 and subsequent years. It therefore became imperative to go into the whole question of educational expenditure and, to this end, the Federal Executive Council appointed a committee, which was charged with this examination, particularly with a view to ascertaining the pace at which it would be possible to implement the policy outlined in the Education Ordinance, 1952. On 17th November, 1953, four Members of the Government, who by virtue of their portfolios were closely concerned with educational problems, were appointed to this Committee, together with two of the three unofficial members of Federal Executive Council. To these were subsequently added four members nominated by the Conference of Federation Executives to represent the States and Settlements. The final Report of this Committee is included in this Council Paper and the purpose of this memorandum is to make such comments as are necessary in order that the views of the Federal Government on certain of the recommendations contained in the Report may be given to the Legislative Council.

2. The Federal Government has been in close touch with the deliberations of this Committee. It has also taken into account the views of the Central Advisory Council on Education, together with various schedules produced by the Director of Education, from which various facts of interest emerged. For ease of reference of Council, these are presented in tabulated form:

Annual cost of a pupil in a

Government Vernacular School	\$ 100
Primary English School	200
Secondary Academic School	400
Secondary Modern School	500
Post-School Certificate Class	1,000

Cost of building a classroom for 40 pupils in a

Government Vernacular School	\$ 5,000
Primary English School	10,000
Secondary Academic School	10,000
Secondary Modern School	20,000 (including equipment)

Cost of building and equipping a		
Trade School (Three-year course for 250 boys)		\$1.1 million
Vocational School (Two-year course for 250 boys)7 million

It is necessary also to explain that, when a National stream replaces a vernacular stream, less wastage may be expected. For example, a vernacular school with at present 650 pupils (200 in Standard I and 450 in Standard II and above) would, in all probability, have 1,200 pupils if and when all streams have been completely converted to National streams. Therefore, a conversion factor of 1,200/650 may be applied to enrolment by the introduction of National streams.

3. With these facts as a background, Council will be in a better position to assess the extent of the educational problem outlined in the Report. It is necessary, however, to point out that there are many educational needs examined in the Report of the Select Committee which drafted the Education Ordinance, 1952, which are not provided for in the minimum and, therefore, necessarily limited programme in the Tables attached to the Report now presented. These include hostels for pupils at all types of schools, vocational training for boys and girls leaving vernacular primary schools, expansion of the inspectorate, teachers' quarters, new schools in areas not at present served by schools, scholarships for training specialist teachers for secondary and vocational schools, more scholarships for Malays, annually recurrent costs of the new Technical College, providing teachers of religion, more extensive teaching of Kuo Yu and Tamil, special schools for handicapped children, school feeding and medical and dental services, transport of children to and from schools and the provision of clothing for necessitous pupils.

4. The annual cost to Government of Education has risen from about \$11 million in 1946 to about \$100 million in 1954. Some figures illustrative of this phenomenal increase are appended at Appendix A. Nevertheless, it has not been found possible to give some 30 per cent. of the children in the primary age group (over six and under thirteen years of age) even the prevailing types of education, much less the desired National School type. The problem gains in size from the fact that the school age population increases annually by some 70,000 children who, if they were given a National School type of education, would alone cost the country an extra \$14 million every year.

5. If it were possible to provide National Schools for all children in the present primary age group, the cost in 1954 would be about \$220 million, excluding building costs. At the end of ten years the country would be required to pay in the region of \$400 million for its primary education alone, again excluding building costs. Add to this the cost at the end of ten years of secondary, technical and vocational education at an estimated \$320 million, making \$720 million in all, and it is perfectly obvious that such a programme of expansion is impossible in this country whose revenue is likely to be about \$600 million in 1954 and not much greater in succeeding years.

6. The expenditure on education over the next six years has been computed for a number of alternative programmes bearing in mind the increasing numbers of children in the primary school age group and the normal increase in costs attributable to completion of training of teachers and salary increments (Increments alone account for \$3 million each year, the high figure being due to the low average age of present teachers). For this reason, even if no increase in enrolments is made in any type of school, it would still be necessary in 1960 to find \$18 million more than in 1954,

although the percentage of children in the primary age group for whom education was available would have fallen from 70 per cent. to 48 per cent. because of the population increase of the group. To keep the same percentage of pupils in schools by holding vernacular enrolments static and increasing the numbers admitted to English medium schools so as to keep pace with the increase in numbers in the primary age group would mean a rise in costs from \$100 million in 1954 to over \$200 million in 1960. From examination of these computations it has become apparent that either there must be recession, or there must be aid from other than Federal revenue.

7. To keep within the limits of a practical budget it would appear that, either the process of education must be cheapened considerably if we are to aim at getting all or most children into school, or there must be rigorous control and selection at all stages. The former means that the costs per child would have to be considerably decreased with an inevitable and catastrophic fall in standards. The latter is by far the better approach, both because it is practicable and because it is educationally sound to place children by selection in their proper educational environment.

8. This control and selection must obviously be accompanied by a concentration on those parts of an education expansion programme which are absolutely essential to the progress and unity of the country. It was the main task of the Committee to recommend what in its view were these essential parts. The Committee was of the opinion that progress should be made primarily on three objectives:

- (a) The gradual introduction of bi-lingualism into Malay Vernacular Schools and tri-lingualism into Chinese and Indian, so that they may progressively assume the features of a National School system;
- (b) The maintenance in the English medium National type schools of the existing proportion of children in these schools to the total primary school age population; and
- (c) The development of vocational secondary education.

It will be seen that the Committee has recommended limited progress along these three lines, that the programme proposed involves an English medium teacher training programme designed to produce 1,000 teachers a year by the end of 1959 and an increase in English medium National type school enrolments from 73,000 in 1954 to 106,000 in 1960, the enrolments in secondary academic classes in English schools remaining around the figure of 34,000 till more accurate estimates can be made of national needs for youths educated up to this standard. Meanwhile, secondary vocational and modern school enrolments would develop from 1,400 in 1954 to 10,750 by 1959. The latter proposal is particularly welcomed by Government, as there appears to be at present an over-emphasis on the academic type of school and many children, who are out of place and fruitlessly struggling in the academic type of school, will thereby receive an education more suited to their natural gifts and attainments. The limited extent to which effect under this programme can be given to the proposal at (a) above, which is one of the utmost importance, is illustrated by the fact that by the end of 1960 only 3,700 English medium trained teachers will have been directed to vernacular schools. When this figure is compared with the present total number of 20,000 vernacular teachers, it will be clear that, however restricted may be the future expansion of enrolments in vernacular schools, there will always be a need for teachers in the vernacular in numbers not less than those at present employed.

9. It will be seen from the analysis of costs of the programme suggested (Table D of the Report) that the total expenditure on education