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SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (INC.)

SUID-AFRIKAANSE INSTITUUT VIR RASSEVERHOUDINGS (INGELYF)

P. O. Box 97

Posbus 97.

JOHANNESBURG.

A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT OF THE COLOURED
EDUCATION COMMISSION, 1953-1956, PROVINCIAL
ADMINISTRATION OF THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.

(THE BOTHA COMMISSION).

by

Mrs. M. L. Grant.

In 1953 the Honourable P.J. Olivier, Administrator of the Cape Province, appointed a Commission " to enquire into and make recommendations on matters concerning Coloured education " and the report was presented early in 1956. The terms of reference were " to enquire into and make recommendations on :

- (a) The financial implications for the Cape Province over the next ten years if effect is given to the views expressed and the recommendations made in the de Villiers report in regard to Coloured education ;
- (b) the question whether the re-organization of the school system as recommended by the de Villiers Commission can and should be applied to Coloured education, and, if so, to what extent;
- (c) the question whether the nature and direction of the present educational system fulfil the needs of the Coloured population, or whether the system with its emphasis on the academic side does not lead to a feeling of frustration;
- (d) the aim and function and the effectiveness of the education in all types of Coloured schools under present policy, regard being had to the disquieting retardation of pupils as evidenced by age distribution tables and examination results;
- (e) the Coloured teacher and his training, his professional conduct and the uses he makes of facilities provided by the State;

/ and

and

- (f) such other aspects of Coloured education as may be related to the foregoing and may appear necessary for a thorough and searching enquiry into all aspects of Coloured education.

The first step taken by the Commission was to define what is understood by "Coloured education." It discarded the view that it meant a "specific type" of education as commonly understood. A point of view which made such a differentiation, in the words of the report, "could hardly be defended in a country which is democratically governed and under a government which has adopted as its policy the ideal of the parallel development of all its population groups. The Commission is of the opinion that by Coloured education no more and no less must be understood than the education provided for those children whose parents belong to a certain population group, namely the Coloured people". At the same time, the Commission does not depart from the status quo regarding segregated education as between White and Coloured children. Coloured education, then, for the Commission means the same kind of education as for White children, but in separate schools for Coloured pupils.

THE PRESENT POSITION AS REGARDS
COLOURED EDUCATION IN THE CAPE PROVINCE.

The report contains a useful analysis of the conditions prevailing and describes many unsatisfactory features of Coloured education, of which retardation and early school-leaving are of prime importance. It notes that, of the pupils who entered Sub-standard A in 1947, only 17 per cent were in Standard VI in 1954; of the pupils in the secondary school in 1954, 53.4 per cent were in Standard VII and only 5.8 per cent in Standard X, while in the same year, 1954, 3.6 per cent of all pupils in all standards, Sub A to X, were in Standard VII or above. (N.B. For the purpose of these calculations, Standard VI is included in the primary school.) But these figures, unsatisfactory as they are, nevertheless show an improvement over the years. The number of Coloured pupils in the Cape Province attending school has increased from 60,561 in 1930 to 208,775 in 1954, while in 1930 only .8 per cent of the pupils were in Standard VII and above.

Shortage of school buildings, resulting in overcrowded classrooms, no provision for mentally retarded children, inadequate medical inspection, all defects noted in previous reports, are reiterated in this report. The Commission finds that the poor socio-economic condition of many of the Coloured people accounts for a good deal of their retardation, and it proceeds to make recommendations for improvement, the most obvious being compulsory

/school

school attendance.

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION
and
THE DE VILLIERS REPORT.

Very little change is recommended by the Commission in the present primary school course, which is the same for European as for Coloured children. The Departmental Primary-Course is considered to be effective, but it is suggested that some differentiation might be introduced into the syllabus to suit differing environments. Stress is laid on reading, writing and arithmetic as the basis of all primary education but more facilities for hand-work are recommended, provision for it being considered inadequate in Coloured schools at present. The provision of adjustment classes for mentally retarded children, as an experiment in a few selected schools, is recommended, their number being increased if improvement justifies it.

Reorganization in the schools along the lines of the de Villiers Report has already taken place, more fully in the European schools but to a certain extent in the Coloured schools as well. The Botha Commission recommends that this reorganization should be applied in the Coloured schools where possible. The main features of reorganization which the Cape Education Department has instituted, based on the de Villiers Report, are (1) Standard VI has been taken out of the primary school and is the lowest form of the secondary school; (2) the secondary school is divided into the Junior Secondary Department, comprising Standards VI, VII and VIII and the Senior Secondary Department, comprising Standards IX and X. The Junior Secondary course is a general course while the Senior course leads to the Senior Certificate examination, with or without matriculation exemption. In the case of Coloured pupils, the Botha Commission recommends that Standard VI be transferred to the Secondary school, as it has been for European children. There must, however, be some exceptions, particularly in rural districts, where there are not enough pupils to justify secondary schools. In these cases, Standard VI should remain in the primary school, the retention of this standard being necessary because it is the minimum educational qualification for certain classes of employment.

In Junior Secondary classes the claims of handwork and commercial subjects should receive more attention, according to the report, for Coloured schools are particularly inadequately served in the matter of these subjects.

/ The Senior

The Senior Secondary course is considered suitable for Coloured schools.

COMPULSORY EDUCATION.

Compulsory school attendance between the ages of 7 and 14 is once more recommended. The present position follows from Ordinance 11 of 1945, according to which a Coloured School board or education committee may introduce compulsory education for children between the ages of 7 and 14 who live within three miles of an undenominational school. There must be sufficient satisfactory accommodation in the schools for the increase in the number of children; pupils who have not attained the age of 14 may leave if they have passed Standard IV and are engaged in regular occupation. Mission schools, which educate the largest part of the Coloured school population, are excluded from the compulsory provision. By 1953 compulsory education for Coloured children had been proclaimed in only six centres in the Cape Province.

The Commission goes further. It recommends that school attendance should be compulsory between the ages of 7 and 14, but pupils who have passed Standard V and have not yet reached the age of 14 should be allowed to leave school. The Commission also recommends that church schools should come under the compulsory regulations. To quote recommendation (2) Chapter IV, "Compulsory school attendance should be applicable at centres where there is no undenominational school, provided that there is adequate, satisfactory accommodation in church schools, and provided that satisfactory arrangements in regard to control can be made with the church or churches." It recommends that Ordinance No. 11 of 1945 be amended as soon as possible, to allow of compulsory attendance being applied to church schools, but states that "compulsory school attendance should be introduced gradually wherever circumstances permit."

TRAINING OF TEACHERS.

With a view to improving the standard of teaching, the report recommends raising the qualifications necessary for male entrants to the profession. Whereas now Coloured teachers must have passed Standard VIII before training, it is recommended that from the beginning of 1960, or as soon thereafter as possible, the minimum qualification should be the Senior Certificate. Teachers of academic subjects in high schools should hold a university degree and receive at least one year's professional training. One year courses in practical subjects and in commercial subjects and a course of training for teachers of mentally retarded children

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are recommended. There is at present no training for Coloured teachers in commercial subjects, nor is there training for teachers of retarded children.

The position with regard to Coloured women teachers is very unsatisfactory. There is such a shortage of them, and so few of them are coming forward to enter the profession, that men have to be employed in the Grades and lower classes, although educational opinion favours women teachers for young children. The Commission therefore feels that it cannot recommend the raising of the entrance qualifications for women to what they should be because of this shortage and so it suggests that women who have passed Standard VIII should continue to be accepted. Even although there are so few entrants to the third-year course of training in Infant School Method, the Commission considers that it should be continued and that for this course the qualification should, as soon as possible, be the Senior Certificate and two years general training.

The main features of the report may be summed up as a number of recommendations for all-round improvement of Coloured education. These include compulsory school attendance, better training of teachers, more boarding bursaries and transport allowances for student teachers and secondary school pupils, provision of more schools, enlarging the teaching personnel, more money for the purchase of library books, special education for retarded children and more medical inspection of schools.

In a chapter on financing these improvements, the report states: "If the recommendations of your Commission are given effect to, be it ever so gradually, the Province will be involved in enormous additional expenditure."

The financial implications are given as (1) a total capital expenditure for the ten years 1955 to 1965 of £8,563,000 and (2) a current expenditure for the year 1965 of £ 7,354,000. No recommendation was made by the Commission regarding the source of the additional funds.

To the questions put in the terms of reference; viz., whether the present type of education is too academic and whether it leads to a feeling of frustration, the Commission replies by recommending the same type of education as is being given now to both European and Coloured, but with greater emphasis on practical subjects to meet the requirements of the courses provided for all pupils. There is, however, a recommendation that some form of vocational training should be provided for pupils of 14 years of age and over who have passed at least Standard V. The Commission was not prepared to accept the view that Coloured youths who had had a junior

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secondary education were frustrated because they could not find suitable employment "provided they are not over-selective", and it did not consider that it could go into the question of obstacles being placed in the way of equality of opportunity as between Coloured and White seekers of employment. To quote again from the report; "The conclusion at which the Commission has arrived is that the solution of the problem of retardation in the scholastic progress of the pupils does not lie in a lowering of such standards as are set for the promotion of pupils from one class to the next, but in the gradual elimination of the factors which cause retardation. "

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