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Recruitment For Primary Schools

Reports reaching us from different parts of the country point to a flaw in the present policy of recruitment for primary schools, which threatens to frustrate the administration's aim of achieving universal literacy by the end of the century.

That flaw stems from the principle that eighty percent of primary school teachers must be females. Intended to encourage the employment of more women, the policy has in fact led to many schools remaining under-staffed. For the fact is that enough educated women to teach in primary schools are impossible to find.

Insistence on the letter of the policy being followed has proved counter-productive from the point of view of the goal it is intended to achieve. If schools stay understaffed, how could children receive instruction?

Besides, with thousands of educated young men looking for employment, and with the need for better progress in our literacy campaign, daily becoming more pressing, it is impractical to exclude males from primary schools. This discrimination can no longer be defended on any rational grounds.

Employ females by all means, where suitable women are forthcoming. But one must not forget that getting children educated is far more important than the pursuit of a policy designed to provide more jobs for women.

We would urge the Education Directorate to weigh the pros and cons realistically and recommend a change in the current policy which, not to put too fine a point on it, amounts to unjust discrimination against males.

We would also take this occasion to point out that apart from staff, most primary schools in rural areas function in conditions which are not conducive to the attainment of our aims. Some lack anything in the way of equipment and furniture: some meet when possible on premises used for other purposes most of the time. Occasionally newspapers receive picture of children gathered in the open under a tree with books open in front of them. Idyllic as this may appear to some, let us not forget that this depends on the weather cooperating when it begins to rain, as it often does from April to November the school has to disperse.

Inadequate staffing is thus one of the problems which is tending to turn our literacy campaign into a kind of make-believe, to put it as mildly as we can.