

MEMORANDUM UPON NATIVE EDUCATION BY THE  
PARAMOUNT CHIEF OF SWAZILAND

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1. While I very keenly appreciate the efforts of the Education Department and Missionaries and other friends to give my people a good education, I feel very strongly that, together with what advantages the present system possesses, it has the following very grave disadvantages:-

- (a) It causes the Swazi scholar to despise Swazi institutions, and his indigenous culture;
- (b) It causes him to become ill-fitted to his environment;
- (c) It releases him from the wholesome restraints which the Swazi indigenous method of education inculcated, and does not set up any effective substitutes for them.

2. In seeking for the reasons for these defects one asks himself whether the fault is in European education itself. But surely this, if properly applied, should improve whatever there was of good in our indigenous methods of education. I have come to the conclusion, therefore, that the mistake is to be found in the method of application. That method is to treat Africans as Europeans, without first trying to discover what it was that produced good qualities in their own system of education, and without considering how they might be expected to react to a system of education so foreign to their culture. The better course would appear to be to use their own culture as a foundation, and erect the superstructure of European education upon it, and so bring out what is best in both, bringing Africans to world civilization as true Africans, a course which has been advocated by various great European statesmen. The present method is to develop the African as a European, arousing in him social leanings which, being a non-European he cannot realize, estranging him at the same time from Native society, and leaving him with a feeling of intense frustration.

I do not blame the African in these circumstances, nor do I blame his educator, who in introducing his kind of education did not know that it would have an effect so different from his expectations because it was being applied to a person so entirely different from himself in most respects.

3. Now, I think it is high time that we take this in our hands. When I ask myself what the good qualities of my people have been, I find them to have been due to the training they received from the amabuto system, and which in our endeavour to remedy matters, I recommend a return to. I believe it to be the best means by which social and individual education can be imparted. It is also the means whereby contemporary public opinion is used to control and direct the high spirits of youth into wholesome channels. At an early age all the lads in the country are formed into regiments. This is not done annually, but about every three to five years, so that the variation in age between the youngest and oldest boys in a regiment may be as much as five years. Each regiment is divided into companies which have as officers individuals chosen from the ranks by the local chief. The chief officer of the regiment is appointed by the Paramount Chief, who also appoints men from older regiments to serve as tutors and exemplars to the younger regiments. The organisation is similar in the case of girls. In the case of youths it is regarded as a breach of their moral code as well as of their regimental law, to have any sexual relations until they have reached their full growth, and are regarded as seasoned amajaha (young men). There are similar prohibitions in the case of girls.

This factor, it is submitted, should appeal strongly to all interested in Native welfare, and only requires a reasonable extension for it to operate towards that ideal of chastity which the Christian aims at realising.

In such matters the force of public opinion has a very great effect, and an individual who offends in these ways finds himself disciplined by his compeers.

4. It is appreciated that inside the school itself and while the scholars are receiving instruction in ordinary school subjects the regimental system would have to be in abeyance, but for any duties outside the class room and for some of the instruction in it, such as drill etc., it is submitted that this system would not fail to have a beneficial effect.

5. It is submitted that the effects of the regimental system are entirely wholesome, and are not inconsistent with the Christian religion. On the contrary, as they are calculated to inculcate pride of race, continence, self-control, respect for lawful authority, and the rendering of communal service, they should receive the approval of clergy and laymen, Christian and heathen alike.

6. I should like to see this attempt to preserve Native culture extended to the matter of food. In my experience the consumption of European diet by Natives has had several ill effects. In the first place it has had a bad effect upon the teeth and consequently upon the health; it is more expensive and is leading the people away from a much-needed frugality if they are to support the burdens which a more complex life now imposes upon them.

7. There is a difficulty which I foresee and for which I have no solution at present. That is the matter of uniform and dress. I do not expect that the Swazi form of uniform as it is now will have the unqualified approval of my friends the missionaries, while many of my other European friends and the older Swazis think that we are making a great mistake in so slavishly following the Europeans in matters of dress. I propose that an attempt should be made to settle it by discussion by the people who will have to wear this dress. That is a detail that I hope both sides may be found ready to give way a little upon.

8. It must not be thought that the regimental system is exclusively or principally military in its aim. It aims, as already stated, at making the individual a useful member of society, both as a defender of his country, and as a bulwark of the civil and social welfare of the State, much in the same way that a Boy Scout is expected to serve.

9. As the regimental system at present only begins to affect the child at about the age of ten and upwards, it follows that younger children of school age would not be immediately

affected by it unless we extended the system to apply to them. For this some simpler modification might be made. It may be possible to have junior amabuto, in the same way that you have Cubs as juniors to Boy Scouts, and that at the ordinary age of ten these Cubs could then become amabuto.

10. I do realize that, for those of my people who will have to go out of Swaziland, it will be necessary to give a preliminary training in European manners, customs, ways of eating etc., but that could be arranged for quite adequately in their last course in our national schools.

11. In order to provide properly for my people I do not see how it can be done effectively unless the system of State or National Schools is vastly extended. I should like to make it possible to have every child in such a school by the time his regiment was established.

12. I invite the most sympathetic consideration and co-operation by the Administration and by my other European and Native friends to these proposals. I can assure them of the support of the more conservative of my people, who view with very grave and well-justified alarm the breaking up of Swazi culture and nationality.

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