

728 Assembly of Chinese Associations of Malaysia

In Protest of Education Blueprint 2013-2025

Detrimental to the Development of Mother-Tongue Education

organised by United Chinese School Committees' Association of Malaysia(Dong Zong)

Declaration

United Chinese School Committees' Association of Malaysia (Dong Zong) hereby solemnly proclaims that we are firmly against the proposed "Education Blueprint 2013-2025"(hereinafter referred to as "the Blueprint") which advocates monolingual educational policy and is seen as detrimental to the development of mother-tongue education and national unity.

Malaysia is a multiracial, multilingual, multicultural and multireligious country which should recognise and implement the educational philosophies and policies of multilingual streams. Unfortunately, the authorities have since the dawn of nationhood overlooked the intrinsic rights of Malaysians of all ethnic backgrounds to learn and use their mother languages, and have advocated all these years monolingual educational policies in contravention to the realistic situation of this country. Since the Razak Report 1956 proposed "a single language and a single educational stream" as its "ultimate objective", the subsequent education reports, education acts and education development blueprints have all stuck to the monolingual educational policy in an attempt to achieve this "ultimate objective". And the Education Blueprint goes a step further by systematically expediting such a move.

The Blueprint has set the following monolingual education policy objectives over three stages from 2013 through 2025:

Stage 1 (2013-2015): Starting 2014, Chinese and Tamil primary schools will be adopting the equivalent standard of Bahasa Malaysia curriculum, textbooks, teaching methods and examination models as in National primary schools for Standard Four to Six. Because of this, Chinese and Tamil primary schools will have to drastically increase the duration of BahasaMalaysia teaching to 570 minutes per week, thus slashing the duration for mother language teaching to merely 300 minutes. Such a move is poised to result in structural inequilibrium of the curricula in these schools, severely jeopardising their functionality of providing comprehensive mother-tongueeducation and subsequently obliterating the nature of such schools.

Stage 2 (2016-2020): Reinforcement of activities stipulated by the education ministry's state and district-level "Student Integration and Unity Programme" committees, while no specification has been made for participating schools to liberally use their own teaching

mediums. This will further erode the unique characteristics of Chinese and Tamil primary schools in the country.

Stage 3 (2021-2025): National primary schools and National secondary schools as priority schools to parents.

The Blueprint is in gross disregard for the fair and equitable treatment sekolah agama rakyat are entitled to while downplaying the government's pledges towards national-type schools and mission schools, not to mention total ignorance of the status of independent Chinese secondary schools and the contributions they have made to the nation over the decades, with the ill intention of excluding them from the country's mainstream education.

Once the objectives of the Blueprint are achieved, we are afraid to say that the days of Chinese and Tamil primary schools will be numbered. Chinese education will be completely uprooted and independent Chinese secondary schools completely wiped out. Meanwhile, national-type secondary schools, sekolah agama rakyat and mission schools will fade into oblivion over time. If this line of defence is breached, the almost two centuries of Chinese education in Malaysia will be abruptly ended and mother-tongue education will become a thing of the past.

The implementation of the Blueprint is obviously running against the principle of fair education, and is detrimental to the development of mother-tongue education, national unity as well as social harmony. We in Dong Zong are firmly against it, and shall hereby reiterate:

1. To urge the authorities to revise the relevant educational acts, abolish the "ultimate objective" of monolingual education policy and implement the more pluralistic education policy to treat all schools equally. The government must provide equal access of schools of different education streams to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching for the benefit of the students.
2. Mandarin is the primary teaching medium in Chinese primary schools while Bahasa Malaysia is a compulsory subject. We urge the Education Ministry to abolish the same standard of Bahasa Malaysia curriculum and examination in Chinese primary schools as in National primary schools. We also object to the increase of the number of periods for Bahasa Malaysia in Chinese primary schools as this will alter the unique characteristics of such schools, adversely affecting the students' learning progress as well as balanced physical and mental development.
3. The Ministry of Education must recognise the status of school boards in Chinese schools, and ensure their sovereignty and normal operations so that they can better manage the schools and preserve their unique characteristics and nature while liaising with the local community to propel the further development of Chinese education.
4. Systematise fair and rational fiscal allocations, provide land for the construction of Chinese primary schools and resolve the issue of teacher shortage in these schools while organising pre-school classes and special education classes for Chinese primary schools,

where Mandarin is the primary teaching medium for the need of smooth transition into Chinese primary schools.

5. Recognise the contributions of independent Chinese secondary schools to the nation's development, approve the construction of more independent Chinese secondary schools and systematise the annual allocations for such schools and full recognition of the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC).
6. Restore the statutory status of Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan (SMJK), and honour the pledges the government has made towards these schools in the past.
7. Retain the Remove class and improve its curriculum, teacher qualifications and operations. Enhance the students' command of Bahasa Malaysia for smooth transition into secondary school curriculum.

Chinese education is taking the brunt of the critical moments of survival now encountered by mother-tongue education. We therefore urge all Malaysians from different ethnic backgrounds to stand alongside us, and stay united to firmly urge the government to stop implementing the Blueprint which is unfavourable to the development of different education streams in the country.

We reiterate that different education streams are an invaluable asset and advantage to the country, not the root cause of instability and disunity. It has been proven that monolingual education policy and assimilation will only serve to disintegrate the country while pluralism, equality and tolerance ensure Malaysians of different ethnic backgrounds will stay united and live harmoniously.

We urge the government to amend the Education Blueprint according to the National Educational Policy as stated in the Education Ordinance 1957, in order to “establish a national system of education acceptable to the people as a whole which will satisfy their needs and promote their cultural, social, economic and political development as a nation, with the intention of making the Malay language the national language of the country whilst preserving and sustaining the growth of the language and culture of people other than Malays living in the country”.