



EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCE TRAINING COMMITTEE

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

Responses to Committee Question 3

Question Noticing Details

Question No.18 Education Grant for 2015

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Abstracted from the Daily Hansard, NPSI)

Education Grant for 2015

18. Mr PETER TOM (*West Kwaio*) to the Minister for Education and Human Resources Development: Can the Minister justify reasons for increasing the Education Grant to our school in 2015 and what measures has the Ministry taken to minimise the abuse and misuse of the financial management role by some of the school headmasters/headmistresses and principals?

Mr Speaker: The Minister of Education and Human Resources Development is not here so the Minister for Finance and Treasury is going to answer the question.

Hon SNYDER RINI (*Minister for Finance and Treasury*): The requirement by our development partners, mainly Australia and New Zealand is that the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) grant to education should be at least 21 – 22 percent. That is the requirement. Based on the study of the Grants Committee in 2014, there was recommendation for the SIG grant to increase to 30 percent, hence the increase. The increase is to cater for enrolment figures of students and also inflation. This is in line with the thinking of the two development partners that support our education, mainly Australia and New Zealand that their contribution to education will reduce and the Government will start to take over and increase its contribution. Those are the reasons why 30 percent SIG support to education this year was put.

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On the second part of the question, the ministry is now working on finalising the Grants Manual and also the Grants Accounting System. These will help improve mechanisms to monitor funds given to schools to put a stop to misuse of funds.

Mr ISHMAEL AVUI (*East Central Guadalcanal*): Just a supplementary question. How many teachers have been involved in the misuse of funds, how many have been demoted, how many have been terminated and have left the service and how many were terminated but reemployed by another different education authority? Those are the questions.

Hon Snyder Rini: I do not have the answers to those questions. I think that is a new question, which he should submit as a new question so that I can provide the figures he is asking for in the supplementary question.

Mr BRADLEY TOVOSIA (*East Guadalcanal*): I would like to ask a supplementary question in regards to the abuse and misuse of education funds. The supervising Minister may not have an answer to my question but this is a serious thing that is happening in schools in the rural villages. If the supervising Minister does not have the answer now, maybe he should provide the answer later on because it is very important for us to know. I just wish all of us know what is happening down there.

Hon Peter Shanel Agovaka (*interjecting*): Ask the question!

Mr Bradley Tovosia: Okay! Please, can you explain what you are doing to address this abuse and misuse of funds? That is the question. I want the details of the measures you are taking.

Hon Snyder Rini: Can the Member repeat the question again?

Mr Bradley Tovosia: The supervising Minister mentioned the Ministry is still working on the way forward to address the abuse and misuse of funds. What are the details?

Hon Snyder Rini: As I have said, the ministry is now trying to finalise the Grant Manual. I believe that manual will state what expenditures should be reported, which expenditures the grant should go for and so forth. All these should be stated in the manual. There is also the Accounting System, which the Ministry is trying to finalise now on how schools should make their retirements and be accountable to these funds. I think by doing that, it will minimise the misuse of grants.

Mr MATTHEW WALE (*Aoke/Langalanga*): I may have missed an earlier answer by the Minister, but with regards to reduction or the Solomon Islands Government picking up more and more of the financing side and the proportion given by donors becoming less and less. What year will the Solomon Islands Government completely take up the whole burden of funding the grants?

Secondly, we have been talking about free education which is not just fee free but completely free education in its basic component right up to the end of secondary schooling. Does the Government see it feasible in light of the fact that more of the burden used to be picked by donors will now be picked up by the Solomon Islands Government (SIG)?

Hon Snyder Rini: The timing is not yet decided but that is the thinking that eventually assistance from those two development partners will reduce and the SIG increasing its contribution to education grant. The timing is not yet decided and this will be discussed during bilateral discussions with these development partners.

On the other question of free education, the government is still looking into that and we are working on the costing of that policy. When the costing is done, we will look at implementing it by putting it into our budget as soon as we receive the final costing of the policy.

Mr Matthew Wale: I want to follow up on the second answer provided to my second question. In view of the exercise going on now in costing it out for completely free education policy, can the Minister inform the House of an indicative time of the Government's estimate whether it will be in the 2016 budget or 2017 budget or even a later year?

Hon Snyder Rini: Costing is yet to be completed this year and that is the reason why it will not be featured in the 2016 Budget. If the costing of that program is completed next year, then for sure it will be featured in the 2017 budget.

Mr Peter Tom: I want to take this chance to thank the Minister of Finance and Treasury for his clear answers to our questions in the absence of the Minister of Education and Human Resource Development. Thank you.