

MONDAY 19TH OCTOBER 2015

The Speaker, Mr Ajilon Nasiu took the Chair at 10.25am.

Prayers.

ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Ministers for Provincial Government & Institutional Strengthening; Environment, Conservation, Disaster Management, Climate Change & Meteorology; Health & Medical Services; Lands & Housing and the Members for Fataleka; Malaita Outer Islands and West Honiara.

SPEAKER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr Speaker: Honourable Members, to assist in the timely delivery and quality of Hansard reports, Members are reminded that starting this week, daily Hansard reports will be given to speaking Members in hard copy immediately after the sitting, and this will be put in your pigeonholes. It is expected that speaking Members make verifications or corrections on their speeches or statements and hand back the copy to the Hansard Department. The Daily Hansard report can also be given to non-speaking members upon their request. The final copy of the daily Hansard report will be uploaded on the Parliament website after two days.

Furthermore, in order to produce quality Hansard Reports, Members who have prepared written speeches or debates made on the floor are requested to furnish a copy of the speech or debate in the provided box or alternatively, the Sergeant-At-Arms or a Chamber assistant will collect it from you. Thank you for understanding.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

- The 2014 Final Budget Outcome (*National Parliament Paper No.12 of 2015*)
- The Central Bank of Solomon Islands Quarterly Review December 2014 (*National Parliament Paper No. 14 of 2015*)
- The Ministry of Finance and Treasury Annual Work Plan 2015 (*National Parliament Paper No. 17 of 2015*)
- The Solomon Islands National Provident Fund Annual Report 2014 (*National Parliament Paper No.18 of 2015*)

MOTIONS

Motion Number 10

Hon Derek Sikua: Mr Speaker, with your indulgence I beg to move that Standing Order 26(1) be suspended in accordance with Standing Order 81.

Mr Speaker: Under the circumstances, leave is granted.

Hon Derek Sikua: I move that Standing Order 26(1) be suspended in accordance with Standing Order 81 to permit the moving of a motion, notwithstanding the prescribed notice period.

Question agreed to.

Standing Order 26(1) is suspended

Hon Derek Sikua: Mr Speaker, with your indulgence I wish to move an amendment to the motion.

Mr Speaker: Leave is granted.

Hon Derek Sikua: In accordance with Standing Order 26(2)(b), I move that the motion be amended by adding 2015 after the words "Education White Paper".

Amendment agreed to.

Hon DEREK SIKUA: (*Minister for Education and Human Resources Development*): I beg to move that Parliament resolves itself into a Committee of the Whole House to consider the Education White Paper 2015, National Parliament Paper Number 16 of 2015.

I am honoured to introduce the Education White Paper 2015 to this Honourable House today by way of this motion. As you may be aware, the White Paper has been approved by Cabinet in July 2015, making it the government's principal policy document on the education system of Solomon Islands. It is also the drafting instructions for the Education Bill and was instrumental in ushering in the proposed directions, changes and development for the education sector which are now reflected in the draft Education Bill due to be tabled in Parliament in early 2016.

By way of background and as colleagues are aware, the original law governing the education system of Solomon Islands is the Education Act 1978 (Cap 69). While the Education Act 1978 was contextual and robust enough to bring our education development in the last 37 years, it was also dated. This is to say that the policy issues which informed the existing act emerged from the 1973 Education For what Report, also known as the Bugotu Report and were limited to curricula, teachers, examinations, school types, education authorities and other administering authorities.

While the issues which informed the current Act were contextual, its scope continues to place serious limitations in our ability to develop and expand the education system. This is because in essence it was a schools Act with legal provisions only for primary and secondary school systems. It was apparent that as a piece of legislation, the current Act lacks the capacity to respond to the needs and aspirations of Solomon Islanders and Solomon Islands as a developing country and its expanding education system. Therefore, it was deemed necessary that steps are taken to put in place a robust and progressive piece of legislation that is futuristic and has the capacity to guide the education system of this nation both now and into the future. That need for a robust and progressive piece of legislation has been one of the major activities my ministry has engaged in for a good part of the past three or four years.

In terms of proper process, the revision of the Education Act requires an Education White Paper. That Paper, which I am now presenting, is a result of a lengthy and extensive consultation process. Since mid-2013, my ministry has been engaged in a wide range of stakeholders and partners in a consultative debate on the most appropriate framework for the education system in Solomon Islands.

The extent and depth of the consultations have been unprecedented. The consultations were characterised by a number of unique features. Firstly, the review process was controlled by the National Education Board. Under the auspices of the National Education Board, an Education Act Review Taskforce was established. Well respected Solomon Islanders were identified and appointed to work for the Taskforce to go out to the people to discuss key issues and key requirements for the new Act.

Key partners and stakeholders in all the provinces and also overseas were consulted through a series of workshops and a questionnaire response form. The consultative process took stock of the achievements, trends and patterns in educational provisions and service delivery.

Secondly, a national education summit was held in December 2013 to vet and validate the review findings. Key partners and stakeholders in education were well represented at the 2013 national education summit.

Thirdly, a series of reviews of the White Paper by a panel of experts were conducted in April 2014 and in May 2015. Those initiatives I have just described involved structured dialogue amongst all the major stakeholders and partners in education on key critical issues affecting the development of the education system in Solomon Islands, which should be protected in a revised Education Act.

Those processes have contributed significantly to the substance of the White Paper and have enhanced common understanding, and I hope, facilitated democracy and a more robust consensus in support of the major strategic policy, reform and directions.

In regard to the purposes of the Education White Paper, it took stock of the current Act as well as the achievements, trends and patterns in educational provisions as well as policies and practices in the education system. It also provides the direction for the necessary reforms of the current legislation. Furthermore, the White Paper builds upon existing best practices and sets out a framework for chartering future directions and for developing the education system into the future and provides the direction for necessary reforms of the current legislation. It

also facilitates the formal recognition of education structures, systems and subsectors of the education sector that were not provided for under the current Education Act 1978.

The key issues, policy directions and reforms recommended by the White Paper are illustrated in 15 areas as follows: Firstly, the importance of having an inclusive education structure. That the Education Act legislates for an inclusive education structure as possible, recognizing all levels of the education system from early childhood care and education (ECCE), schools (kindergarten up to Year 12), Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), higher or university education and adult and community education.

The second area of reform is access to education. That the Education Act empowers the Minister to prescribe particular provinces or other areas where compulsory education for children aged six to 16 be enforced to facilitate children's access to education.

The third area for reform is the age of entry. That is a particular requirement for learners aged turning six before 31st May of that year to be admitted to Year 1 at their local school.

The fourth key area or issue is the roles and responsibilities of education authorities. That the roles and responsibilities of education authorities be defined as the focus for organising the implementation of service delivery at the school level.

The fifth key issue is recognising education authorities as employers. Defining education authorities as employers of teachers is an important issue, an area of reform and we need to enhance the capacity to fulfil responsibilities as good employers.

The registration and deregistration of education authorities is the sixth key issue being addressed in the White Paper where we need to have improved two way accountability between the ministry and the education authorities including improved guidelines for registration and deregistration of education authorities.

The functions of the National Education Board is the seventh key reform agenda. Empowering the National Education Board as the peak organisation with oversight responsibilities over early childhood care and education, schools and adult and community education is a necessary key reform area.

The eighth area of reform is an important one on the management of teachers. That the Education Bill includes all those provisions required for the good governance and management of the Teaching Service and therefore removes those registered as teachers under the Education Act (Cap 69) and to whom the Teaching Service Handbook refers or applies from the application of the Public Service Bill.

The ninth key issue is teacher registration where accountability and support by education authorities is important where we recognise that a highly skilled teaching force is at the heart of the education system, requiring standards for teacher registration and that not only are teachers accountable to the community they serve, but they must be supported by the education authorities who will act as good employers and indeed by a ministry of education that must support education authorities to be able to have education authorities fulfils this responsibility.

The tenth and an exciting new reform agenda in the Education White Paper is the Tertiary Education Commission and the Qualifications Authority. The establishment of the Solomon Islands Tertiary Education Commission (SITEC) and the Solomon Islands

Qualifications Authority (SIQA) as the overarching bodies in the tertiary sector responsible for tertiary education policy, scholarships, quality assurance, registration and accreditation of tertiary training providers and programs.

The eleventh area is registration and accreditation. These are requirements for higher education and technical and vocational education and training providers to be registered. Higher education, technical and vocational education and training courses to be accredited, trade testing and licensing bodies to be approved. Tertiary education institutions providing courses to oversee students to lodge a security bond to protect overseas student fees.

An appeals mechanism must be put in place. And this is the twelfth area of reform in the White Paper. That the revised Education Act provides an appeals mechanism to the National Education Board, the Teaching Service Commission or the Solomon Islands Tertiary Education Commission in relation to any grievances under the various types of decisions under the forthcoming bill.

The thirteenth area is defining the core business of the Ministry of Education. A clearer definition of the mandate of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development is required to ensure that the ministry focuses on its core business of policy and planning. That financial resources are used effectively and efficiently and that the ministry is responsive to emerging educational needs of our people and country.

The fourteenth policy area and an important pillar in our education system that is sought for in the Education White Paper 2015, is aimed at strengthening community participation. That community participation in the education process be strengthened through the requirement that each school, as is the current practice, will have a school board that the head teacher will report to about the progress of their school development plan and accountability for use for funds provided to the school.

Last but not the least, the fifteenth reform agenda sought for in the Education White Paper 2015 is on school leadership and management. That promotion of improved school leadership and management is undertaken by specifying that the school principal is the day today manager of the school including management of teacher performance and ensuring their needs for continued professional development are assessed and supported.

As colleagues read the Education White Paper 2015 and prepare for the debates, these are the main areas I would like to get inputs from the Education White Paper.

Before I conclude, allow me to thank a few individuals, groups and our development partners in the formulation of the Education White Paper 2015. Over three or four years, numerous individuals have freely given their time and energy and contributed valuable ideas towards the realization of the Education White Paper 2015. It has not been possible to make specific mention of all individuals that have made such invaluable contributions. However, mention must be made, if not to all, then to some: Firstly, I would like to thank the NCRA Government under the then Minister for Education and Human Resources Development, Mr Dick Ha'amori for accepting and approving the review of the Education Act 1978. My Permanent Secretary, Dr Franco Rhodie who is the incumbent PS who has had the opportunity to have been directly involved and engaged in the development and the review of the White Paper right through to Cabinet approval. His predecessor Dr Fred Isom Rohorua was also instrumental in the initial stages and in particular the facilitation of the acceptance and approval

by the NCRA government on the review of the Education Act 1978 (Cap 69) by the National Education Board. I would also like to thank Mr Johnson Fangalasu, the principal author of the White Paper for the technical support provided in the design and preparation of this White Paper and Ms. Andrea Bateman, who prepared the tertiary education component of the White Paper.

Beside the authors, Mr Richard Hellyer provided expert guidance, insightful comments and suggestions which have been a tremendous addition to the focus, sequence and overall structure of the document. Mr Gabriel Taloikwai, the chairman and all members of the Taskforce for their perseverance in attending meetings during the laborious and tedious exercise of the review process, as well as their inputs and decisions which guided the preparation and management of the White Paper.

To the members of the review team, I thank in particular Ms. Josephine Kama and Mr Tione Bugotu, for their technical inputs in the review process and for provincial visits for information collection and gathering. I would also like to thank all my Chief Education Officers and staffs of provincial education offices, education directors and secretaries of church education authorities who have provided valuable assistance given to the review team during the consultations. All the key participants in the consultations, the numerous teachers, parents, education authorities and all stakeholders who volunteered their time and effort to engage in the consultations, I thank you all.

I would also like to thank members of the Peer Review Team who have provided professional input by way of analysis, comments and contributions which greatly assisted in the final shape of the this draft White Paper. Lastly but not the least, our dear and long term development partners in education, in particular I would like to thank the Australian Aid Program and the New Zealand Aid Program for funding assistance which enabled the completion of the entire review process and the preparation of this Education White Paper. The final version of the Education White Paper 2015 now before us is the result of the contributions of each and every one mentioned above and those not mentioned as well. Thank you very much.

In conclusion, as I present this Education White Paper 2015, I am sure that you will appreciate the extensive consultations, research, discussions and debates throughout Solomon Islands have culminated in this final document which have provided a solid and firm basis for the revision of the Education Act 1978 (Cap 69). In that regard, I am certain that the Education White Paper 2015 does not only serve its purpose in informing the proposed Education Bill and the needs of the education system, but also the dreams and aspirations of Solomon Islands and its people for an education system suited for their future and that of their children and their children's children. With these remarks I beg to move.

Adjournment of Debate

Hon Derek Sikua: I move that debate on the motion be adjourned to the next sitting day.

Question agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon MANASSEH SOGAVARE (*Prime Minister*): I beg to move that this House do now adjourn.

The House adjourned at 11.02am