



MANUS PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

Division of Education

1. INTRODUCTION

Chair person of the meeting, organisers, sponsors, participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Firstly I wish to convey my Provincial Administrators apology for not being able to attend this forum for the reason that he has pressing matters to attend to at home. However he passes his good wishes and equally hopes that this forum can successfully conclude its discussions and identify some ways forward in addressing the issue of improving service delivery to our people.

On behalf of my Provincial Administrator, I take this opportunity to thank the organisers of this forum for giving us the opportunity to participate at this level on a matter that for many of us seems rather elusive, and that being, improving the delivery of services to those who need it most, our people. Every where our people have cried, loud and long and they are still crying, for us to reach out to them.

As people entrusted the responsibility to serve our people, we ought to seriously ask where have we gone wrong and find out what the impediments are that continues to prevent us, year after year and time after time, from doing what we all know is the only right thing to do, serve our people.

For the purpose of this forum, I am asked to speak on, “ Getting the Public Sector Right to work properly for the benefit of the Rural Majority and the Urban Poor, giving Provincial Perspective on Education, drawing from our experiences with the Manus Provincial Administration”. Against this backdrop, we are asked to identify “What specific, positive outcomes are achievable that we think if properly harnessed can significantly improve accessibility to quality education services at the provincial and district level”.

The Education Sector Plans and programs in the past and present has always tried its best to provide simple but quality education services to its rural majority and urban poor in PNG. We try to ensure that our service is affordable, compatible and relevant to the need of our people. These may have been easier said than done. Much of what we see or hear today about the deteriorating education indicators despite millions of Kina being poured in to improve service delivery, is a result of a major systems constrain and poor work attitude.

Many years ago it would be true to say that Manus hold half the sky. For a long time now, we have gone into a deep slumber and like the bear, hibernating . The Mean Ratings Index for grade 10 in 2011 places Manus at position 14 in the country, so there is little success story for me to tell. My presentation will therefore focus more on the constraints we face each day, and I hope you will help me chart a new course for Manus during our discussions and that you may learn from our mistakes.

2. HAVING ACCESS TO SCHOOL

Manus has successfully implemented the education reform. Access to school up to grade 8, students retention at all levels and gender parity issues are not of serious concern to us in Manus. Elementary schools have been established in almost all recognised communities in the province. In the words of Mr. Kini Puele, former Education Advisor Milne Bay, “we cannot move people and we cannot move islands, so where people are, services must go”. We share the same view. We believe that in Manus, we have achieved almost 100% accessibility to basic education. The numbers of elementary and primary schools are near sufficient to cater for the current need of the population for some years to come. If in the event it is proven that there is a child in Manus who is not at schools at primary level when he/she should be, it would be for reason other than access. Access to upper secondary has also increased as a result of converting Ecom high school to secondary level.

While we know that access has improved tremendously, we acknowledge that we are far behind in delivering quality education. The demand placed on education resources as a result of high population increase has caused us to lag behind.

Table below shows Key education data in 2011.

Key Data	Elementary	Primar y	Secondary	Vocational
Number of students enrolled	5332	6868	1812	106
Number of school age children in the province	4945	7664	5168	97
Number of school place available	9380	15960	2184	150
Number of teachers	268	399	84	10
Number of schools	122	84	4	1

3. EDUCATING CHILDREN AT THE CORRECT AGE LEVEL

Parents should be made aware of the need to send their children to school at the correct age of six. Children must be encouraged to go to school at the correct age of six, because it is at this tender age that the child’s cognitive ability to assimilate and process information effectively begins and develops gradually as the child grows older.

However in many small communities like Manus this is not happening. For the want of numbers, and larger class sizes to justify the allocation of a teacher, many children are denied their right to enrol at the correct age level. Unfortunately this will remain the norm, until such time appropriate class sizes do not become a prerequisite to creating a class. It is our view that irrespective of size, let alone the economics of cost, where there are students available at the correct age to enter school, a teacher must be made available to teach that class. Education at the correct age level must be made compulsory.

This aspiration can only be attained through appropriate legislations that must be designed to protect the rights of the children to enter school at the correct age level and deal with defying parents.

4. PROMOTING THE AGENDA OF QUALITY EDUCATION.

Education is everyone’s business. The need for every citizen to receive education must be gotten right by everyone. Albeit, having access to education through established school that are commonly located in close proximities of communities, some children are

still not going to school and end up as only functionally literate. Reasons for these may vary, but often these are the result of parental misconceptions and other economic and social demands. In simplicity, some people are content with life as it is, while for many, ignorance and the lack of adequate knowledge blinds them from the realities.

The age old notion that we must give our children an education that would not alienate them from their communities is advocated by those who in my view are selfish and greedy, many of whom are amongst the educated elite. These same people would be the first to do all they can to ensure that their children obtain a decent education and find paid employment.

There is an urgent need to embark on an intensive awareness on the need for children to be educated and with the best possible education. The challenges experienced by us in this complex and competitive world have necessitated the urgency for our children to receive decent education to enable them live comfortably wherever they may choose.

We actively encourage teachers to improve their qualification with the hope that this will result in improved quality of education.

5. BETTER FACILITIES AND INCREASED RESOURCES.

To talk about the state of poor school infrastructure and the lack of facilities and resources is like telling an old story that you have heard so many times and I am sure you are tired of hearing it, but it is real so I will tell it again and we should continue to do so until we see tangible results.

The top schools in six provinces in the grade 10 examination in 2010 were international schools. Obviously they achieved this feat due largely to better facilities and available resources. In comparison, the state of infrastructure in most of our local schools leaves much to be desired. Many of those built during the colonial era have succumbed to the test of time, and as in the case of Kerevat National High School, and would cost a fortune to rehabilitate. Almost all our schools are in dire need of better infrastructure and improved facilities.

Poor communication and scarce and unreliable transport services have and will continue to affect the delivery of quality education services to our schools. As at the end of term one this year, several rural schools in my province were still without teachers for the reason that there is absolutely no shipping service available to transport teachers there.

In Manus, funding for school materials as a minimum priority area is paid directly to schools at a 100% rate. Schools decide what they want and procure these themselves. The division of education only provide the check on these expenses to ensure that they are spending money on the right things. Even then, resources in these schools remain basic and inadequate. Indeed our schools are in urgent need of more resources to elicit quality learning from our children.

6. BETTER TEACHER TRAINING.

While I do not wish to sound negative nor be unnecessarily critical, I cannot help, but to mention that many teachers passing out from colleges at all levels, need to be better prepared. Most teach only according to the books and cannot think out of the box. They have little motivation for work and have no passion for teaching. They lack innovation and therefore are not creative. They cannot interpret the curriculum, so ten years on and we are still in-servicing them on the curriculum. Give them a written passage and many of them will do no better than the students they teach. Amazingly even those that have

attained qualifications at university level still cannot write. One should ask how they passed through the universities at the first place.

To illustrate this point, I share with you this experience.

*During the marking of the grade 8 Written Expression Exam in 2010, I discovered to my amazement that one child could only spell the words, **to, the, are** and **is** and had all other words spelt wrong. This child was suffering from Dyslexia, a learning disorder marked by a severe difficulty in recognising and understanding written languages, leading to spelling and writing problems. (This is not caused by low intelligence or brain damage).*

How was it possible, that no teacher who taught this child in those nine years identified this learning deficiency and seeks to have it addressed?

It is not right therefore to say, that unfortunately, we are not translating our training to tangible results.

7. INSTILLING POSITIVE ATTITUDES/MINDSET.

The single biggest problem we have in this country is the poor attitude. This we all should declare as public enemy number 1. Our schools are riddled with this problem as well. Many teachers have poor work attitude and in my view most are just plain lazy. Many conduct their business in very casual manner without much thought of its end result, let alone its impact or effect on the students. There is a general lack of commitment from teachers. Only a few teachers are hardworking and willing to go the extra mile. Teaching lacks motivation and cause students to lose interest. Their handling of student's problems and issues is mediocre. For many their dressing is generally poor and for some you think they are in a fashion contest. Supervision of students is generally weak for some; a few do not care at all. Some prepare their lessons well while many just do not bother. Absenteeism is rife and so what? Then slide the card at the ATM and there is no sense of guilt.

Our schools are constantly riddled with students discipline problems. Often, these come about as a result from lack of effective supervision. The lack of student's activities lead to boredom and the empty mind becomes the devils den.

Teaching is an art. The stroke of every brush can make the difference. A good teacher is experimental. Like a good chef, he/she won't bore you down with one style of cooking every dinner; least you grow tired of it. A good teacher takes his/her students on a journey of discovery and guides them along the way until they part.

As oppose to the status of my schools in Manus, I am humbled to note that Oksapmin High School, nestled in the mountains of Telefomin, constructed out of bush materials takes the honours of topping the country in the 2010 grade 10 examinations with a Mean Ratings Index of 95. I can only assume, that being tucked out there in the middle of nowhere, it's all systems go. There is no disturbance and teachers have nowhere to go but to get on with the job. The school becomes like a family unit where each member depends on the other, for guidance, comfort, love care and success. Material matters become secondary. If anything, we all should emulate this success story.

8. SUGGESTIONS

To enable us achieve better results and address some of the constrains mentioned above and on behalf of the Manus administration, I make the following suggestions for the forum to explore;

- i) That irrespective of population, where ever there are people, education service by way of school must be made available to all communities and that parents be made to enrol their children at the correct age of 6, and enforced by appropriate legislations.
- ii) That teaching at grade 7 and grade 8 is based on specialised teaching as opposed to generalist teaching so that students are better equipped to take on studies at grade 9 level.
- iii) That the Department of Education closely scrutinise the performance of Standard Officers in monitoring the work of teachers at all levels.
- iv) That the Department of Education streamline the teacher training programs of all teacher training institutions to ensure that they all meet the proficiency level set by the department to ensure teacher competency at all levels.

9. CONCLUSION

Our desire is for every Manus man and woman to be healthy, educated and lives a happy and harmonious existence with each other. Our target age group is between the age of 0 – 35. Our government demands that we improve our Human Development Index in the next 18 years to make it the best in the country. We have set a target to fulfil the demands of Vision 2050 by the year 2030. Indeed our plans and programs may seem ambitious but we aim to get there.

At the provincial level, we acknowledge that we don't have the answers to many of our problems. We will stretch out our hand to you and seek the best possible practises. We will soon embark on a major campaign and reach out to all communities as the first step to addressing our serious concerns on education. It is our government's desire that we strengthen the family units and our ward systems and get them to take ownership of these issues. We know that Manus men and women have helped to develop PNG and we will therefore call on them to put their hands and their minds where their heart is. We acknowledge that this will not be easy and it will not be enough but with your help and God's help we are determine to get there.

As we say it in Manus, how we get there, we will get there or Hau yumi go bai yumi go.

Wuroh and thank you

LEONARD P JONLI

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