



# **SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT**

**Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development**

**Honiara, Solomon Islands**

## **EDUCATION WHITE PAPER**

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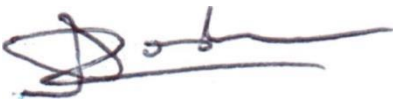
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**Dr. Franco RODIE,**  
Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development

## Foreword

This White Paper has been approved by the Democratic Coalition for Change Government (DCCG) in July 2015. It is the culmination of a lengthy and extensive consultation process, beginning in 2012, and was undertaken under the auspices of the National Education Board (NEB) by a Taskforce established to supervise the review of the Education Act. The review consultations involved a broad range of key stakeholders and partners in education throughout Solomon Islands and abroad.

In essence the purpose of the review has been to analyse the 1978 Education Act (Cap 69), take stock of achievements, trends and patterns in educational provision, policies and practices and to chart future directions for education in Solomon Islands through a reform of the legislation. The White Paper builds upon the best of these practices and sets out a framework for the development of education into the future, against a background of a society facing rapid changes - demographic, social, economic and political.

The White Paper describes an agenda for change and development within the education sector. It seeks to give an empowering sense of direction and a definition of the relationship between the Ministry of Education and all partners in education. It proposes an inclusive structure for the education system and includes significant organizational developments. It seeks to allow for flexibility to meet particular needs and circumstances, respects legitimate rights and responsibilities amongst the partners and the different levels within the education system, and clarifies the role of the Ministry of Education in governance and strategic management, policy formulation, approval, implementation and monitoring. It also indicates the manner in which an appropriate legislative framework will be provided for key aspects of educational provision in the future.

The approach to the implementation of changes is important. Effective change does not occur instantly. The implementation of the proposed legislation and policies described in this White Paper will require sustained effort over time. The White Paper provides the strategic direction. However, carefully planned implementation strategies will be necessary, consolidating the best achievements in the past, while adapting to changing needs and circumstances in the future. It is essential that there is a firm commitment from all the partners to the achievement of change, and to respond to the changing needs and aspirations of stakeholders including students and parents or guardians. Changes will continue to be implemented on a partnership basis, involving consultation with all the concerned interests where this is necessary and appropriate.

The review of the Education Act is an important priority of the Government. Therefore the Government will aim to provide, during its term in office, the resources for the development needs identified in this White Paper, within the framework of the budgetary parameters set out in the Government's policy document. The amount which can be made available in any given year will have to be determined by the Government in the context of its financial position and its other public expenditure priorities at the time. In this context, the Government will have the opportunity to consider any potential which may exist to reallocate any resources within the education sector.

The implementation of the strategy set out in this White Paper is not contingent on the availability of resources alone. It will also require leadership and commitment across the education system and many important developments in the White Paper will improve the education system without additional cost. The strategic directions set out in this White Paper reflect the need to ensure the greatest possible benefit from the available resources.

The ultimate objective of the strategies set out in this White Paper is an education system which will provide every student with fulfilling educational experiences at every stage in a lifetime of learning. It is the hope that this document will blaze the trail of opportunity and self-fulfilment for all learners and decisively influence the quality of life of all citizens and the prosperity of our nation Solomon Islands.



**Hon. Dr. Derek SIKUA, MP**  
Minister  
Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development

## Abbreviations

BSIP	British Solomon Islands Protectorate
CBTC	Community Based Training Centre
CHS	Community High School
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSSs	Community High Schools
EAs	Education Authorities
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EFA	Education for All
IPAM	Institute for Public Administration & Management
LN	Legal Notice
MCILI	Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development
MoFT	Ministry of Finance and Treasury
MPGIS	Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening
MPS	Ministry of Public Service
NCAB	National Curriculum Advisory Board
NEAP	National Education Action Plan
NEB	National Education Board
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHRDTC	National Human Resource Development Training Council
NSSs	National Secondary Schools
NTTT	National Trade Training and Testing Unit (MCILI)
NTU	National Training Unit
OBE	Outcomes-Based education
PSC	Public Service Commission
PSSC	Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate
PSSs	Provincial Secondary Schools
QKM	Queensland Kanaka Mission
SDA	Seventh Day Adventists
SICHE	Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
SINU	Solomon Islands National University
SIQA	Solomon Islands Qualifications Authority
SIQF	Solomon Islands Qualifications Framework
SIQS	Solomon Islands Quality Assurance Standard
SISC	Solomon Islands School Certificate
SISEE	Solomon Islands Secondary Entrance Examination
SISTA	Solomon Islands Standardized Tests of Achievement
SSEC	South Sea Evangelical Church

SSEM	South Sea Evangelical Mission
TSC	Teaching Service Commission
TSH	Teaching Service Handbook
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UPNG	University of Papua New Guinea
USP	University of the South Pacific
VRTCs	Vocational and Rural Training Centres

## Glossary

Achievement standards (in education)	<p>Statements approved and formalised by a recognised agency or body, which defines the rules to follow in a given context or the results to be achieved. Achievement standards can take a variety of forms. A distinction can be made between competency, educational, occupational or certification standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• competency standard refers to the knowledge, skills and/or competencies linked to practising a job;</li><li>• assessment standard refers to statements of learning outcomes or levels of achievement to be assessed and methodology used;</li><li>• educational standard refers to statements of learning objectives, content of curricula, entry requirements and resources required to meet learning objectives;</li><li>• occupational standard refers to statements of activities and tasks related to a specific job and to its practise; and</li><li>• certification standard refers to statements of rules applicable to obtaining a qualification (e.g. certificate or diploma) as well as the rights conferred.<sup>1</sup></li></ul>
Accreditation	<p>The official approval of achievement standards, including qualification or unit(s) of a qualification, usually for a particular period of time, as being able to meet particular requirements defined by an accrediting agency.<sup>2</sup></p>
Adult and community education	<p>Adult and community based programs are intended principally for adults and community groups and include general, vocational and basic education, as well as recreation, leisure and personal enrichment programs. These programs aim to support community needs and for the individual provide for return to study options, improved literacy and numeracy skills, learning new skills and broadening employment options possibly in the informal economy.</p>
Assessment	<p>Process of appraising knowledge, know-how, learning outcomes skills and/or competences of an individual against predefined criteria (learning expectations, measurement of learning outcomes). Assessment is typically followed by validation and certification.<sup>3</sup></p> <p>Assessment can be diagnostic, formative or summative. The term summative assessment is used to describe assessments that are used to certify or recognise candidate achievement or potential. The term diagnostic assessment is used to refer to assessments that produce information about the candidate's learning. It is similar in meaning to the term formative assessment, which has been used to describe assessments that produce evidence concerning how and where improvements in learning and competency acquisition are required.<sup>4</sup></p>
Basic education	<p>The whole range of educational activities taking place in various settings that aim to meet basic learning needs such as literacy and numeracy. In Solomon Islands, basic education comprises primary and lower secondary education or Year 1 to Year 9.</p>
Competence	<p>Competence is an ability that extends beyond the possession of knowledge and skills. It includes: i) cognitive competence involving the use of theory and concepts, as well as informal tacit knowledge gained experientially; ii)</p>

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from CEDEFOP 2011, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework draft 2014

<sup>3</sup> CEDEFOP 2011, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Gillis and Griffin 2008.



functional competence (skills or know-how), those things that a person should be able to do when they work in a given area; iii) personal competence involving knowing how to conduct oneself in a specific situation; and iv) ethical competence involving the possession of certain personal and professional values.<sup>5</sup>

Components of qualifications	Components of a qualification; also known as subjects, units, modules, courses, papers, competencies. This is the smallest part of a qualification or programme that can be separately assessed and certified. <sup>6</sup>
Composite schools	Multi-level schools providing or offering ECE, primary, secondary and tertiary programs under the same school administration and management.
Continuing vocational education and training (CVET)	<p>Education and training after initial vocational education and training – or after entry into working life aimed at helping individuals to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve or update their knowledge and/or skills;</li> <li>• acquire new skills for a career move or retraining; and</li> <li>• continue their personal or professional development.</li> </ul> <p>Continuing education and training is part of lifelong learning and may encompass any kind of education (general, specialised or vocational, formal or non-formal, etc.). It is crucial for the employability of individuals.<sup>7</sup></p>
Early childhood care and education	The first stage of formal education for children between 3 to 5 years of age in centers outside of the home.
Education system	In Solomon Islands the education system incorporates all aspects of activities related to learning and assessment and other mechanisms such as recognition of learning. It includes the early childhood care and education sector, primary and secondary school sector and the tertiary sector (including technical and vocational education and training as well as higher education).
Formal learning	Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to validation and certification. <sup>8</sup>
Higher education	Education involving qualifications at degree level and above but may include qualifications below e.g. diploma and advanced diploma qualifications. The curriculum for higher education programs is generally based on notions of knowledge and understanding. These qualifications are generally accredited under higher education arrangements.
Informal learning	Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. <sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Coles & Werquin (2006), p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> *Pacific Qualifications Framework*, SPBEA, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> CEDEFOP 2011, p. 25

<sup>8</sup> CEDEFOP 2011, p. 48

<sup>9</sup> CEDEFOP 2011, p. 54

Initial vocational education and training (IVET)	Preparation of people with skills and/or competences to gain entry into specific occupations/sectors. <sup>10</sup>
Learning outcomes	Learning outcomes are clear statements of what a learner can be expected to know, understand and/or do as a result of a learning experience. <sup>11</sup>
Non-formal learning	Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. <sup>12</sup>
Preparatory	The final year of the three years of early childhood care and education to prepare learners for the transition into primary education.
Primary education	The first stage of formal education between early childhood care and education and secondary education. Primary education comprises Year 1 to Year 6, or ages 6 to 11.
Program	The arrangements made for the teaching and learning of a body of knowledge, set of skills and of wider competences. A learning programme can lead to a qualification. <sup>13</sup>
Qualification	Qualification is a formal certificate issued by an official agency, in recognition that an individual has been assessed as achieving learning outcomes or competencies to the standard specified for the qualification title, usually a type of certificate, diploma or degree. Learning and assessment for a qualification can take place through workplace experience and/or a program of study. A qualification confers official recognition of value in the labour market and in further education and training. <sup>14</sup>
Qualifications framework	Instrument for development and classification of qualifications (at national or sectoral levels) according to a set of criteria (such as using descriptors) applicable to specified levels of learning outcomes. <sup>15</sup>
Quality assurance	Quality assurance is a component of quality management and is 'focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled'. <sup>16</sup>  In relation to education and training services, quality assurance refers to planned and systematic processes that provide confidence in the design, delivery and award of qualifications within an education and training system. Quality assurance ensures stakeholders interests and investment in any accredited program are protected. <sup>17</sup>
Quality assurance framework	A set of principles, guidelines, tools and standards that act as a reference for guiding the consistent application of quality assurance activities. <sup>18</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from CEDEFOP 2011, p. 55

<sup>11</sup> ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework draft 2014

<sup>12</sup> CEDEFOP 2011, p. 71

<sup>13</sup> *Pacific Qualifications Framework*, SPBEA, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Coles & Werquin 2006, p. 21 & 22.

<sup>15</sup> CEDEFOP Glossary 2011, p. 82.

<sup>16</sup> AS/NZS ISO 9000:2006: Quality management systems—Fundamentals and vocabulary, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework draft 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Adapted from CEDEFOP Glossary 2011, p. 21

Quality standards	Technical specifications which are measurable and have been drawn up by consensus and approved by an organisation recognised at regional, national or international levels. The purpose of quality standards is optimisation of input and/or output of learning. <sup>19</sup>
Registration	<p>Registration processes include formal acknowledgement by a registering agency that an education provider meets relevant quality standards. Under national qualifications frameworks and/or quality assurance frameworks it is usual for a provider to be registered in order to deliver and assess accredited programs and issue awards.</p> <p>Some agencies differentiate between the two processes, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• formal acknowledgement that the provider meets key generic standards; and</li> <li>• formal acknowledgement that the provider meets specific standards related to the provision of teaching, learning and assessment of a specific program.<sup>20</sup></li> </ul>
Satellite schools	These are also referred to as 'extension schools'. Satellite schools provide education to students who may otherwise find it difficult to travel to the nearest school due to physical barriers such as distance or rough terrain.
Secondary education	The next stage after primary education comprising of years 7 to 12 for learners 12 to 17 years of age.
School	Any place at which instruction (with or without religious instruction) at the primary or secondary level of education is given on a regular basis to at least 10 students including any 'extension' or 'satellite' schools established in isolated villages, but does not include any place that is operated by a church or other religious body that provides instruction wholly or mainly of a religious character; or is exempted by the rules.
School Board	A body established to be responsible for the management and governance of a registered school.
Skills sets	Skill Sets are defined as single components of a qualification, or combinations of components of a qualification from an accredited qualification, which link to a licence or regulatory requirement, or a defined industry need.
Teaching Service	The Teaching Service refers to the teaching service in Solomon Islands which consists of teachers appointed by the Teaching Service Commission to work in schools.
Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)	Education and training which aims to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market. TVET courses are based on the notion of competency. These qualifications are generally accredited under TVET arrangements. <sup>21</sup>
Tertiary education	The tertiary education sector in Solomon Islands incorporates formal training beyond secondary school education. The tertiary sector incorporates two main sub sectors: higher education sub sector and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sub sector.

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<sup>19</sup> CEDEFOP Glossary 2011, p. 96

<sup>20</sup> ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework draft 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Adapted from CEDEFOP 2011, p. 126

## **PART 1: BACKGROUND**

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Education in Solomon Islands prior to 1978 was the responsibility of the early Missions and the Protectorate Government. The early Missions and the Protectorate introduced and established the systems which were formally recognized in the 1978 Education Act (Cap 69). This background provides a brief summary of the main influences of the two education systems on the legislation and the education sector of Solomon Islands.

Modern education was first introduced by the early Christian Missions in the mid-1860s when thousands of Solomon Islanders attended the Melanesian Mission's school on Norfolk Island. Men such as Stephen Taroaniara of Tawatana, Makira; Joseph Wate of Sa'a, South Malaita; Charles Sapibuana of Ngella, Walter Wa'aro and his wife Catherine Ahatora of Ulawa are amongst some of the earliest Solomon Islanders to have been taken and trained overseas by the Melanesian Mission. They were taught to read the Bible and instructed in Christian values, belief systems and traditions and later returned to the islands.

The introduction of education often followed after the establishments of mission stations or villages. Those who settled in the villages were taught the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. The 'schools' which survived and continued until Solomon Islands became a Protectorate became the pioneers of education in Solomon Islands.

Early mission education in Solomon Islands was denomination-based. Its primary focus was the conversion of souls. Mission education was premised on the transmission of knowledge of things deemed to be of eternal or everlasting value. Since learners were 'made in the image of God' they were instructed and taught skills in reading the Bible with the ultimate aim of knowing God and later conversion to Christianity. Mission education was denomination-based, its immediate focus was parochial and its structures rather simple and specific.

The curriculum of mission education was basic, without a coordinated and defined structured syllabus. The Melanesian Mission for instance emphasized reading, writing, arithmetic and religious knowledge. Similarly, the curricula of the Marist missionaries were religious and moral training, accompanied by reading, writing, arithmetic and singing. There was no formal industrial education, although students were engaged in boatbuilding, concrete work, printing, and learning on the job. However, the Methodists pursued an industrial education model, which included plantation work, teaching technical and industrial skills as well as Christianity. Furthermore, Methodist converts participated in carpentry, boatbuilding, saw-milling and plantation work. Thus, early mission education, although effective in achieving its intended outcomes, was not developed enough to be a unified system for the nation.

The quality and educational standards varied between the different missions, and contents of the curricula and training programs were independently determined. Religion, rudimentary literacy and numeracy were instructions in the courses. However, these required both academic and practical (vocational) skills and knowledge. Mission education therefore was limited to individual mission.

When Solomon Islands became a Protectorate in 1893, the administration was initially concerned with the pacification and establishment of law and order. Hence, education remained a low priority. As a result of its late, cautious and gradual approach on education, the Protectorate Government came under strong criticisms.

The Protectorate's involvement in education was focus on nation building. It stemmed from the primary concern with law and order and the need to unite the different ethnic and island groups. In order to realize that, the administration established a system of central government primary schools enrolling students from the various island groups. Those schools offered a standardized national curriculum. The opening of an Education Department was a major step towards a coordinated and concerted effort in planning, administration and management of education. This resulted in the integration of the Missionary Education System into the Protectorate Education System.

Before secondary education was introduced, a Senior Primary Certificate examination was used for students who had completed primary education at the end of Standard Seven. Ultimately, a standardized national curriculum was created. Secondary education, up to Form II, was first offered at King George VI School, and later to church schools. This gave rise to the need to align the education system to an international system. Later on, the Cambridge School Certificate, a British 'O' Level School Certificate was introduced including a four year secondary education. This resulted in the raising of the level of English proficiency and advanced Arithmetic with Science and Social Science.

In order to engage Solomon Islanders in the public service and private sector the Protectorate established tertiary education. For example, the British Solomons Training College was intended to provide skills and qualifications for artisans, electrical, clerical workers, and teachers. Later on, the Honiara Technical Institute (HTI) was established in 1969, to cater for the training of skills in teaching, nursing, agriculture, commerce, carpentry, engineering, marine, survey and draughting, and Trades. The Institute was intended to provide qualifications and skills required by countries in the region.

In addition to the national institutions mentioned above, rural training centers were established throughout the country by the Missions to provide training as early as the 1960s. Later on Mission theological colleges were also used to address second chance learning by providing training to young community members with the skills and knowledge that enabled them to make a worthwhile contribution to their community. Later the Solomon Islands Association of Rural Training Centres was established. The purpose of the association was to coordinate and disseminate information amongst its members, and to represent the interest of its members to all stakeholders and donor partners. Currently forty-three (43) rural training centers in the network, distributed throughout the country under ten different Education Authorities of which three address students with disabilities.

The summary above, which was derived from the Protectorate education system was the basis of our new education system. It further clarified the strategies and methods of operation used, to ensure the development and expansion of the system. This is exemplified by the regulative and legislative developments outlined below:

- The 1953 BSIP Education Regulation stipulated the establishment of colleges which offered multiple courses to prepare skilled manpower required for services in the Protectorate. This led to the establishment of a number of training institutions such as the British Solomon Islands Teacher Training College, the Agricultural Training Institute, the Central Hospital Nursing School, Auki Boatbuilding School and the T.S. *Ranadi* Marine Training School.
- The 1963 White Paper on Educational Policy provided a guide for educational progress until the early 1970s. The intention was to provide a flow of educated Solomon Islands leaders, including an adequate supply of teachers upon which to rely for the eventual extension of primary education.
- The 1967 White Paper contained significant recommendations for an expanding education system to be effected in 1968. The new introductions were to expand teacher training and to pay for equipment and subsidies for scheduled boarding schools. The intention of the Paper was that after five years there would be 150 junior primary schools in the Protectorate. This was to have led to an increase in the number of staff for the British Solomon Islands Teacher's College. The College introduced courses for selected Standard IV teachers and with that a new system of scheduled schools which had to meet certain criteria in order to qualify for government subsidies. The White Paper also suggested increasing the support for church secondary schools.
- In December 1973, an Education Policy Review was tabled in the Governing Council. It set into motion a series of consultations that led to a White Paper being introduced into the new Legislative Assembly in October 1974. Earlier that same year, in August 1974, a ministerial system of government was introduced and the Education Department was replaced by a Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs.
- In 1975, a policy in the form of a White Paper called 'Education for What Report' was produced. The policy was based on the findings of the BSIP Education Policy Review Committee. This policy provided direction and set the stage for the drafting of a new Education Act that came into effect on the country's independence.
- The policy issues that emerged from the 'Education for What' report, which understandably moulded the content of the Education Act (Cap 69), included curricula, teachers, examinations, school types, Education Authorities and other administering authorities.

The Education Act will be inclusive of all existing levels of the education sector from ECCE through to Tertiary Education (i.e. Technical and Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education) as well as Community and Adult Education.

The issues which informed the Education Act (Cap 69) were limited and this in turn restricted the scope of the legislation. Therefore the Act needs to be reviewed to enable it to reflect current

educational systems, practices and expectations. The review will ensure that a new Education Act for Solomon Islands will:

- be underpinned by educational principles that are grounded in the society's values and expectations, the Constitution and the fundamental aims of education to serve individual, social and economic wellbeing and to enhance the quality of life of individuals and the nation. These principles can be derived from the pioneers of the education system of the country;
- legislate for the education systems which were not included in the current Act (Cap 69) such as Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), and Tertiary Education including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Higher Education systems;
- empower, provide direction and define the relationship between the Ministry of Education and all partners in education by empowering the Ministry and its key partners in the governance, management and delivery of educational services in a developing society;
- seek to allow for flexibility to meet particular needs and circumstances, respects legitimate rights and responsibilities amongst the partners and the different levels within the education system, which includes protecting the rights of learners with special needs to education; and
- provide for a legislative framework for the education sector, the sub-sectors within it, and to also clarify the relationships between these sub-sectors. This framework will provide clarity about the legal requirements of the Government and key partners as well as the rights and responsibilities of the users and beneficiaries of education services.

A new education act and the entire education system for that matter should be underpinned by a philosophy of education which embraces the following characteristics:

- education which addresses learners holistically - socially, culturally, emotionally, spiritually - regardless of gender, age, creed, race, and people with special needs;
- education system that is relevant, specific to meet the needs and challenges in the local and global context as the country modernises progressively;
- promotes Christian values/virtues and other similar religious principles;
- promote conveying of knowledge, skills and attitudes by using local vernacular;
- encourage and foster national pride & identity. For example singing of national anthem and flag raising as well language, culture, art, national symbols etc);
- instil in learners the importance of environment and management of terrestrial and marine resources and air resources;
- emphasis on study of science and technology, literacy and numeracy, rights and freedoms of students verses parents, teachers and schools rights and freedom in a learning context;
- our qualifications should be premised upon clear criteria for benchmarking our education standards against internationally recognised education standards;
- in a school learning environment the learners should not use modern IT technology that promotes undesirable values e.g. use of mobile phones and unsupervised internet access during school hours; and
- risk and disaster management should be provided for the schools. e.g. care for institutional assets and disaster preparedness.

## **PART 2: NEW FOUNDATIONS FOR EDUCATION**

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### **2.1 Framework and Approach**

The direction for the new education system is to develop sound approaches and policies that will produce quality education and empirically-based best practice.

The need for a coherent and unified system of education for Solomon Islands is a priority. It is from such a need, that the overall policy approach, the education strategic frameworks and structures as well as proper systems and practices are essential to be properly expressed in the proposed Act.

Thus the main components of the framework and approach are:

- vision and mission statement;
- role of the national government;
- education principles;
- role of parents and communities;
- institutional ethos; and
- education and economic development.

Each of these is expanded upon below.

#### **2.1.1 Vision and Mission Statements**

Our vision for education is that all Solomon Islanders will develop as individuals and possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes for life in a changing world. We envisage a united and progressive society in which all can live in harmony including with their environment and with fair and equitable opportunities for all.<sup>22</sup>

##### *Mission Statements*

Our main mission is to ensure that the proposed new Education Act will provide a legal framework for the further development of the Solomon Islands education system.

##### *Goals and Aims*

This White Paper proposes the following statements of educational goals and aims:

- to continue to improve access, quality and management of the education system;
- to provide appropriate educational frameworks, structures and institutions that will govern, manage and implement educational policies;
- to promote values and attitudes that foster societal harmony;
- to foster an understanding and critical appreciation of the values - moral, spiritual, religious, social and cultural - which have been distinctive in shaping Solomon Islands society and which have been recognized and respected within the community;
- to nurture a sense of personal identity, self-esteem and awareness of one's personal abilities, aptitudes and limitations, combined with a respect for the rights and beliefs of others;
- to promote equal educational opportunity for all, including those who are disadvantaged, through economic, social, physical and mental factors, to develop their full potential;
- to develop intellectual skills combined with a spirit of inquiry and the capacity to analyse issues critically and constructively;
- to foster a spirit of self-reliance, innovation, initiative and imagination;
- to provide learners with the necessary education to support the country's economic development and to enable them to make their particular contribution to society in an effective way;
- to create tolerant, caring and politically aware citizens who understand their rights and responsibilities; and
- to ensure that young Solomon Islanders acquire a keen awareness of their national heritage and identity, and an awareness and respect and care for the environment.

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<sup>22</sup> Adopted from the *Education Strategic Framework 2007 - 2015*, June 2007, p.11

Education can empower individuals to participate fully and creatively in their communities. Time spent in education is not just a preparation for life; it is also a lengthy and important period of life itself. For this reason, the importance of collective, as well as individual development is an integral and important goal of education.

### **2.1.2 The Role of the National Government**

The role the National Government plays in education is the concern for the joy, peace, progress and prosperity, and the quality of life for all Solomon Islanders. This concern places a responsibility on the Government to balance the protection of the rights of individuals and safeguarding the greater good of society. Seen in this way, education is a right of each individual and a means to enhance society well-being and quality of life.

The legislation requires the Government to seek to create, support and promote the enabling environment through which education can fulfil this wellbeing and quality of life in society. Also, the nature of Solomon Islands as a multi-ethnic, multi-racial society requires education to embrace the diverse religions, cultures and traditions, as well as the systems of beliefs and values of its citizens.

The Government has an obligation to respect the existing interests of the various partners in education and must support the distinctive character of institutions and places of learning. Institutions and places of learning in turn have a mutual obligation to respect and support the principles and rights upon which a democratic society is based.

This role of the National Government in education and the mutual obligations of its key partners in education and the links between education and the economy, at the national and institutional level are therefore of paramount importance.

The following principles should inform the philosophical rationale for the role of the Government in education.

- the Government, through the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) should focus on governance; management and coordination of key educational services; strategic vision and direction; policy formulation, approval, planning and implementation; and monitoring, evaluation and research;
- the Government should be concerned with a number of key principles, which should underpin the formulation and evaluation of educational policy and practice. A few of those principles, such as access, quality and management have already been applied within the education system in recent years;
- the Government is obligated to protect and promote fundamental human rights and freedoms, in accordance with the national Constitution, impacting national legislation and relevant International Conventions, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC);
- the Government is responsible for articulating a national statement of broad educational aims, to nurture the holistic development of the individual and to promote the economic and social welfare of society;
- the Government should empower individual schools, tertiary institutions, and key partners in education, including Education Authorities, to nurture their particular values, traditions and character and to set out and articulate their philosophical approaches;
- the Government should have a major role in resource allocation to the education sector and, based on sound fiscal management and recognition of constraints, support key stakeholders and partners to effectively and efficiently deliver educational services to all Solomon Islanders who are eligible to benefit from the educational services that the system provides. This requires clear messages about what areas of the education sector the Government can financially support and what are the responsibilities of other stakeholders; and
- the Government should, for purposes of transparency and accountability, be responsible for reporting to stakeholders on what is being achieved through its investment in education.



### 2.1.3 Education Principles

Educational principles and rights are derived from the Constitution and the fundamental aim of education to serve individual, social and economic wellbeing and to enhance quality of life. The following are suggested principles to be recognized by legislation as the legal basis to systematically inform policy formulation and educational practice in Solomon Islands:

**Access and Equity:** People in Solomon Islands, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, location or disability have improved access to relevant, demand-driven school based, technical vocational or tertiary education. This could be achieved through access to education through different modalities (e.g. structured workplace learning and recognition of prior learning) as well as through an adequate number of schools or centres, classrooms, classroom equipment and resources, dormitories, and other infrastructure with financial support from the Government, other stakeholders and key partners.

**Accountability:** The education sector is a major beneficiary of the national budget. The Education budget is a significant share of the overall SIG budget. An example of this is that in 2013, the Government spending on education was 24 per cent of the SIG budget.<sup>23</sup> Educational services, delivered by the Ministry, Education Authorities, schools, the university, teachers and educators, and other stakeholders touch the lives of thousands of beneficiaries on a daily basis. However, the Solomon Islands Government faces competing demands from other sectors and needs to be able to justify its currently large investment in the education sector.

Education undoubtedly occupies a central place in the personal development of individuals as well as the nation's development. This central position demands putting in place appropriate procedures and processes at the various levels within the system, for evaluating the effectiveness of educational policies and the effectiveness and efficient delivery of services and what the outcomes are. Arranging for such procedures will require accountability to the beneficiaries of education such as parents, learners and the wider community, and accountability to the Government and other partners such as the donor community and provincial and faith-based education authorities.

To ensure that the limited resources available to education are used efficiently, and to require accountability from those who use the resources, the Act should ensure that effective systems can be developed and implemented at national, provincial and community levels. Those systems will be used to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of resources. Again, accompanying costed policies and procedures will be developed based on the requirements of the Act that clearly identify accountability at the national, provincial and community levels.

**Equality of Opportunity:** The principle of equality of opportunity is at the heart of the protection of individual rights and the promotion of community wellbeing. Ideally, where participation and achievement in the education system are impeded by demographic, geographical, physical, mental, economic and social factors, the Government should seek to eliminate barriers to learning or compensate for the consequences of educational disadvantage. This Paper seeks to ensure that legislation will, as much as is possible, enable each and every learner to make the most of their potential, to overcome limitations and to mitigate their effects where it is not.

An education system for the future should have a philosophy that embraces all learners, male and female, on a basis of equal opportunity. A sustaining philosophy should seek to promote equality of access and quality education services, with participation and benefits according to needs and abilities.

Measures to promote equality of opportunity will include providing for the allocation of resources to those in greatest need, providing appropriate support systems, and changing the tangible and intangible qualities of the system itself to cater for the diverse educational needs and interests of the population.

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<sup>23</sup> MEHRD spending as % of SIG recurrent budget. Source: MEHRD (2014), *Draft Line Ministries Expenditures Analysis*, p.1.

**Partnership:** An effective education system must involve partnership between key actors. The key participants are collectively referred to as partners in education - the Government, EAs, parents, trustees, owners, governors, management bodies, and local communities. Other players, including NGOs and the development partners should also be recognized as having legitimate interests in the system. Effective partnership involves active cooperation among those directly involved in the provision of education and the anchoring of educational institutions and structures in the wider communities they serve. This also enhances the contribution of education to the democratic process by enabling communities to participate in decision making. To an extent this is happening but there is considerable room for improvement.

The development of a strong commitment to partnership requires improved cooperation among schools, together with better provincial and national coordination and planning of education provision. This cooperation will recognize the important roles of individual schools, and will equally recognize the benefits of constructive cooperation in enhancing the welfare of all learners and making the most effective use of available resources.

To this end, the Government shall seek to promote and support an effective balance of the contributions made from those involved in education while recognizing the integrity of the educational system and process itself. This balance is best achieved through an approach which recognizes different traditions and approaches, which recognizes legitimate rights and responsibilities, but which also encourages a fruitful learning from each other and the discovery of new possibilities. Effective partnership also requires increased transparency and accountability, in order to allow the partners to exercise their rights and to be accountable for their responsibilities.

**Quality:** All Solomon Islands learners deserve the highest possible standards of teaching, so that they can achieve the highest quality of learning in order to realize their full potential. The Act shall enable the Ministry to promote and ensure that the highest standards of education opportunities are available for all. This involves a number of interdependent factors, including the quality of the curriculum, the effectiveness of teaching practice and assessment, the quality of teachers training and on-going professional development, the availability of teaching and learning materials, educational facilities, the leadership and management of schools, institutions or places of learning, the planning and implementation systems and processes.

The new legislation shall provide the necessary framework for prioritising, developing, approving and monitoring the required policies and their implementation. Plus, it will also empower the Ministry to develop rigorous procedures for the evaluation of educational efficiency and effectiveness based on good knowledge of outcomes, and reporting this to stakeholders in close collaboration with them.

Improved quality results from maximizing the efforts of those responsible for the education and coordinating the supporting structures and services of the system so all places of learning, from ECCE centres to university, are effective, that is, places where effective teaching, learning and research take place and where the highest standards are achieved by every learner according to their ability.

#### **2.1.4 Role of Parents and Communities**

The Constitution of Solomon Islands does not accord parents or the family as the primary and natural educator of the child. Traditionally, from the early stages in life, education took place within the security of parents and the extended family. In most countries, the religious and moral, intellectual and social education of children remains the inalienable right and duty of parents. Parents now send their children to school but are not fully playing their roles in the education of their children. There is the argument that the fee free education removes parents' responsibility to contribute towards the education of their children.

The role of parents and the family in education, and their rights and responsibilities are to be formally recognized in the law and it ought to remain central up to and into adulthood.

Parents have a better knowledge of their child's development, particular needs, interests and circumstances outside the school to take part in their child's education. This entails parents' rights as individuals to be consulted and be informed on all aspects of the child's education and their right as a group to actively participate in the education system at school, at provincial or national level. Schools

are accountable to parents and the communities they serve. The Act should include this notion of accountability.

Parents also have responsibilities, such as nurturing a learning environment, cooperating with and supporting the school and other educational partners, and fulfilling their special role in the development of the child. The Act should specify a number of these responsibilities.

### **2.1.5 Institutional Ethos**

The first six secondary schools in Solomon Islands comprised: one State and five mission schools. The characters of each school were and still are identified by a certain 'ethos', which encompasses the values, beliefs, collective attitudes, traditions, aspirations and goals of the school as an institution. The mission schools, for instance, their ethos were influenced by the denominational ethos. This tradition needs to be maintained and strengthened to enable all educational institutions to exist with clarity of vision and direction.

Those responsible for the educational institution, governance and management e.g. Education Authorities and School Boards, must ensure that institutional ethos, are established and shared with all those associated with the institution. Furthermore, parents have legitimate concern in the education of their child and the Institutional ethos. These educational rights and responsibilities make it all the more important for the school to foster and protect its particular ethos. The protection and promotion of the ethos is also a legitimate right and responsibility of the Education Authorities, Boards, to whom parents entrust the education of their children.

While each institution may nurture and support its particular ethos, it also has a responsibility to acknowledge and reflect the principles and requirements of a democratic society, and to respect the diverse beliefs and practices of others by exercising due care and respect in the application of its policies.

Parents have rights in the moral and spiritual upbringing of their children. This makes it particularly important when determining teachers who not only sympathize with but espouse and model the values, beliefs, traditions, practices, and goals and aspirations of the school.

### **2.1.6 Education and Economic Development**

The links of education to Solomon Islands economy has been outlined in various policy and strategy documents (such as the *Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015*, *Solomon Island National Development Strategy 2011-2020*, *National Education Action Plan 2013-2015* and *National Human Resource Development and Training Plan 2013-2015*). The *Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015* notes that:

'Education must be available to all, regardless of gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic background. In particular, basic education must be accessible to and be accessed by all school age children in Solomon Islands. Likewise, adults should have access to further education to enable them to develop skills for employment or to broaden their knowledge.'<sup>24</sup>

For the Solomon Islands economy to grow and prosper in the way and at the pace outlined in the *Solomon Island National Development Strategy 2011-2020* the labour force of today and the future must be educated and trained in skills for jobs that make the economy and the workforce internationally competitive. A fully functioning education system including a strong and responsive tertiary system (including TVET and Higher Education) has at its core, the challenge of contributing to the social and economic development of the country through a highly skilled workforce, innovative and talented people, productive workplace behaviour, better paid jobs and employment mobility. In addition, further and continuing education, both in a formal and informal setting are also recognised as essential for strengthening the informal economy of Solomon Islands.

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<sup>24</sup> MEHRD (2007), *Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015*, p.10

### **PART 3: CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

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Legislating for education can be complex. Certain issues that are critical to education may not be settled only by an education legislation as other legislations, such as the nation's Constitution and other laws may also contain provisions that have a bearing directly or indirectly on those matters. One such matter for instance is the employment of teachers.

The Constitution, the nation's supreme law, directly impacts on the education law when it comes to the determination of the employment of teachers. Section 116B of the Constitution vests the powers of appointment, removal and the exercise of discipline over teachers in the Teaching Service Commission. The Teaching Service Commission may delegate those powers, in writing, but only to any member of the Commission, any public officer, or any provincial government officer. Therefore when considering legislating for the employment, removal and discipline of teachers, careful consideration must be given to these constitutional provisions.

Besides the Constitution, consideration must also be given to other relevant national legislations. The other national legislations which impact on the education law include the Public Service Act, the Labour Act and the Provincial Government Act, to name just a few.

Without amendments to the proposed new Public Service Bill that deal with teachers, the Public Service Bill will continue to impact on the Education Bill. The Public Service Bill defines the term 'employee' and takes the view that teachers are public officers and are therefore public servants. As such, the Public Service Bill will define the management of teachers as employees, terms and conditions of employment of teachers, teacher establishment, and teacher development and training.

The present legislative arrangements are far from satisfactory. Having certain aspects of the teaching workforce under the Public Service and others under the Ministry of Education increases the complexity of the roles of both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Service over the management of teachers and therefore allows for the exploitation of the legal issue of who has jurisdiction over teachers. The Ministry of Education, with entire departments designated for teacher's is best placed to effectively manage the welfare and salaries, and other issues related to teachers.

This status quo in the legislative arrangements could be best resolved by excluding teachers from the Public Service Bill. This may (i) lessen the complexity of the roles and responsibilities for managing teachers; (ii) reduce the exploitation of the legal issue of who has jurisdiction over teachers; (iii) reduce the complexity of legislating for Education Authorities to be the legal employers of teachers; and (iv) address the situation where Church-based Education Authorities may be managing public servants.

The Labour Act outlines the requirements for the apprenticeship scheme and therefore impacts on activities in the tertiary sector.

The Education Act, its supporting regulations and policies, administrative decisions and actions for which the Ministry, Education Authorities, schools or other places of learning are responsible for upholding the constitutional provisions concerning the Teaching Service Commission.

The Education Act, the Teaching Service Handbook and human resource management regulations for which the Ministry is responsible for should be harmonized with the provisions in the other national legislation that impact on education and in particular to teachers.

## **PART 4: POLICY FRAMEWORK**

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### **4.1 Context**

The development and approval of policies has been an ongoing process within the education system. Along with already prepared policies, other identified key policy areas for development, approval and implementation are as follows:

- policy development, planning, research, management, coordination & monitoring
- early childhood education
- universal basic education (primary)
- universal basic education (junior secondary)
- senior secondary education
- Inclusive Education
- Literacy and Numeracy
- Curriculum
- Student Registration
- School land
- assessment
- teacher supply;
- teacher quality;
- higher education;
- technical and vocational education and training;
- capacity development;
- efficiency;
- school infrastructure;
- information and communication technology;
- education authority support;
- scholarships;
- gender equity;
- financing education;
- gender equality in education;
- school disaster management;
- school registration;
- teacher in-service training;
- school discipline;
- apprenticeship;
- induction;
- play school;
- theological institutions; and
- teacher workload.

A number of policy documents have been developed and approved without the necessary provisions in the Act. The lack of a legal basis casts doubt on the legality of the policies, the establishment and registration of those system's institutions, funding, management and monitoring of the quality of education provided. Policy gaps and overlaps have limited the ability to develop a comprehensive education policy framework. For example there is a lack of sound policies explicitly addressing the adult and community education sector, health, safety, and security and work placements. The Act aims to establish a sounder basis to how policy needs are identified, developed, approved, implemented, monitored and evaluated.

### **4.2 Key Policies**

Following are existing key policies that highlight issues and concerns facing policy development to support the implementation of the Education Act. The issues and concerns raised are representative of policy development and emphasize the need for an integrated policy framework for the entire education system.

### **4.2.1 National Early Childhood Education Policy**

The National Early Childhood Education Policy Statement is an example of problems with the current education policy framework. This policy, approved in 2008, acknowledged the development of the ECCE system in the education sector. Since its approval, it has provided a regulatory framework for the ECCE system in Solomon Islands.

The Statement cites the Education Act 1978 as the empowering legislation for the development and approval of the Policy. However, the Education Act has no provisions for ECCE.

### **4.2.2 Basic Education Policy**

There is currently no specific policy document for basic education. The concept and definition of basic education are not provided for in the Act. The Policy Statement and Guidelines for Basic Education is purported to be the Primary Education Policy document. Generally, it is accepted that in the context of Solomon Islands basic education includes primary and junior secondary education.

### **4.2.3 Senior Secondary Education Policy**

Senior Secondary Education policy statement and guidelines are expected to be read in conjunction with other National Education policy documents.

The Senior Secondary Education policy sets out the strategic direction and its vision that provides Solomon Islanders within the age group of 15 to 18 years the opportunity to senior secondary education which prepares them for higher education of an academic or technical vocational nature. As a result they will eventually become useful members of their community and the nation.

The policy objectives state:

- i) Improved access to secondary education through achieving increased enrolment of 40% by 2015 and 80% by 2020. (including gender parity);
- ii) Improve quality of teaching and learning through increasing the number of qualified teachers to 90% by 2015;
- iii) The principle of the policy statement is that education is a fundamental human right regardless of ethnicity, gender, disability, religion and that the diversity of Solomon Islands must be respected; and
- iv) Priorities under this policy include equitable access, improved infrastructure, improved quality and improved management.

Currently Senior Secondary education and secondary schooling are not provided for under the Act [CAP 69]. The policy statement in clause 2 claims the authority to be the Education Act. However, on closer reading this is not supported by any relevant provision in the Act.

Although there is a clear distinction in the policy statement between Junior and Senior Secondary Education, there is no provision as such in the Act. The Policy however does not state clearly that the age range of 15 to 18 years refers to the age range for senior secondary schooling. It is assumed that 12/13 years is the entry point into Junior Secondary Education. However, the question remains as to whether the policy is actually focusing on Senior Secondary Education or the overall Secondary Education.

This paper observed that the Act and the policies show continuous inconsistency and no linkage between them regarding the provision as per discussed. This needs to be corrected through provisions under the Act in order to legitimize the policy statements, and legalised the practice.

The gap between end of Form 4 and entry into Vocational Rural Training Centres need to be bridged. This could be addressed through continuing or community education strategies.

#### **4.2.4 Policy on Technical and Vocational Education and Training**

Policy on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (2005), also referred to as the TVET Policy, is focused primarily on education for living. The policy basically aims to

- i) provide and assist students through the education system in developing TVET skills and to further:
  - a) apply these skills in developing their communities;
  - b) create self-employment using resources available to them;
  - c) gain paid employment; and
  - d) pursue further training in this field if the opportunity arises;
- ii) recognize TVET as a continuum in life-long education thereby erasing the distinction between formal and non-formal education;
  - a) Incorporating it as an integral part of basic education taught from year 1 to year 9;
- iii) the creation of training centres to progress the teaching of these practical skills; and
- iv) providing for the inclusion of adult education into TVET.

Provision should be made under the Act [CAP 69] to give legal effect to the establishment of Technical and Vocational Education Training. The existing practice is that TVET institutions have been established through interpreting the word 'school' to cover Vocational Rural Training Centres.

Further inconsistency between the policy statement and the Act is evident when referring to different classifications of school types and levels. The details of the policy statement show even further inconsistencies in that the Policy makes reference to different classifications of school types and levels, which are not provided for under the Act. For instance the policy document distinguishes between junior and senior secondary systems, and two separate streams including academic and technical, a category that simply does not exist or practiced in the system. Even though the broad interpretation of the term 'school' has legitimized TVET's establishment, this has yet to be corrected under the Act so as to be in line with future practice.

The link between TVET sector and Higher Education sector needs to be formally established in the new Education Act. This would provide a pathway for students leaving TVET providers and intending to pursue further training at a Higher Education provider. The TVET Policy would be the mechanism through which that pathway can be addressed through the registration of training providers and training programs with the Solomon Islands Qualifications Authority (SIQA).

#### **4.2.5. Tertiary Education Policy**

The Tertiary Education Policy (2010) sets the strategic direction and is the governing instrument for Higher Education in Solomon Islands. It states the underpinning Authority as the Education Act as well as other pieces of legislations. In essence it provides for high quality education that will meet individual and national needs, but by definition excludes TVET.

It has been observed that the Tertiary Education Policy (2010) has no provision in the existing Education Act. The need to include Tertiary Education (including TVET) in the new Education Act is deemed essential.

The establishment of the British Solomon Islands Teachers College (BSITC) and Honiara Technical Institute (HTI) during the early 1960's was legal, however, this provision was not included in the current Education Act, unless it was intended to be treated as a school using the provisions of Part IV Sections 13, 14 and 15 of CAP (69). SICHE was established under a separate Act of Parliament in 1984, and has since been repealed and replaced by the SINU Act 2012, which provides the legal basis for the establishment of the National University.

Even with the enactment of a separate Act of Parliament that established SINU, there should still be provision in the Education Act, the overarching legislation, for tertiary education in Solomon Islands. It should be noted that any provision included in the Act for tertiary education will not be confined to Government established institutions but also to church and private sector, regional providers and international providers.

The Tertiary Policy should also make provision for the registration and recognition of training providers through the SIQA.

#### **4.2.6 Infrastructure Policy**

The quality of all school buildings affects the quality of teaching and learning. It has been observed that the quality of school infrastructure varies from school to school. It is the responsibility of school boards and EAs to ensure that the quality of the school buildings enhances high quality teaching and learning.

The Policy Statement and Guidelines for School Infrastructure (2011) was developed in collaboration with other key ministries: the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, the Ministry of Infrastructure Development in response to the need for quality infrastructure in schools throughout the nation. The policy provides guidelines for the design, development, construction, rehabilitation, repair and maintenance of all school infrastructures. As a result, it emphasizes “engineer-designed, well-constructed, maintained safe, hygienic, maintained and regularly upgraded” infrastructure. The policy is anticipated to set the quality and safety standards for school infrastructure.

The policy applies to all new infrastructures from ECE, primary and secondary and TVET. Infrastructure, in this context refers to classrooms, staff offices, specialist classrooms, dormitories, toilets, and water and sanitation. The definition needs to be expanded to include other infrastructure such as teacher housing on school compounds, sports facilities, ICT, and communications networks. In addition, school land issue needs to be considered under the service agreement between the Ministry and EAs.

The roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, from national to provincial and community levels, are outlined in the policy. The policy states that the financing of school infrastructure development is based on the principle of partnership. This recognizes that financing of infrastructure is a shared responsibility and finance can be sought from various sources such as the National Government, the Provincial Government, Education Authorities, development partners, school fees, contributions, and by community fundraising efforts.

Currently, available data from SIEMIS are inadequate for fulfilling the Policy objectives from the Policy Strategic Framework and Action Plan’s aims. Therefore, the need to improve SIEMIS (and to improve the capacity of providers to collect and report data) is important and relevant for the development of forecasts for school infrastructure requirements. Furthermore, the proposed National School Infrastructure Development Plan requires proper budgeting and costing.

The principle of partnership and the development of school infrastructure as per stated in the Infrastructure Policy needs to be given legal basis in the revised Education Act.

#### **4.3 Legislative Provision for Education Policy formulation and approval**

The Education Act should reflect the current education status of Solomon Islands and also address social, community, education and economic aspirations. It is therefore important that the revised Act provides for an integrated policy framework for all sub-sectors of the education and training system and enables policies to be developed that reflect changing contexts and conditions.

The Act will provide a policy framework for the development and approval of education policies to support the implementation of the Act, and that will require all existing policy statements be revised and updated to ensure consistency with the Act.



## **PART 5: ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK**

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This White Paper seeks to provide for an enabling environment and an empowering sense of direction in the relationship between the Ministry responsible for education and all its partners. At the national level, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development is vested with the overall powers for the governance, management and implementation or delivery of educational services. This White Paper proposes a clear delineation and delegation of those powers, roles and responsibilities between the Ministry and its partners for the effective and efficient management of the education system. This can be undertaken through a three-tier organizational structure of governance, management, and implementation.

### **5.1 Governance**

#### **5.1.1 Governance Structure**

The Ministry for Education and Human Resource Development is vested with the overall responsibility for education and training. The Ministry consists of: the Minister, a Permanent Secretary, administrative and technical staff. The Permanent Secretary is the chief executive officer, responsible for the direction and control of the Ministry and its staff and for administering the Act.

Under this organization, the Ministry's core function shall be governance: strategic vision, direction and leadership in the education system. The delegation of this primary function to the Ministry allows it to concentrate on policy development, approval, implementation, planning, monitoring, evaluation, ensuring financial resources are available, used efficiently and effectively, and being responsive to the emerging educational needs and aspirations of Solomon Islanders.

The Ministry shall be empowered to set and promote the highest standards of education and training opportunities and ensure they are available for all learners. This involves a number of interdependent factors, including governance, management and coordination of key educational services; strategic vision and direction; policy formulation, planning, approval and implementation, and monitoring, evaluation and research.

The delegation of the core function of governance to the Ministry also requires the provision in the legislation of an appropriate delegation framework for the operationalization of the management roles and responsibilities and implementation or delivery of educational services to key partners. This can be facilitated through various delegation instruments and/or service contracts between various EAs and providers and the Ministry.

Legislation should also provide the necessary framework for determining, developing, approving and monitoring the policy for each of those areas. In addition, it will empower the Ministry to develop rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating educational effectiveness and outcomes, in close collaboration with all key stakeholders and learning institutions.

Furthermore, legislation should empower the Ministry to provide support for structures and to resource EAs for effective and efficient educational services in order to maximize the efforts of all those responsible for the education of learners to achieve the highest standards.

#### **5.1.2 The Legal Name of the Ministry**

The Ministry responsible for education has undergone name changes in previous years to reflect changes in its portfolio. Prior to 1974, the predecessor to the Ministry was called the Department of Education. In 1974 when the ministerial system of government was introduced the Ministry was initially called the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs. It has had a few name changes since before finally settling with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development or MEHRD for short.

In the existing Act, section 2, under the interpretations of "the Minister" and "the Ministry", and sections 3(1) and 11(3), the terms "education and training" are coupled. "Education and training" implies an integrated approach, and a shift from the view of learning which distinguishes between 'academic' and 'non-academic', 'theory' and 'practical', 'knowledge' and 'skills'.

When referring to name of the Ministry, other national legislations of Solomon Islands and education acts of other Pacific countries refer to the 'Ministry responsible for Education' as portfolios may change according to changes of government.

The Act shall refer to the Ministry as the 'ministry responsible for education across all levels of education'.

### 5.1.3 The National Education Board

The National Education Board (NEB) serves in an advisory capacity to the Minister. Regulations governing the NEB are covered under Part II of the existing Act.

The functions of the NEB, as provided for under the Act, are: to advise the Minister on the operations and development of the education system, make recommendations to the Minister on matters of education policy, any related matters referred to it by the Minister; and advising the Minister on matters concerning the financing of educational services. However, the Act only relates to primary and secondary sectors.

Membership of the NEB as stipulated under the existing Education Act (Cap 69) is inadequate. It has been proposed that the revised Act should clearly stipulate the criteria for membership that should include but not limited to having relevant skills and expertise in education, financial management and public administration. To be consistent with the United Nation goals there should be provision for gender equity in the Board.

It is proposed that the membership of the Board include:

- a. the Permanent Secretary;
- b. the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry for Women, Youth and Children's Affairs;
- c. three representatives of education authorities which are provincial governments;
- d. two representatives of the remaining education authorities;
- e. a representative of the early childhood care and education sector;
- f. a representative of private sector business and commerce;
- g. a representative of non-government and community organisations that have an education mandate;
- h. a representative of the main professional associations representing the interests of the Teaching Service;
- i. a representative of the National Council of Women;
- j. the Chair of the Solomon Islands Tertiary Education Commission;
- k. the Chair of the Solomon Islands Qualifications Authority;

and may include up to two other people as the Minister may decide.

The roles and responsibilities of the National Education Board under the present Act (Cap 69) as described above will be maintained under the revised Act. Furthermore, the roles and responsibilities of the National Education Board will be to advise the Minister in relations to the primary and secondary sub-sectors.

There are to be no sitting fees or similar payments to members of the Board. However, travelling and other expenses may be fixed by the Minister from time to time.

### 5.1.4 The Inspectorate Services

Section 19 of the Act specifically addresses inspection of schools. The Act requires the Permanent Secretary to delegate inspection of schools to an authorised officer(s). The benefits of an inspectorate service to an education system are very important. The Inspectorate Division continues to play a very important role to the operation and quality of the education system.

In addition, the Inspectorate is vested with the responsibility for quality assurance at various levels in the school system, including vocational training. Furthermore, Inspectors engaged in different activities at school and the national level. Presently, the Inspectorate Division is divided into three divisions: early childhood, primary, and secondary. In the revised Act, the role of the Inspectorate division must

include advisory services to ensure quality dissemination of good practices. The Act needs to retain the flexibility for this to occur within the mandate of the Ministry.

It is proposed that the scope of the Inspectorate be limited to evaluation of education provision in the early childhood care and education, primary and secondary sectors. Initiatives discussed in the Tertiary Sector section of this White Paper address how tertiary sector education and training provision will be monitored and evaluated. This includes any accredited or funded tertiary sector programs delivered in secondary schools and the adult and community sector.

Currently the Inspectorate division of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development is administered centrally by the Ministry and within provincial education offices. Inspectors are not seconded to other Education Authorities. Other Education Authorities are encouraged to act independently to ensure their objectivity and ability to identify improvements in the management of their schools as required by the Education Act. The existing legislative provisions and arrangements limit the scope of the Inspectorate Division and the services that could be rendered to the education system to meet the current needs and practices in school inspection and monitoring.

It is proposed that consideration be given to provide a legal basis for expanding the powers, roles and responsibilities of the Inspectorate Division. Decisions for empowering the Inspectorate Division and the future organizational structure and operations of the Inspectorate are outlined below. Those are consistent with the other major structural changes set out in this White Paper, such as the increased focus of the Ministry on policy formulation and quality assurance, the establishment of education boards, the strengthened role of school management, and the like.

#### *Structure of Inspectorate Division*

The staff of the Inspectorate should be organized to fulfil two main functions: monitoring and audit, and policy implementation. The monitoring and auditing functions will concentrate on evaluating and reporting on the quality and effectiveness of the provision of educational services in the schools systems from early childhood care and education through to secondary schools. The audits will be conducted at key focal points such as the Education Authority, against nationally agreed standards of performance. The policy implementation function will play a key role in coordinating policy implementation strategies. This function will also provide professional input into the evaluation of policy priorities in all the major areas of education.

This White Paper acknowledges the deployment of inspectors into the provincial education offices. The empowerment of inspectors located in the provinces could have a valuable role in the education system. A provincial presence will be important in helping education boards to meet their responsibility for monitoring the quality of education in the primary and secondary schools in each province. However, the Inspectorate should serve both in providing advice on good practice and a quality assurance role.

Currently the Inspectorate considers that it has limited power to influence the behaviour of Education Authorities. For example, necessary actions recommended by the Inspectorate were generally ignored. It is important that the revised Act gives strong and clear powers to the Inspectorate including the consequences for Education Authorities for failing to resolve serious concerns raised with them.

The Education Act will clearly specify the advisory and evaluative roles of the Inspectorate and ensure that arrangements are in place so that Education Authorities know they need to respond appropriately to concerns raised by inspectors in the performance of those functions.

Appraisals of school teachers by School Principals and school leaders for quality teaching and learning and the Whole School Inspection should have legal basis in the Act.

## 5.2 Management

### 5.2.1 Management Structure

In the proposed organizational framework, key partners will have a major part to play in the management of educational services and provision. The revised Act should define explicitly the management roles, responsibilities, and certain powers for governance to be delegated to Education Authorities (EAs) and their statutory roles and responsibilities for the management of the education system.

### 5.2.2 Education Authorities

Education Authorities as key partners of the National Government in the governance and management of education are recognized by the current legislation under Section 9 of the Education Act. This provision should be maintained under the revised Act.

The Education Authorities are composed of either Provincial Executive or Education Boards. The EAs status on the functions and accountabilities are not clear in the current Act. The functions and accountability of EAs must be clarified and settled in the revised Act; specifically that EA should be responsible for overseeing education under its jurisdiction.

Functions of EAs are provided under Section 12 of the Act, elaborated on Appendix G of the Teaching Service Handbook, and responsibilities of EAs to the Teaching Service Commission are covered under Chapter 2 of the same Handbook.

To date there are at least 30 EAs operating in the education system. These include government, provincial, church, private or independent. There are no clear distinctions between the EAs as defined in the Act. The revised Act should provide for clearer distinctions between the different types of EAs.

The Schedule to section 9 of the Act lists the approved EAs, however, this is not up to date. There needs to be a process established for maintaining and updating the Schedule to ensure the accuracy of the information.

The current Act provides that a person or organization can become an EA. In the future, clear criteria for EA application will be a statutory requirement and will include, but not limited to, requirements for proof of legal status e.g. company or trust, and financial capability.

The Act will clearly state necessary powers for EAs to effectively manage the delivery of educational services.

The EAs are accorded legal status and recognition by virtue of their registration and listing under the schedule. As soon as they are approved by the Minister/Permanent Secretary, there seems to be no other legal requirements. The Ministry has no authority to administer EA schools in the instance where an EA has had its approval status withdrawn or is dissolved for any other reason.

It is proposed that properly constituted Boards will be established with statutory functions under the Act to control government schools.

The consultations findings included:

- support for vesting the powers of an Education Authority to a registered Education Board;
- an opinion of the need to merge two or more independent schools under a single governing body, if it was in the best interests of education at the schools in question; and
- that all current practising EAs be granted provisional registration for a period of two years from the date of the enactment of the revised Education Act by Parliament. Registration after this date will be determined on the Education Authority's performance in meeting the national education standard (benchmark).

There is no authority to the Ministry to determine levels of budgetary support to EAs. However, currently Education Grants are provided by the Ministry to EAs and is a form of budgetary support.

This White Paper proposes that the legislation provides for an enabling environment which empowers the Ministry to determine levels of budgetary support to EAs based on the performance of individual EAs. Legislation will empower the Ministry to establish rigorous procedures for evaluating EA performance and educational effectiveness against established outcomes and criteria and to determine budgetary support and financial assistance based on individual EA performance against such criteria. The legislation will also empower the Ministry to take responsibility for the school(s) of any withdrawn or discontinued EA.

### 5.2.3 Provincial Education Authority Boards

Provincial Education Boards have been in existence in some provinces. In such provinces, the existence of provincial education boards is justified by the number of education authorities and the need for coordination and management of the delivery of educational services amongst the authorities.

However, this arrangement lacks legal a base. Therefore, the revised Act will legislate for the statutory provisions for the establishment of Provincial Education Boards in situations where this is necessary. There should also be clear designations of powers to such boards to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities.

To ensure the management and delivery of educational services are efficient and effective the composition of the each Board must include all stakeholders who have direct interest in the school and shall take gender balance into account.

Each Board must foster a dynamic partnership with the EA, parents, schools, and the communities that they serve, including these specific initiatives:

- approval and monitoring of policies, procedures and practices for the education system under their jurisdiction;
- a range of supportive actions including the identification and transfer of best practice concerning parental involvement in schools;
- engaging in a consultative process with parents on school accommodation needs, including new schools, and the provision of specialist facilities;
- the development of clear procedures, in consultation with parents and school authorities for the resolution of disputes concerning issues which have been raised but not adequately or satisfactorily resolved at the school level;
- the provision of support services for parents of learners with special needs, as part of its responsibility for the coordination of educational provision; and
- allocation of financial resources provided by the Education Authority that will promote improved access, quality and management, and that complements resources provided by SIG.

### 5.2.4 School Committees or Boards

Historically school committees or boards have played a vital role in the management of educational provision at the school level. These bodies have now been formally recognized as having a legitimate role in the education system of Solomon Islands in the policies, but were not specifically provided for in the existing Act. The Teaching Student Handbook<sup>25</sup> Appendix H outlines the roles and responsibilities of school committees and boards. This Paper recommends that provisions be made in the revised Act to legalise these bodies, and to avoid confusion that the term used in the legislation is 'school board'.

Membership of school boards should provide for broad representation of stakeholders. The appointment processes must ensure that parents have a direct say about who is representing them, also there should be representation from students and from the wider community such as church and women representatives. The essential function of the school board is to ensure effective and efficient educational management of the schools.

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<sup>25</sup> MEHRD (2011), *Teaching Service Handbook*, p.66.

It must be understood that SIG and EAs will not be able to provide all the resources necessary to promote quality education. Therefore the school board has the responsibility to mobilise the parents and the wider community to supplement additional resources schools needed.

The Board will provide governance and management to support the principal and staff to achieve the school's aims and objectives. The Board will ensure that a school management is accountable to the parents and students including the Provincial Education Authority Board, the EA and the Ministry of Education.

It must be a statutory obligation of school boards to ensure, through the principal and teaching staff that:

- the school identifies and responds to the needs of students, individually and collectively;
- Whole School Plans, as required by the Ministry, are developed, implemented and evaluated including monitoring Universal Basic Education requirements;
- the curriculum, assessment and general provision of education by the school are of a high quality, meet the standards prescribed by the Ministry and ensure that principal and teacher performance is appraised;
- management and staff development needs are identified and provided, within available resources
- procedures are in place through which parents can receive information on all aspects on the educational progress of students, including access to records of students for whom they are responsible; and
- the school complies with all the rules and regulations prescribed by the Ministry.

Furthermore, a board will be responsible for protecting and promoting the ethos of the school. In some situations, a school committee or board may need to strike a balance between the rights, obligations and choices of the majority of the parents and students who subscribe to the ethos of the school or denomination and those of the minority who may not subscribe to the ethos but who choose a school for other reasons.

There are to be no sitting fees or similar payments to members of school boards. However, travelling and other expenses may be fixed by the Minister from time to time.

Provisions governing the operation of the school board, e.g. the appointment of members and the period and terms of their appointment will also be provided for in the new Act.

No sitting allowances shall be paid to members of school boards. It shall be a statutory obligation for EAs to monitor this requirement.

### **5.3 Implementation/Delivery**

The third tier of the organizational structure, the implementation or the delivery of educational provision takes place at the school level. Good management and leadership at all levels within the school system are essential. School effectiveness depends crucially on the leadership provided by suitably qualified, experienced and skilled principals, supported by deputy principals and post-holders, i.e. Heads of Departments. This section discusses the provisions for empowering effective implementation of educational delivery, and any proposed to the revised Act.

#### **5.3.1 School Principals**

The day-to-day responsibility for the smooth and efficient running of the school is vested in the principal. Therefore the manner in which the principal discharges her/his responsibilities assisted by the deputy principal(s), determines the efficient and effectiveness of the education provided at the school. Working co-operatively with the EA and School Board the principal is responsible for determining the educational aims, formulating strategies for achieving them, encouraging staff to support these aims, and developing the school's curriculum policies.

The primary roles of the principal are management of staff, management of school and accountability to the parents and guardians.

The specific roles and responsibilities of the school principal are stipulated in Appendix I of the Teaching Service Handbook. It is proposed that the powers of the principal to carry out their roles and responsibilities be formally recognized in the revised Education Act.

### **5.3.2 Deputy Principals and Position Holders**

In small schools, principals may adequately lead and influence the entire school. Larger schools however, require the principals to delegate some responsibilities to deputy principals, senior teachers and the other staff to ensure the smooth running of the school. Delegation is an integral and essential part of the process of organizing and managing a school.

The deputy principal is the person who, under the direction of the principal, shares the duty of coordinating the work of all sections of the school. The deputy principal should be capable of discharging all the duties of the principal in the absence of the principal. The deputy principal should have devolved responsibilities for certain components of a school on a daily basis. The deputy principal's roles and responsibilities are stipulated in Appendix 1 of the Teaching Service Handbook.

The present arrangements of having two deputy principals in existing community high schools evolved historically in an unstructured manner. In addition, the allocation of senior teacher positions, which assigns responsibility and accountability to teachers for the academic and counselling programs in the school, reduces the workload of the principal. In turn the principal would have more time to concentrate on the management and administration of the school. There is a need to make provision in the revised Act regarding the above.

The Act will make provisions for the roles and responsibilities of the principal to give effect to the leadership and management roles that they will perform at the school level. However, the specific details of those roles and responsibilities should be specified outside of the Act.

The principal and the deputy principal should be seen as a cohesive unit in managing a school. The selection criteria for appointing a principal should also apply to a deputy principal and both should have access to on-the-job career development pathways to improve their performances.

### **5.3.3 Whole School Development Plan**

The Whole School Development Plan (WSDP) establishes a formal planning and reporting procedure which assist schools to implement and manage change and improve the quality of education being offered. This process offers an excellent opportunity for engaging the school boards, the principal, staff, parents and learners in a collaborative exercise to create policies and work programmes that will achieve the school's vision and mission statements. The Whole School Development Plan policy encourages team work in the school setting. In this way equal participation by all stakeholders of the school is ensured and no one is isolated. Teacher development needs may be identified when teachers draw up school plans and establish priorities, which also enable more precise specification of their training needs. Teachers and parents are empowered through the process of school planning and in this way influence the quality of education in the school. Through their representation on the school board, and parent's association, parents will become effective partners in the school planning process.

The WSDP is one of many conditions for receiving school grants. Plans are received by EAs from schools under their jurisdiction and submitted to the Ministry no later than 15 December each year. Failure to provide the WSDP to the EA may determine whether or not the school grant is received by a concerned school.<sup>26</sup>

The concept of whole school planning is now generally accepted at the levels of primary and secondary schools. Principals, position holders and senior teachers are expected to play a leading role in developing school plans.

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<sup>26</sup> MEHRD (2012), *Updated Grants Policy*, p.14.

The standards for whole school development are included in the Teaching Service Handbook. The Act will allow the flexibility to develop additional standards for school and forms of school based management appropriate to the contexts of Solomon Islands.

The requirements of the Whole School Development Plan (WSDP) shall be provided for in the Education Act.

It shall be a statutory responsibility of the relevant education authorities to ensure that the school boards have a WSDP. Boards will approve such school plans, subject to the approval of the Education Authority. Education Authorities will prepare a consolidated plan including their budget and report to the Ministry.

It shall also be a statutory responsibility of the relevant education authority to submit a consolidated school development plan to the Ministry and to monitor and report on the implementation plan annually.

The school principal will provide leadership and technical advice and will work closely with the School Board to ensure that those responsibilities are fulfilled.



## **PART 6: STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

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### **6.1 Introduction**

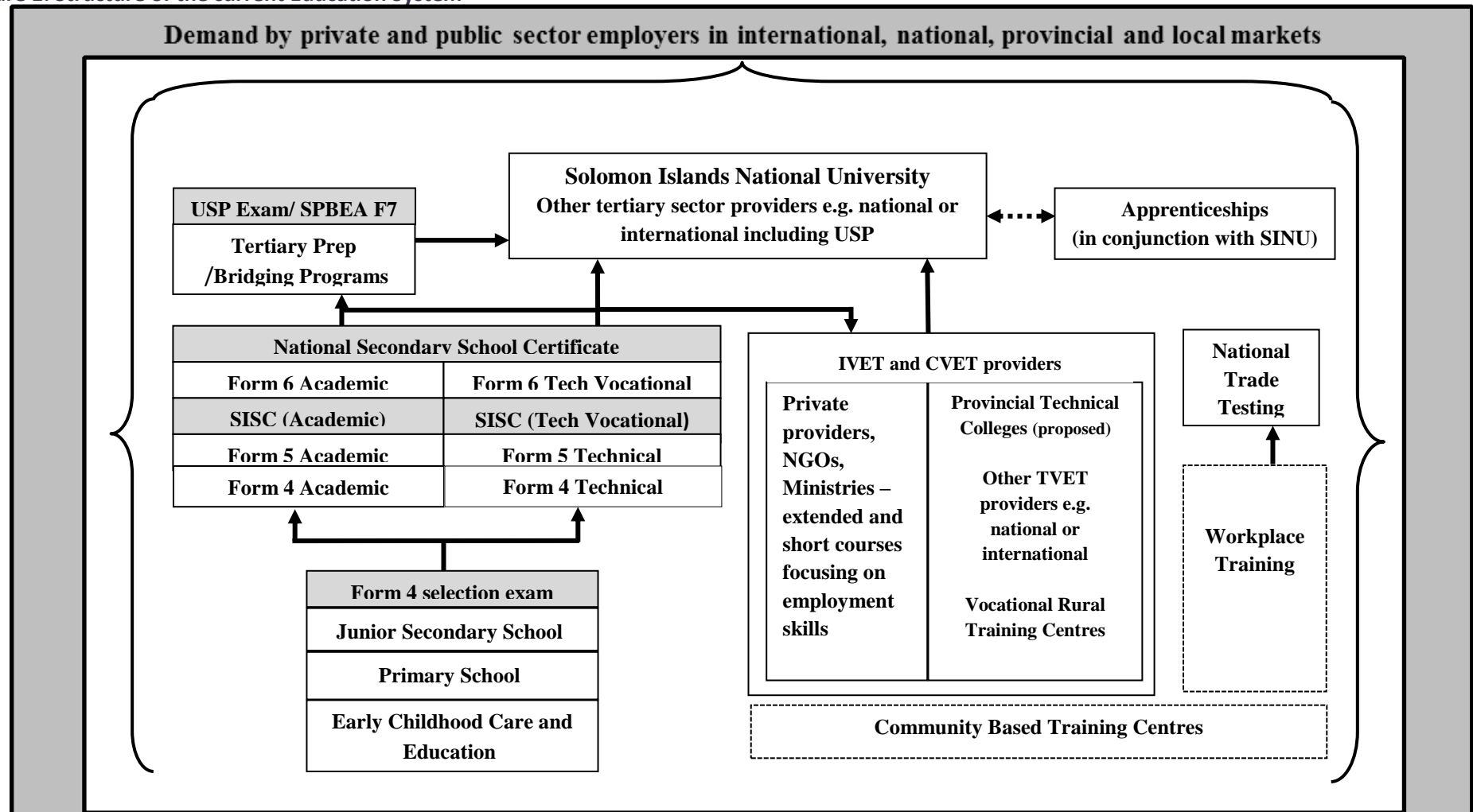
The education system of Solomon Islands must recognize and strive to ensure that all Solomon Islands are entitled to receive quality education which nurtures and harnesses their development so they can reach their full potential. That goal must be supported by a robust and cohesive education structure. It follows that all institutions in the system should aim to create such an environment for their teaching and learning. The environment should be a conducive and caring one, in which the right of each learner to reach their full potential is protected.

One of the shortcomings of the present Act is its lack of clarity on the structure of the education system. This was despite the existence of such systems within the education landscape prior to 1978.

There shall be provisions within the legislation to enable the establishment of the structure of the education and training system for Solomon Islands inclusive of ECE, through to Tertiary Education, and including Adult and Community Education.

The figure below outlines the basic current structure of the Solomon Islands education and training system.

Figure 1: Structure of the current Education System



## 6.2 Early Childhood Care and Education

The demand for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is increasing. The current policy provides for learners of 3 to 5 years of age and refers to a variety of educational programs including nurseries, playschools, pre-school, kindergartens, day care and preparatory classes. However, a further distinction is made in the policy with reference to early childhood care regarding provision for children younger than 3 years of age.

In Solomon Islands, ECCE is largely community based and driven, with only about half of them being officially registered. In 2011 for example, there were 521 centres, of which 222 were registered, and only 87 received government grants. Those centres catered for more than 22,817 children. On average, this is 103 learners per centre. In 2013, there were 256 registered ECCE centres. This brings to a total more than 26,300 children in ECCE centres throughout the entire country in 2013.<sup>27</sup>

The basis for ECCE intervention in the education system is that the early introduction of a child to education is important for the child's development and progression in education. Also, entry into formal schooling is a major transition for learners, which makes it all the more important for them to start the long journey early. ECCE has been recognized by the education system. This formal recognition must now translate into legal provision.

### 6.2.1 Legislation

Under the existing Act, children are not permitted to attend school until they are six years of age. That entry age provision assumes that children enter formal schooling at primary level in Year 1. However, since the eighties, the number of children entering formal education opportunities prior to the age of six has been increasing. This is due to the introduction of ECCE into the education system.

ECE has been formally recognized in the education system. However, the national legislation that specifically provides for ECCE is the Provincial Government Act 1997, and not the principal legislation, the Education Act. The Provincial Government Act, Schedule 5 Section 33(3) empowers the Provincial Executive to provide such educational services as kindergartens, primary schools, provincial secondary schools and community education. By definition, kindergartens, like nurseries, playschools, pre-school, day care and preparatory classes are all classified under early childhood care and education.

Providing for ECCE in the principal legislation for education will address a number of practices and policy issues. Prominent among such issues are the national standards for the establishment, operations and management of ECCE centres throughout the country. Today, some ECCE centres have been established and operated as business entities. Because an ECCE centre can be registered and operated as a business, it is governed by a separate legislation even though its core business is education, as the nature of the services that ECCE centres provide involves the education of children.

The need for privately established ECCE centres to register with the Ministry, should be a legislative requirement. So should their obligations and responsibilities to meet minimum requirements and standards of the Ministry for ECCE including the qualifications of trainers.

The absence of ECCE from the current Education Act will be addressed through the formal recognition of ECCE and by providing for ECCE in the new Education Act.

### 6.2.2 Policy

ECCE has been operated and guided by an existing policy, "the National Early Childhood Policy Statement, approved in April 2008. The Statement cites the Education Act 1978 as the empowering legislation for the development and approval of the Policy. However, the Education Act has no provisions for ECCE.

The ECCE Policy is a comprehensive document providing guidance and direction and acts as a regulatory framework for a wide range of issues within the ECCE system in Solomon Islands. However, the goal of providing universal ECCE access to all 3 to 5 year-olds was not costed, and is not currently known if it is affordable.

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<sup>27</sup> MEHRD (2013), *Updates*.

The Policy rightly provides for early childhood care and education, for children within the age ranges of 3 to 5 years but implementation of the Policy needs further consideration to ensure it can be both equitable and affordable. Early childhood care, which caters for children younger than 3 years of age, is not catered for by legislation or policy.

### 6.2.3 Sector Issues

#### *Curriculum*

There is no provision specifically covering the ECCE curriculum in the current Act. An ECCE Curriculum Framework was approved in 2010 by the National Education Board. There is a Teacher's Handbook, which consists of hands-on information to provide ECCE educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide quality ECCE programs to 3 to 5 year old learners. The Handbook focuses on developmentally and age-appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes that will maximize the potential of learners and develop for them a foundation for life in the future.<sup>28</sup>

### 6.2.4 Funding

Most ECCE centres charge fees. This is due to the cost associated with ECCE learning programs which encourage play in order to actively explore, manipulate, interact with the environment, investigate, create, discover and engage in hands-on activities. Because not all ECCE centres are registered, and not all centres receive government funding assistance, there is inadequate coordination and monitoring of the range of fees charged by the various centres.

The ECCE system is dependent on government funding for staff salaries and grants, if the centre is registered and managed by educators trained at the national university or another recognized provider. In 2011 for example, there were 521 centres, of which 256 were registered. Those centres catered for more than 22,817 children.

Those ECCE centres that are not registered with the Ministry raise their own funds, mostly through school fees, in order to run programs and to pay for salaries of staff not on government payroll.

ECCE expenditures have been low for the past five years from 2009 to 2013.<sup>29</sup> The total budget for 2013 was \$22,604,326.00, which was 3 per cent of the total budget for education.

The following principles will guide Government support for ECCE:

- (i) The recognition of ECCE as the foundation of the lifelong process of learning.
- (ii) The recognition of the final year of ECCE as the transition year into primary education for which a curriculum will be developed which will be aligned to the Year 1 curriculum.
- (iii) That only the final year of ECCE may receive Government funding in the form of a grant.

ECCE and associated systems will be formally recognized and included in the Act.

Final ECCE year shall be a preparatory year for schooling for which a curriculum shall be developed to link with Year 1 curriculum.

<sup>28</sup> MEHRD (2013), *Draft ECE Teacher's Handbook*, p.11.

<sup>29</sup> MEHRD (2014), *Line Ministry Expenditure Analysis*, p.11

## 6.3 Primary Education

The Government is committed to ensuring that in the primary education sector the diversity of school types is maintained, in recognition of the rights of parents with regards to the school of their choice subject to the curricular and co-curricular activities and their ability to afford the costs of education at the school of their choice.

The premise for primary education is that quality primary education enables children to realize their potential as individuals and to live their lives to the fullest capacity according to their particular stage of development. Quality primary education therefore gives children a firm basis for future participation in and progression through the education system.

### 6.3.1 Legislation

Primary education is still not clearly defined. Currently, primary education includes Year 1 to Year 6. This definition needs to be clearly stipulated in the legislation. Also unclear are the definition of the term 'school' and the registration of a primary school. So, when specifically provided for, registration for the establishment of primary schools will have to be specific. A separate registration will be required if a primary school offers junior secondary education making the primary school a Community High School (CHS). Although it is not openly stated, primary education begins with Preparatory Year at the age of 6 years or later, so in reality, primary education after ECCE constitutes a total of 7 years of schooling. The current ECCE policy and Basic Education has indicated the phasing out of Preparatory level. The Compulsory Primary education is from year 1 to year 6.

Primary education has the highest rate of enrolment in comparison to other levels in the education sector. Approximately 65 per cent of all eligible children are enrolled in primary schools of which approximately fifty three per cent are male, while forty seven per cent are female. Primary education is offered in a full primary school or at a CHS. In 2013, there were 669 registered primary and 151 CHSs which include both primary and junior secondary education, years 7 to 9.<sup>30</sup>

School boards should have increasing responsibility for the management of primary schools, but that requires legal basis, that is, appropriate provision in the Act to affect their establishment, powers and functions, and to regulate for operating and managing schools.

### 6.3.2 Policy

There is no specific policy for primary education. The policy which covers primary education is the 2009 Policy Statement and Guidelines for Basic Education for Solomon Islands. As defined by that Policy Statement, basic education relates to Year 1 to Year 9, which covers six years of primary education and the first three years of secondary education, also referred to as junior secondary.

The main aim of the Policy is to facilitate nine years of basic education. Its focus is to provide for and enable all eligible learners the access to and attainment of nine years of basic education without interruptions due to any barriers.

### 6.3.3 Sector Issues

#### *Definition of 'School'*

A clear definition of the term school is essential as currently all institutions of education and training, from ECCE to tertiary education are notionally classified under the term 'school'. A clear definition of the term school and the distinctions between the various sub-sectors is necessary under regulation for clarity and monitoring purposes.

The Act defines school as any institution or place at which any secular instruction (whether with or without religious instruction) is regularly given to ten or more pupils outside their own homes, but does not include:

- (a) any institution or place operated by a Church or other religious body which in the opinion of the Minister provides instruction wholly or mainly of a religious character;

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<sup>30</sup> MEHRD (2013), *Updates*.

- (b) any institution operated by or under the control of the Solomon Islands Government to provide specialised training for periods not exceeding three months in a particular trade or profession, whether on an in-service or pre-service basis.<sup>31</sup>

It is proposed that under the revised Act, the definition of school be extended to include an institution which provides education from **primary to the end of secondary education** and should not include institutions which provide Technical and Vocational Education and Training or Higher Education.

Consideration should be given to also extend the definition to include regular instruction by way of personal tuition, home schooling, and any institution or place from which a regular instruction emanates or is imparted to pupils, by means of correspondence/distance learning.

#### *Classifications of centres and schools*

It is proposed that under the regulations for registration, schools should also be classified into clear categories, such as:

- (a) early childhood care and education centres, being centres in which instruction is given to children between the ages of three and five years in games, stories, simple handwork and other activities aimed in inculcating good physical and social habits;
- (b) Primary schools, being schools in which full time instruction is given from the first year to the sixth year of formal education or for any shorter period;
- (c) Satellite schools, also referred to as 'extension schools', which are commonly found amongst primary classes, and are schools that offer either single or more classes to children who, due to factors such as isolation, distance or terrain are unable to access education at the nearest school to their village;
- (c) Junior secondary schools, being schools in which full time instruction is given to pupils in the seventh to the ninth year of formal education;
- (d) Senior secondary schools, being schools in which full time instruction is given in general and technical, business and agricultural subjects, extending over a period of three years, to pupils who have completed the full junior secondary school education.
- (e) A composite school is a school offering multi-level educational programs comprising a mix of ECE, primary and/or secondary under the same school administration and management.

The Education Act will clearly define between schools and institutions. Early childhood care and education providers shall be classified as 'early childhood care and education centres'. Schools are places of instruction and learning for primary and secondary education, whereas institutions are places of education for TVET and higher education.

#### *Registration of schools*

Currently, for schools that provide educational services across education sub-sectors e.g. early childhood care and education, primary, secondary and tertiary, the process for registration or approval to deliver additional services in another sub-sector is not consistently applied by Education Authorities.

It is proposed that in the revised legislation that the requirement to have multiple registration for each education sub-sector will be a requirement.

The Education Act will clearly outline that multiple registration is required to provide educational services across sub-sectors of the Solomon Islands education system.

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<sup>31</sup> Education Act (1978), Part 1 Preliminary, Section 2.

### *Compulsory Education*

Education in Solomon Islands is not compulsory. The purpose of compulsory education is to ensure that all eligible learners access educational opportunities to nurture and harness their development so they can reach their full potential. If legislated for, compulsory education would commence with formal education at the primary level. Compulsory education is also accompanied by a school leaving age before which a learner cannot leave school.

However, if legislated for, compulsory education will pose a number of challenges. Legislating for compulsory education will entail dual legal requirements: (i) compulsory provision and (ii), compulsory attendance. Compulsory provision requires responsible authorities, the National Government and Education Authorities, to provide educational opportunities of acceptable quality to every learner during the period of compulsory education. This means that a school aged learner cannot be denied access to schooling for the compulsory period. Conversely, compulsory attendance places a legal obligation on guardians of learners covered by the compulsory education period to ensure that a learner attends school for that period. However, a learner's parents cannot be required to ensure the learner's attendance if no educational facilities is available to them.

Compulsory attendance follows compulsory enrolment. From the first school day of the year in which the learner reaches the age of 5 years until the last school day of the year in which such learner reaches the end of the compulsory education period, the learner is required to attend school. Where enrolment is compulsory, every guardian must ensure a learner within the defined compulsory age for whom he or she is responsible is enrolled at a school.

Solomon Islands faces and will continue to face a huge challenge in fulfilling compulsory education - compulsory enrolment and compulsory attendance requirements in terms of its capacity to provide educational facilities and infrastructure to enable every learner to attend school and to monitor the attendance of compulsory-aged learners as will be required by law.

If compulsory education was to become law, then it should serve the purpose of being a tool which the Government can use to provide infrastructure so as to ensure that learners are enabled to attend school.

The Act shall make provision for a minimum age from 5 - 14 years for compulsory education, to allow students the opportunity to complete basic education.

The Act shall make provision for the Minister, with the consent of Parliament through an order, to specify any area or areas in a province or state in which all learners of such age or ages which the order may specify, should attend a school. Education then becomes compulsory for that area or areas after such an order.

When compulsory education has been declared for such an area, then it places the responsibility on the Government and/or an education authority to provide the needed infrastructures and resources in order to enable learners in that area to attend school.

### *Curriculum*

The curriculum to be taught in all primary schools in Solomon Islands is provided for in the Act, Part V Section 23. There are different levels of responsibility for the development and implementation of the curriculum. At the national level, the curriculum is approved by the Minister for Education following submission from the National Curriculum Advisory Board (NCAB). The Ministry of Education oversees its implementation, monitoring and evaluation through the Curriculum Development Division.

An existing Policy Statement and Guidelines for the National Curriculum was approved in September 2009, and a National Curriculum Statement was subsequently approved in 2013. According to the documents, curriculum encompasses the content, the structure and processes of teaching and learning, which the school provides according to a set of key learning outcomes for the whole curriculum.

The National Curriculum Policy Statement and Guidelines include both specific and implicit components of the curriculum. The specific components are the concepts, skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes which children learn at school as part of their personal and social

development. The implicit components are those factors that make up the ethos and general environment of the school. The curriculum is concerned, not only with the subjects taught, but also with how and why they are taught and with the outcomes of this activity for the learner.

The primary education curriculum is based on the following general principles:

- the full and harmonious development of the learner, with due allowances for individual differences;
- the central importance of activity and guided-discovery learning and teaching methods; and
- teaching and learning through an integrated curriculum and through activities related to the learner's environment.

The manner in which curriculum has been defined, planned, implemented and evaluated should reflect the aspirations of Solomon Islanders on the quality of primary education. The curriculum and assessment should therefore be properly managed and administered so as to ensure quality of provision in the schools, to provide learners with a range of knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes best suited to their personal development, and to prepare them for progression toward the completion of junior secondary education (or proposed Year Ten).

The Ministry will be empowered to ensure that effective curriculum planning and implementation, with clear aims and values are undertaken. They also require well-defined learning outcomes and integration of the different activities which contribute to their achievement. Curriculum planning is a continuous process involving planning, observing, assessment and adjustment in the light of the experience of implementation.

The Ministry of Education will develop policy and guidelines for school based internal assessment, including diagnostic, formative and summative. This policy should ensure uniformity and continuity of approach between similar year groups and within the school.

Satisfactory attainment levels in literacy and numeracy are essential for students, in order to participate in, and benefit from, all other learning activity in school and to ensure that they are not impeded in their subsequent progression through the education system. In recognition of this, a specific target will be set to address literacy and numeracy difficulties among primary school students. To allow for the systematic evaluation of this objective, the Ministry will closely monitor existing standardized forms of assessment such as SISTA, for these core competencies. The outcomes of such assessments will be available to EAs and the Ministry to allow for the monitoring of the achievement of standards in literacy and numeracy.

Assessment should be diagnostic, formative continuous, and geared towards providing information for teachers, schools, students and parents, which will help to improve the quality of educational outcomes. This means that assessment is an integral part of the curriculum, and the teaching and learning process.

In view of the recent shift in the school system to school-based internal assessments, and the removal of the SISEE in the near future, any reference to 'curricula and examinations' in the education system should now be replaced with 'curricula and assessment'. This needs to be formally recognized by the revised Act.

#### *Alternative Curriculum*

There are a number of Independent education partners that offer alternative curricular to that duly approved by the Minister. An example is the widely used US-based Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curricular. ACE is a Bible-based, individualized, self-instructional, mastery-based curriculum. This curriculum has been around for more than 40 years and is widely used and accepted in the education systems of a number of Western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa and others.

The need to provide a wide range of school curricular choices has been discussed with key stakeholders. Alternative school curricular choices have emerged in the education system because there was a perceived need to prepare learners fully for life, based on choices and preferences of parents.

The Act shall ensure that there is a statutory obligation for schools offering any foreign curricula to 'integrate' the national curricular with the option for learners to sit for the national examination at the end of senior secondary in order to be eligible to access government scholarships.



### *Language of instruction*

The existing Education Act refers to the medium of instruction.

'In all schools the language or languages to be used as the medium of instruction shall be that or those prescribed by the Minister, either generally or specifically'.<sup>32</sup>

However, since the establishment of the Act there has been no known direction relating to the medium of instruction. Future directions in this regard should be based on sound research and the potential link between language of instruction and learning. It is proposed that the Permanent Secretary in consultation with the Minister make a decision on the language of instruction. This Paper noted that National Education Board resolved that the languages of instruction shall be; local vernacular, Pijin, English and sign language. These languages of instruction shall be applied individually or combined depending on which language(s) the learners use. However, English shall be the medium of instruction from year four to higher levels of learning.

The Act should include reference to the local vernacular, Pijin, English and sign language as the languages of instruction.

### *Religious Education*

Section 27 of the current Act on religious instruction resonates with the fundamental rights and freedoms of Association of the individual under the Constitution of Solomon Islands.

The Act provides for EAs to delegate a church minister to give religious instructions to pupils of a particular religious denomination one hour per week. The existing Act does not clarify the term religious denomination. For instance does 'religious denomination' refer to a world religion, or does it refer to the various denominations within the Christian religion such as Catholic, Anglican, United Church, etc. The revised Act needs to make provision to clarify the terms mentioned above and encourage interfaith dialogues. The revised Act needs to refer to 'faiths or denominations' instead of 'religious denominations'.

The existing Act does not provide for exemptions from religious instructions upon the request of a parent or guardian. However, the Constitution of Solomon Islands protects the rights of a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years and is attending a place of education from being required to receive religious instruction or take part in any religious ceremony or observance, relating to a religion other than his or her own.

In the Vanuatu Act, a parent/carer may request and be permitted exemption of a child from religious instruction. In Fiji, teachers shall not be compelled to attend, and exemption can be given to pupils upon parents' request.

The Constitution of Solomon Islands, under the Protection of Freedom of Conscience states that 'no person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or take part in any religious ceremony or observance if that instruction, ceremony or observance relates to a religion other than his own'.<sup>33</sup>

This right of exemption must be provided for in the revised Act. Therefore, whilst the revised Act should recognize and support schools that were established on denominational ethos, the rights of the minority who may not subscribe to the school ethos but who for various reasons do not attend another school have to be provided for and safeguarded. It is proposed that the Ministry will provide policy guidelines for the application of the right of exemption in the school context.

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<sup>32</sup> Education Act 1978, p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> SIG (1978), 1978 Constitution.

The Act should:

- allow for all faiths or denominations and encourage interfaith dialogue;
- should refer to 'faiths or denominations' instead of 'religious denominations'; and
- include right of exemption. The Ministry of Education will provide policy guidelines for the application of the right of exemption in the school context.

### *Civic Education*

The National Education Board resolved that in order to instil a sense of unity and national identity, all schools and institutions in the Solomon Islands must observe civic education activities such as flag raising, singing of the national anthem and other related activities.

### *Fee Free Basic Education*

The Policy on Basic Education and the Fee Free Basic Education Policy, approved in 2009 by the Coalition for National Unity and Rural Advancement (CNURA) Government, resolved that a nine year basic education program for all eligible learners be implemented. Their specific goals were to avail all children of Solomon Islands the opportunity of nine years of free education. The policies were the Government's strategy for the achievement of Education for All, (EFA), as contained in the Millennium Development Goals, (MDGs) which Solomon Islands is a party to.

The government provides an annual grant to schools on a per capita basis to operationalize the *Fee-Free Policy*, a recurring theme during the consultations. The effects of that policy have been controversial and key stakeholders consider the policy to be unsustainable as the grants are inadequate to meet the operational needs of the school. As a result schools continue to charge fees in the form of parent contribution which the existing Act does not provide for.

The successful implementation of the fee free basic education policy since 2009 has been hampered by insufficient financial resources and the absence of enabling legislation. Therefore the Government is urged to find enough financial resources and create enabling legislation to implement fee free basic education successfully.

That the revised and updated Fee-Free Policy includes regulatory, monitoring and accountability standards and measures and criteria for the fee-free funding.

The Fee Free Policy commits to a minimum level of support for all primary schools based on the assessment of a school's operational requirements and options should exist for well performing schools to be given additional funds.

## **6.3.4 Funding**

Historically, the government, churches and people of Solomon Islands have made a staunch commitment to the provision of education and to making it available. This is more evident in the past two decades with the introduction of ECE, CHSs and in recent years, the Government with Donor assistance has dramatically increased the funding of education. This is reflected by the increase in the spending on education in Solomon Islands where the budget on education by 2012 and 2013 was 24 per cent of the total national budget.

Education has played a positive impact on the social and economic development of Solomon Islands. Therefore, the allocation of resources to education and ensuring the effective and efficient distribution of those resources is crucial for the progress and prosperity of the nation. The strength of the economy and other benefits received due to positive economic growth justify the expenditure spent on education.

More specifically, quality primary education is fundamentally important in determining the chances of learners to participate in the social and economic development of the nation later on in life. All subsequent education and training are built upon the foundation of primary education. It is for this reason that the provision of adequate resources for primary education will remain a priority.

Furthermore prioritizing the funding of primary education are both socially and economically beneficial to the nation.

Major sources of funding of primary school education are:

- contributions;
- school grants;
- salaries; and
- fund raising (by the school).

### *School Fees*

According to the existing Act [Section 40 (2)] – Schedule of School Fees Legal Notice 10-1989 EAs are not allowed to charge fees without the prior approval of the Minister.

Section 40(2) of the current Act, which requires the prior approval of the Minister before fees are charged, has not been observed by EAs and other partners, nor enforced by the Ministry of Education.

School Fees may only be charged by EAs upon the prior approval of the Minister for Education. However, a *Fee-Free Basic Policy* approved by National Coalition for Rural Advancement, (NCRA) Government, in 2009 means that primary education is meant to be *fee-free*.

Legal Notice 10/1989 in the existing Act is not observed by Education Authorities charging school fees not approved by the Minister of Education as stipulated in the legal notice 10/1989. There is a need to amend this provision to what will work in the revised Act.

Section 41 of the existing Act provides for remission of fees. School fee remission received popular support during the consultations but most fee payers were more sympathetic to the current practice of schools charging fees illegally.

### *School Grants*

Based on the current school grants policy, the grant per learner for rural and urban primary schools is \$320 and \$520 respectively.<sup>34</sup> Registered schools benefit from bi-annual grants by the government under provisions of the present Act, Part VI, and Section 38. Administration Grants are provided to EAs while School Grants are deposited directly into school accounts for which EAs are required under the present law to account for. Meanwhile a review of school grants is being undertaken. Equity requirements need to be considered and funding variations should be further explored.

Expenditure, for primary level to date is 35 per cent, which represents the largest proportion of the education budget. Spending on primary education has increased from 19 per cent in 2007 to 35 per cent in 2013, the highest sub-sector spending. The implication of the high population growth rate on education provision is also reflected by the high proportion of non-discretionary expenditures. So, with the high population growth rate of around 2.3 per cent per annum, and 50 per cent of the population under the age of 20, the cost of primary education will continue to increase in the future.

### *Salaries*

As provided for under Part C Section 17 of the Act, the salaries and allowances of primary teachers are paid on behalf of EAs by the Ministry in accordance with the provisions of the Teaching Service Handbook. Primary school teachers are employed by respective EAs and their terms of employment and conditions of service are regulated in the Teaching Service Handbook.

It is proposed that the Education Act gives power to the Ministry to bulk-fund EAs based on their performance. Through bulk-funding those EAs can establish their own teacher salary schemes and terms and conditions of services. However, the bulk funding is government assistance for the operations and management of education and is not intended solely for teacher's salary.

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<sup>34</sup> MEHRD (2012), *Grants Policy*, p.24.

### 6.3.5 Inclusive Education

#### *Learners with Special Needs*

The Government's strategy for education is characterized by the hallmark of equality. When social or economic disadvantages impeded a learner's potential, justice and equality should call for action and appropriate measures to mitigate the effects of the disadvantage. In Solomon Islands, often these disadvantages are not identified prior to ECCE and consequently the learner is prevented from attending school altogether.

Special needs relate to all forms of disabilities and/or circumstances which prevent learners benefiting adequately from the education normally provided for those of their age group. It also includes all learners for whom education which is normally provided in the classroom is not challenging enough or too challenging

All learners, regardless of their personal circumstances, have the right of access to and participation in the education system, according to their potential and their ability. The achievement of equality of access, participation and benefit for all learners entails positive intervention at all levels including minorities who experience difficulties.

The objective will be to ensure a continuum of provision for special educational needs, ranging from occasional help within the ordinary school to possibly fulltime education in a special school or centre, with learners being enabled to move as necessary and practicable from one type of provision to another. Educational provision will be flexible to allow for learners with different needs, at various stages of their progress through the educational system.

At present only the Red Cross Handicap Centre in Honiara provides education for learners of primary school age with special needs. The Centre focuses on the physically disabled or handicapped. The Centre operates as an EA and receives grants from the Government. Actions have yet to be taken to integrate handicapped or learners with disabilities into mainstream primary education system.

A special taskforce established by the Ministry of Education is preparing the formulation of a Policy for learners with Special Needs. Proper costing needs to be done on the special needs policy for purpose of successfully implementing the policy. Any expansion of services to children with special needs should be costed and implementation based on what is a priority and what is affordable. Otherwise there will be policy statements but with no subsequent action that improves opportunities for these students.

Other disadvantaged groups include:

- gender equity;
- remote school children;
- children in poverty; and
- children in disaster areas or human conflict areas.

#### *Assessment of Special Needs*

Although the special educational needs of some learners have been identified before they start school, classroom teachers carry the main responsibility for identifying and responding to special learning difficulties. The assessment procedure will focus on the identification of the learner's potential rather than on his/her learning difficulties.

Education Authority and School Boards will have a statutory responsibility for all learners in schools of the Authority, and will coordinate educational provisions including support for these learners.

The National Curriculum Advisory Board will ensure that all learners have equal access to the same curriculum. To accommodate educational provision for learners with disabilities in mainstream schools, the development of the curriculum will allow for flexibility, addition and adaptability. The curricular needs of all learners in specialist centres will be reviewed continually based on age, ability, needs and aspirations.

Appropriate in-career development for teachers of learners with special educational needs will be the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

Recognition of learners with special needs should be included in the Act.

### 6.3.6 Hours of Instruction/Time in Primary Schools

The amount of time students spend in organized learning activities influences their academic performance and development. The total amount of time spent in school depends upon the length of the school day, the number of days in which actual learning activities take place, the length of the school year, and the number of years a student attends school.

The current school calendar is as follows:

**Table 1: Primary School Calendar**

Item	Number of Days
Days of instruction	196 days
School holidays	60 days
Public holidays during days of instruction	5 days
Weekends	104 days
<b>Total days</b>	<b>365 days</b>

Hours of instruction for primary education are specified in Chapter 7 of the Teaching Service Handbook. The prescribed hours of instruction for years 1 and 2 and years 3 to 6 of primary education are 4½ hours and 5½ hours per day respectively, while the minimum days of instruction per annum are 190 days.<sup>35</sup> When adhered to, the minimum number of days of instruction and the hours of instruction per day will ensure that teaching and learning are maximized. However, the days of instruction and hours of instruction are adversely affected by teacher absenteeism. Most schools in Solomon Islands operate for less than the prescribed minimum number of days. The principal sources and causes include teacher absenteeism, late commencement of the school year and terms, teacher's industrial action, and early closure of schools at the end of terms due to ration shortage. In order not to disadvantage the learners it is suggested that a catch-up program must be organised by the School Administration if the school fails to meet the minimum learning days. Therefore, a provision to cater for this suggestion needs to be in the revised Act.

The integrity of the minimum days of instruction and the hours of instruction per day will be safeguarded.

It will be a statutory obligation for school boards to comply with all rules pertaining to the duration of the school year or calendar. Each Education Authority will have a statutory responsibility for monitoring and reporting on compliance with the days of instruction per annum and the hours of instruction per day. A specific policy shall be developed outside the Teaching Handbook related to hours of instruction and duration of the school year.

The Minister shall promulgate instructions on the length of school year and schools day.

### 6.4 Secondary Education

The Government is committed to ensuring that in the secondary education sector the diversity of school types is maintained, in recognition of the rights of parents with regards to the school of their choice subject to the curricular and co-curricular activities and their ability to afford the costs of education at the school of their choice.

Secondary education covers Year 7 to Year 12 and is offered by a range of schools, namely, Community High Schools (CHSs), Provincial Secondary Schools (PSSs) and National Secondary Schools (NSSs). These classifications are resonant of the evolution of secondary schooling in Solomon Islands and the era, and the philosophy or ethos which gave rise to the establishments of

<sup>35</sup> MEHRD (2011), *Teaching Service Handbook*, p.26)

those schools. The relevance of those classifications to a modern education system in Solomon Islands needs to be captured in the revised Act.

Currently, secondary education falls under two categories: Junior secondary, which includes Year 7 to 9, and senior secondary, Year 10 to 12. Both junior and senior secondary education are offered by CHSs, PSSs, and NSSs. Access to junior secondary is through the Solomon Islands Secondary Entrance Examination, SISEE, conducted at the end of the sixth year of primary education to determine entry into secondary education. Similarly, access to senior secondary education is through the Solomon Islands Form 3, SIF3 Examinations.

The secondary education system is managed on behalf of Provincial Assemblies and EAs by Provincial Education Boards or EA Education Board. Schools are managed by school boards. School boards are accountable to the EA. However, appropriate provision is required in the revised Act in order to legalise their establishment, their roles and responsibilities, their operations and management under EAs.

Successive governments intend to ensure that all Solomon Islanders achieve nine years of basic education. The Government values providing learners with nine years of basic education. Despite a wide range of challenges the nation and individuals experience. Junior secondary education builds on the foundation of six years of primary education. Whatever their socio-economic background, gender or special education needs, all learners are encouraged to strive to achieve nine years of basic education as the standard for the minimum level of education for Solomon Islanders.

Junior secondary education recognizes the right of equal access of individual learners to nine years of basic education. Learners are therefore encouraged to participate and benefit from the educational opportunity provided and progress through to the end of junior secondary education and achieve nine years of basic education without the likelihood of non-progression due to an examination.

Currently, junior secondary education, the first three years of secondary education, covers years 7 to 9 (also referred to as forms 1 to 3). It is neither a separate component of the education sector nor of secondary education. However, junior secondary education is referred to separately for the reason that whilst it is the beginning of secondary education, it is also covered under the *Basic Education Policy (2009)*.

Spaces available in secondary schools are limited. Therefore, selection for the available spaces is made possible through the Solomon Islands Secondary Entrance Examination (SISEE) conducted at the end of the sixth year of primary education. The examination serves the purpose of selection for progression into secondary education and has been seen as working contrary to the achievement of the Basic Education Policy as it not only serves selection but also determines discontinuation of education. For this reason, the final SISEE or Year 6 examination will be administered in 2014.<sup>36</sup>

Currently, senior secondary education covers the years 10 to 12, (previously forms 4 to 6), and is offered by some CHSs, PSSs and NSSs. In 2013 a total of 93 schools offered senior secondary education. Access to senior secondary education is through the Solomon Islands Form 3, SIF3 Examination, administered at the end of nine years of basic education.

Schools will be classified according to their sector and not by whether they are 'national' or 'provincial'. Classification of schools includes:

- Secondary schools - may be junior secondary or senior secondary, or both.
- Community Schools - may be at multiple sub-sectors of education (such as ECE, junior secondary or senior secondary), and where there is strong community input into the establishment and management of the school.
- Composite schools - include two or more different sub-sectors of education, i.e. ECE, primary or secondary.

<sup>36</sup> MEHRD (2013), *NEAP 2013-2015*, p.8.

### **6.4.1 Legislation**

Despite the existence of secondary education prior to the enactment of the Education Act in 1978, secondary education is not clearly defined or specifically legislated for. There are references under separate sections of the Act such as recurrent grants to 'secondary schools'. There is a need to make provision in the revised Act to cater for; (i) provide a clear definition of secondary education, and (ii) governance and management of secondary education.

### **6.4.2 Policy**

Secondary education is governed by two separate policies. Junior secondary education, from years 7 to 9, is covered by the Basic Education Policy (2009). The primary aim of this Policy is to avail education and enable all eligible learners the access to education and attain nine years of basic education. Like other policies that have been formulated and approved, the Policy requires the necessary legal basis.

### **6.4.3 Sector issues**

#### *Curriculum and Assessment*

The secondary school curriculum, which is the totality of learning experiences to students, includes the arts, sciences and vocational subjects. The structure has a sense of permanence about it and is developed and supervised centrally by the Curriculum Development Division of the Ministry of Education. The arrangement for the development, implementation and review of the curriculum is provided for under Part IV Section 23 of the existing Act. The Solomon Islands School Certificate, (SISC) which was first administered in 1978, is used for selection of students for Year 12 as limited places are available. At the end of year 12, students sit the National Form Six Certificate offered by the Ministry of Education.

University of the South Pacific offers exiting Year 12 students the USP Foundation Program which is the equivalent of Year 13, and is a bridging program to university. Although this program is offered within limited secondary schools foundation studies programs focused on meeting entry requirements for tertiary providers are generally considered tertiary programs. Currently, the Ministry provides teacher salaries and facilities and equipment for this program and USP quality assures the provision.

Assessment in secondary schools includes all the methods used to evaluate the achievements of an individual or a group of students. It is usually concerned with the gathering of information related to the student's knowledge, understanding, skills and aptitudes. Assessment procedures range from the formal, such as written examinations, to the informal, such as the teacher's observation.

Continuous assessment, which may be described as formative assessment, is an integral part of teaching in the secondary school system and is a professional duty of every teacher. Summative assessment is normally carried out at the end of a term or year and normally takes the form of a test or examination.

Assessment and the uses to which it is put influences teaching methods. Assessment policies should ensure that procedures are comprehensive enough to test the full range of abilities across the curriculum and to evaluate all the elements of learning. It is particularly important that assessment methods should fully support the achievement of the full range of curricula objectives. It is equally important that assessment methods promote and support the more diversified range of teaching approaches necessary to achieve those objectives.

It is intended that when nationalized, the current Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate, PSSC, will replace the Form 5 certificate as the school leaving certificate for Solomon Islands. It will provide certification of achievement and will be the basis for progression to employment and University Foundation and tertiary education.

The recent shift in approach nationally to OBE, with emphasis on school-based continuous and formative assessment needs to be supported by changes in teaching methodology. Teaching methodology must ensure that methods used are appropriate. Teaching methods are central to the realization of the learner-based, OBE.

The traditional didactical method was centred on the teacher as responsible for transmitting of knowledge to the learner. Modern education now demands the need for the engagement of learners as active agents in the teaching-learning process and thus the need to complement traditional

methods with a wide range of strategies in teaching as well as learning. New strategies will also help to harmonize approaches between primary and secondary education.

This White Paper recognizes the need for greater in-school cooperation and partnership involving teachers centred on sharing, supporting, and teamwork as professionals. By pooling their expertise teachers can significantly contribute to the quality of the education of learners.

Other key components in ensuring the success of teaching methods are teacher pre-service and in-service professional development programs. In-school teacher professional development programs

### *Learners with Special Needs*

The principles set out in relations to learners at the primary level will continue to be applied at the senior secondary level. The objective will be to ensure that learners with special needs are provided for.

### *Hours of Instruction and Time in Secondary Schools*

The amount of time students spend in organized learning activities influences their academic performance and development. The total amount of time spent in school depends upon the length of the school day, the number of days in which actual learning activities take place, the length of the school year, and the number of years a learner spends in school.

The legal provision for the hours of instruction and time in school is Part IV Section 18(1) of the current Act. The hours of instruction are prescribed in Chapter 7 of the TSH.

The hours of instruction for secondary education at all levels are 5½ hours per day while the minimum days of instruction per annum are 190 days.<sup>37</sup> When adhered to, the minimum number of days of instruction days and hours of instruction per day will ensure that teaching and learning are maximized. However, the days of instruction and hours of instruction are adversely affected by, amongst other reasons, teacher absenteeism. Evidence clearly indicates that teacher absenteeism is the fourth reason for the rate of learners not completing the secondary education.<sup>38</sup> The current school calendar for time in school is as follows:

**Table 2: Secondary School Calendar**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Number of days</b>
Days of instruction	196 days
School holidays	60 days
Public holidays during days of instruction	5 days
Weekends	104 days
<b>Total days</b>	<b>365 days</b>

Most schools in Solomon Islands operate far less than the prescribed minimum number of days. The principal sources and causes include teacher absenteeism, late commencement of the school year and terms, teacher's industrial actions, and early closure of schools at the end of terms due to ration shortage. The revised Act needs to provide for "catch-up" programs by schools not meeting the minimum teaching days (hours).

The integrity of the school calendar, which prescribes the minimum days of instruction and the hours of instruction per day, will be safeguarded.

It will be a statutory requirement for school boards to comply with all rules pertaining to the duration of the school year or calendar. Each Education Authority will have a statutory responsibility for monitoring and reporting on compliance with the days of instruction per annum and the hours of instruction per day.

<sup>37</sup> MEHRD (2011), *Teaching Service Handbook*, p.26

<sup>38</sup> UNICEF 2011, *Barriers to Education Study*



## 6.4.4 Funding

### *School Fees*

Schools that offer senior secondary education do charge fees and are not covered by the *Fee Free Basic Education Policy* of 2009. Charging of school fees are legislated for under Part VII Financial, Section 40 (2) of the existing Act. Under the same section, no EA shall charge fees at any school for which it is responsible without the prior approval of the Minister. However, as observed earlier in this paper, this legislation continued to be ignored by the Secondary Schools. EAs are charging fees that are in excess of the prescribed range approved by the Minister.

Under Part VII Section 38 (1), all registered secondary schools are eligible for grants. Educational grants cover EA administration costs as well as school grants, which cater for expenses related to the operations and management of schools. Grants to schools are disbursed on a per capita basis.

The total expenditure at secondary level of 22 per cent, accounts for the third largest proportion of the total education budget. Spending on secondary education has increased from 19 per cent in 2007 to 35 per cent in 2013, the highest sub-sector spending. A high proportion of the expenditures are non-discretionary. However, during the same period, the salaries of secondary school teachers have not increased significantly.<sup>39</sup>

VRTCs will be eligible for funding if they are recognized by SIQA as meeting minimum standards and/or criteria.<sup>40</sup>

## 6.5 Tertiary Education Sector

This section of the White Paper incorporates the Tertiary Education Sector that is currently not covered by the Education Act 1978. It proposes new structures, independent of MEHRD, which will promote better coordinated and higher quality tertiary education designed to meet the future needs of Solomon Islands for a skilled workforce. These bodies are:

- Solomon Islands Tertiary Education Commission (SITEC); and
- Solomon Islands Qualifications Authority (SIQA).

The key role of SITEC is to set national tertiary strategy and high level policy, to liaise with industry and to promote, plan, develop, coordinate and where appropriate fund (or purchase training) tertiary education and training in Solomon Islands. SIQA's role is quality assuring the tertiary education system. It will ensure the maintenance of a high quality and internationally recognised tertiary system. Although these bodies need to collaborate to ensure an effective and efficient tertiary education sector, there is no structural hierarchy, all are independent of each other and report directly to the Minister.

Associated with SITEC and SIQA is that of the National Human Resource Development Training Council (NHRDTC). It is not proposed that the NHRDTC is incorporated within the Education Bill, but that it remain the remit of Ministry of Development, Planning and Aid Coordination. NHRDTC's main role is to analyse human resource development demands related to economic development and to identify the skills shortages that is in demand by businesses, communities, and government to support economic and social development.

### 6.5.1 Introduction

The tertiary education sector in Solomon Islands incorporates formal training beyond secondary school education. The tertiary sector incorporates two main sub sectors: higher education sub sector and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sub sector.

The higher education sector generally includes qualifications at degree level and above, but may include diploma and advanced diploma qualifications; and Foundation Studies or bridging programs provided by higher education sector providers. In Solomon Islands higher education is provided through the Solomon Islands National University and also campuses of UPNG and USP. TVET sector

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<sup>39</sup> MEHRD 2013, *Analytical notes of key expenditure trends 2007-2012*, p.1.

<sup>40</sup> This is limited to not for profit VRTCs under the authority of an Education Authority, provincial government or council.

qualifications aim to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market. In the Solomon Islands TVET is predominantly delivered through these same universities but also through 43 Vocational and Rural Training Centres (VRTCs), although there is a small number of private providers, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and Institute for Public Administration & Management (IPAM) who deliver vocational or continuing education programs.

In Solomon Islands, as is the case in many countries, the distinction between the two subsectors is not clear. All three universities offer both higher education programs and TVET programs and could be viewed as dual-sector universities rather than purely higher education universities. In addition there are other providers to which the alignment of their qualifications to either sector is not clear such as those programs at the two nursing colleges (Helena Goldie Hospital College of Nursing [Western Province] and Atoifi College of Nursing [Malaita Province] and programs at the various theological colleges. In addition, the notion of separating higher education from TVET based on the level of the qualification or the employment outcomes does not assist when there is no qualifications framework and where separation by professional outcomes is not clear e.g. nurse or accountant. Finally, the possibility of inclusion of TVET into the secondary schools sector and students dropping out of secondary and moving to vocational rural training centres blurs the lines even more between other sectors.

One way of distinguishing the two subsectors is to consider the development and design of the qualifications and the type of achievement standards that form the basis of the qualification. Higher education curriculum is often based on notions of knowledge and understanding rather than competency based, is generally accredited under higher education arrangements and is often norm referenced with other similar programs internationally. TVET programs are based on the notion of competency and are generally accredited under separate TVET arrangements and are focussed on meeting industry needs.

In Solomon Islands there is no formal structure, national qualifications framework or quality assurance arrangements for approval of qualifications and of providers to be able to organise or manage the sector. However, there appears to be acceptance that the two subsectors are inclusive of a 'tertiary sector' and that the sector has varied purposes and takes many forms.

The Education Act will recognise the post-secondary education and training sector as the 'tertiary sector' and acknowledge that there are two main subsectors: 'higher education' and 'technical and vocational education and training'.

It should be acknowledged that the term 'higher education' is an accepted term across other countries to which Solomon Islands connects with and does not presuppose 'superiority over the TVET sector' but that it has a separate purpose and intent.

## **6.5.2 Profile of the tertiary sector**

### *Technical and Vocational Education and Training*

The main providers of TVET in Solomon Islands are SINU and the network of 40+ Vocational and Rural Training Centres (VRTCs). The VRTCs, as a group, enrol and train the largest number of students and their 'reach' provides opportunities to remote and disadvantaged areas. The universities, IPAM, the recently established Australia Pacific Technical College (APTC) and a small number of private providers are also a source of TVET training. The National Trade Training and Testing (NTTT) unit in MCILI provides assessment services to apprentices and to exiting students from VRTCs and existing workers.

There is very little known about the TVET private provider sector in the Solomon Islands. There is no collated list of private providers and not for profit organisations or of the programs delivered.

Providers of TVET provide statements of completion or attainment to students graduating from their programs however these certificates are not comparable across the sector.

### *Higher Education*

The profile of the higher education includes SINU, University of the South Pacific (USP), Open College of the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), John Coleridge Patteson University, Fulton University, Pacific Adventist University, and Goroka University. There are other providers that may be providing higher education programs such as nursing colleges and theological colleges that issue a testamur or parchment qualification. Without a national qualifications framework and any clear policy on the definition of higher education it is unclear what additional providers are included in this cohort.

### 6.5.3 Legislation

The existing Education Act does not recognise tertiary providers<sup>41</sup> who provide structured technical and vocational education and training and/or higher education and who issue a testamur or qualification parchment. Currently the Act only recognises a 'school' defined as:

'any institution or place at which any secular instruction...is regularly given'. It does not include any institution which 'provides instruction wholly or mainly of a religious character' or 'any institution operated by or under the control of the Solomon Islands government to provide specialised training for periods not exceeding three months in a particular trade or profession, whether on an in-service or pre-service basis'.<sup>42</sup>

This definition clearly excludes IPAM and theological colleges, and does not acknowledge other providers (such as private providers, not for profit providers, NGOs and universities).

The Education Act will include a definition for 'tertiary institution' to incorporate providers of technical and vocational education and training and of higher education.

Tertiary institutions are those providers that plan and deliver education and assessment services that lead to the award of qualifications or components of qualifications in the tertiary sector.

The Education Act will enable recognition of the range of tertiary institutions as providers of that have been approved under national quality assurance arrangements.

Currently, by not recognising tertiary providers, the Education Act by default does not recognise programs conducted by these providers. These programs could be those in the TVET and Higher Education Sector including foundation or bridging programs into higher education institutions.

The Education Act will enable recognition of tertiary programs that have been approved under national quality assurance arrangements.

### 6.5.4 Policy

The strategic framework for tertiary education and training is outlined in a number of key documents:

- Education Strategic Framework 2007–2015;
- National Education Action Plan 2013–2015;
- Education for living: Approved policy on technical, vocational education and training (2005); and
- Policy statement and guidelines for tertiary education in Solomon Islands (2010).

The *Education Strategic Framework 2007–2015* (MEHRD 2007) acknowledges that there is a need to integrate TVET into the formal education system rather than leaving it as a sole responsibility of the rural and vocational training centres. The focus is on the development of skills and competencies

<sup>41</sup> Including vocational and rural training centres, private providers, ministry training centres (such as IPAM), not for profit organisations, NGOs, nursing colleges and theological colleges as well as higher education providers (including universities).

<sup>42</sup> Education Act 1978, pp. 3-4.

required for economic and social development in Solomon Islands. The Framework separates post-secondary education into higher education and TVET.

The *National Education Action Plan 2013–2015* (MEHRD 2013) distinguishes between higher education and TVET and outlines four key strategies that have guided the design of the NEAP 2013–2015. These are: i) strengthening school, Education Authority and Provincial Government planning and management; ii) ensuring professional development of teachers through school-based support and regular school supervision; iii) strengthening partnerships and collaboration with service providers; and, iv) improved data recording and use.

The *Education for living: Approved policy on technical, vocational education and training* (MEHRD 2005) is now an outdated policy but does acknowledge that education is seen as a continuum ranging from the most formalised to the most non-formal.

The *Policy statement and guidelines for tertiary education in Solomon Islands* (2010) by definition excludes TVET from the tertiary sector. However the policy acknowledges the importance of a technical, vocational training system and the need for flexibility and responsiveness to labour market demands which has 'clear links between trades, technical and professional qualifications and workplace'.<sup>43</sup> The *Policy statement and guidelines for tertiary education in Solomon Islands* (MEHRD 2010) recognises that a 'good tertiary system is necessary as it prepares our human resources for the knowledge economy of today. Knowledge and advanced skills are critical determinants of a country's economic growth and standard of living' (p. 7). The policy limits its strategic view of higher education to that of SINU and does not recognise other Solomon Islands providers or international providers such as USP and UPNG.

The *Policy statement and guidelines for tertiary education in Solomon Islands* (MEHRD 2010) needs to revision to ensure that it reflects the strategic direction of the tertiary sector [as defined in this White Paper] including higher education providers beyond that of SINU. The clarity of TVET as a subsector of tertiary education and its role in skilling the Solomon Island workforce is inconsistent in the more recent policies and these documents require review.

### **6.5.5 Tertiary sector issues**

The higher education sector has significant overlap with that of TVET sector including similarity in terms of issues and concerns, as such, both sub sectors are discussed together.

#### *Curriculum, Training and Assessment*

Across the tertiary sector there is no formal or systematic accreditation of achievement standards e.g. curriculum, other than the internal processes at SINU and the other universities.

Within other TVET providers there are no achievement standards (such as national curriculum or national competency standards) to inform the training and assessment of vocational programs.

VRTCs do not have a common program and there are no established training guides to inform training and assessment. Vocational and rural training centres have in earlier years been provided with study guides in relation to key subjects via a European Union funded project through Solomon Islands Association of Rural Training Centres (SIARTC) in 2005; although these are not now consistently used.

The NTTTT Unit undertakes testing of apprenticeships based on training schedules set by the apprenticeship board. It also tests VRTC graduates and existing workers against a small number of outdated ILO competency standards for a few occupations. There are very few apprentices currently tested each year.

Both NTTTT Unit assessments of VRTC graduates and existing workers and the assessments of apprentices are tested on theory and practical application. In universities the focus is on normative testing whereas the vocational rural training centres the focus is more on practical application. At a systems level testing does not form a reliable signal of candidate skills, as there is little standardization in procedures, content or quality of testing, leaving employers to rely on their own

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<sup>43</sup> MEHRD (2010), *Policy statement and guidelines for tertiary education in Solomon Islands*, p.9.

knowledge of the issuing institution to judge the quality of graduates.<sup>44</sup> The universities within Solomon Islands are established through an act of parliament (either in Solomon Islands or in another country) and have self-governing status which includes approval of curricula, conduct of assessments and issuance of qualifications. For Solomon Islands National University there are processes for accreditation and quality assurance of programs which is to involve industry representation in the development and review processes.

The *Policy statement and guidelines for tertiary education in Solomon Islands* (MEHRD 2010) indicates that quality of education provision can be achieved through: international and regional recognition and through learner outcomes focussed curriculum development. However, there is no national system in place to recognise or approve university higher education qualifications nor is there a process to recognise higher education qualifications that may be conducted by other providers.

Therefore a national quality assurance framework that provides confidence in Solomon Islands' qualifications is needed.

### *Providing for and meeting needs of industry*

The aim for the tertiary sector should be to provide quality recognised programs that provide pathways for individuals and meet the needs of the industry. However, the scope of TVET provision at SINU is limited and the VRTC's duplicate programs across the islands. Provision of programs is input driven and relies heavily on precedence and current resources (e.g. staff and equipment) rather than on the labour needs of Solomon Islands.

In Solomon Islands there is limited engagement of industry in the formal development and review of tertiary programs; any community or industry engagement is dependent on the individual initiative of vocational and rural training centres or private providers. SINU within its internal processes require involvement of industry in the design of the qualifications.

The *Policy statement and guidelines for tertiary education in Solomon Islands* (MEHRD 2010) highlights the importance of the higher education sector linking closely to labour market demands in the private and public sector. Given the lack of labour market data and analysis and the lack of a demand driven approach to funding and provision the universities capacity to provide and plan for new programs and monitor existing program is limited.

There are very few sources of information on labour market needs available to tertiary providers to make informed decisions on program provision; sources are limited to a few ad hoc skills-related surveys or studies. In addition, there is very little cohesion or capacity within the tertiary sector to establish a demand driven systems to make the sector more responsive to employers' needs.

Therefore there needs to be structures established in the Solomon Islands that will provide accurate and current information in relation to labour needs. Also strategies need to be in place that will enable a more demand driven system to ensure that the tertiary sector is responsive to the labour market and employers' needs.

### *Staffing*

Under Section 29 (1) of the Education Act, VRTC teachers need to be registered on the Register of Teachers. However, there is no minimum requirement set for teaching staff qualifications and experience. For VRTC teaching staff to be paid by MEHRD they need to be registered with the Teaching Service and be part of the staffing establishment of a centre. SINU and other universities have required level of qualifications for employment and are paid through internal university processes. For private and not for profit providers there are no set requirements.

Performance management of staff is also varied across provider types. For vocational and rural training centres, the requirements for the review of teacher performance are outlined in the *Teacher Appraisal Handbook 2011* (MEHRD 2012). The Handbook notes that the quality of education should be the focus of MEHRD and that the employment of teachers should be that of the EAs. The Handbook proposes that principals/head teachers are to carry out teacher appraisals. It is understood

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<sup>44</sup> SABER, Bateman et al draft 2014.

that these proposals have not been fully or systematically implemented in VRTC's (Bateman et al 2014).

The Inspectorate of the MEHRD undertakes reviews of VRTC teachers; however there have been no teacher reviews since 2011.<sup>45</sup> Universities are responsible for their own staffing requirements and the standards set. There is no uniformity across the universities as to what are the threshold standards for staffing at a higher education provider in Solomon Islands.

There are no set standards for minimum requirements of teachers who will be providing training and assessment of programs accredited under the proposed SIQF which should be addressed in the proposed quality assurance standards.

### *Resources, facilities and equipment*

Providers face continual pressure to ensure facilities and equipment are sufficient and up to date with current industry requirements. Providers require adequate sources of funding to enable them to purchase and maintain facilities and equipment. Currently there is no quality assurance of training providers to ensure that equipment and facilities meet training and industry needs.

Vocational and Rural Training Centres have to be aligned to an EA and then to be registered with MEHRD to receive the school grant and for staff salaries to be paid by MEHRD. The MEHRD minimum requirements for recognition are in draft and their application is loosely applied. These requirements relate to access to undisputed land, relationship with an Education Authority, access to water supply and transport, adequate infrastructure and staff and must have an enrolment of between 75 -100 students, with staff/student ratio of 1:15 or 1:20.<sup>46</sup>

Recent research has noted that at VRTC's there are limited equipment and facilities to undertake the programs currently provided. The minimum standards for VRTC's do not provide a strong basis for quality assurance of provision and these standards do not acknowledge the role of private providers in the TVET sector.<sup>47</sup>

SINU and other university campuses in Solomon Islands are under pressure to provide space for increased student numbers and also face pressure of staff student ratios and access to suitable equipment and facilities.

### *Training and performance data*

There is no consolidated administrative data from tertiary providers for the analysis of provider performance and system trends or to inform policy. Funding is not attached to provider performance.

The government does not require tertiary providers to submit administrative data, nor is there any consolidation of data to analyse provider performance, system trends or to inform policy. There is no requirement of the format for provider data recording and systems for data retention vary from large scale databases in universities to paper based or limited records in VRTC's. Given this, consideration needs to be given to establishing a national database for the retention of completion records of students for qualifications, skills sets and competencies.

IPAM and NTTTT Unit report data within their respective ministry's annual report, but there is no data collected from private providers or NGOs.

VRTC's are required to submit administrative data to be eligible to receive the government grants. There is a low level of VRTC SIEMIS survey returns and a lack of completeness of data.<sup>48</sup> SIEMIS data are at a level where only a cursory system level analysis would be possible. Data is collected on administration of funds reconciliation, salaries and assets but these are rarely used to guide

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<sup>45</sup> Bateman et al draft 2014

<sup>46</sup> MEHRD (20??), Tentative Rural Training Centres Minimum Standard for Registration and Inspection.

<sup>47</sup> Bateman et al draft 2014

<sup>48</sup> Bateman et al draft 2014

investments beyond teacher payments. In addition, operational data are limited to inputs, e.g. number of toilets to students, access to clean water, student class ratios.<sup>49</sup>

Universities report administrative data through their annual reports. There is no requirement to provide data in a consistent format and there is no review or collation at the ministerial level of this data. MEHRD does not report TVET or university enrolment data in Annual Reports or in the Performance Assessment Framework annual reporting process.

### *Flexibility of education and training market*

The TVET system is strongly reliant on Church providers supported financially through government paid teacher salaries and grants. What is in place is one main recognised provider, that is, SINU and 40-odd VRTC's that are aligned to 10 EAs. This situation has led to narrow program offerings and variability of program quality assurance. The few private providers and not for profit providers that provide training are focussed on short course to address immediate needs.

Higher education providers i.e. universities, are managed via their own councils

Given that there are no incentives or a process for private or not for profit tertiary providers to be recognised the flexibility and responsiveness to meet industry needs, which is often a characteristic of smaller providers is lacking.

### *Apprenticeship scheme*

Solomon Islands has in place an apprenticeship scheme. The apprenticeship scheme is outlined in the Labour Act and subsidiary legislation, the Labour (Apprenticeship) Rules, and therefore is not under the remit of the Education Act. The Labour Act and its Rules outline the requirements for the apprenticeship scheme but do not prescribe who is responsible for undertaking the apprenticeship proficiency tests and examinations nor does it prescribe what institutions are responsible for provision of formal training of apprentices.<sup>50</sup>

The MCILI is responsible for the implementation of apprenticeship requirements. The apprenticeship scheme has faced difficulties with closure of businesses and there is a disjunct between what industry needs and the provision of trade programs. There are limited links between the MEHRD and MCILI; this is especially concerning, given that the need to establish a strong Tertiary sector as part of workforce development. Improved management of the apprenticeship scheme in Solomon Islands should be determined based on sound research.

The Education Act through the establishment of the Solomon Islands Tertiary Education Commission will encourage liaison with related Ministries.

The Education Act should include the Solomon Islands Tertiary Education Commission researching international practices on apprenticeship schemes and recommending improved management options and systems.

In addition, the role of MCILI as both a testing centre of apprentices and of VRTC students and existing workers should be clearly within the remit of the quality assurance of the Solomon Islands Qualifications Authority (SIQA) if services are related to or include learning and/or assessment against accredited qualifications, skill sets or components of a qualification. It may be that the role of

<sup>49</sup> Bateman et al draft 2014 World Bank

<sup>50</sup> The Electricity Act (SIG 1996) notes that B Grade licence is available to those who have completed Electrical Trades Course at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education and passed a Trade Test set by the Apprenticeship Board; or to those who have a minimum of five years' experience as an electrical wireman in the electrical trade and have obtained a pass in the Theory and Practical Tests at Final Level of Testing, and has satisfied the requirement set by the National Trade Training and Testing Committee. The Act also notes that an A Grade licence is available to those who have completed an apprenticeship period as an electrician and have carried out electrical wiring work for a total of twelve months after completion of the apprenticeship, or have worked in the electrical trade as an unlicensed wireman for not less than five years (Bateman et al draft 2014).

MCILI as a testing facility could become the role of specific tertiary institutions that have the capacity to ensure integrity of testing, retention of data and access to facilities and equipment.

### *Work attachments/Structured workplace learning*

In addition to the apprenticeship scheme VRTC's include as part of their programs work attachments; these vary between 6 months and 1 year. Currently work attachments are focussed on gaining experience in the workplace rather than being part of structured workplace learning, which is on-the-job training during which a student is expected to master a set of skills or competencies related to an approved program. Such placements can benefit students, providers and employers. Work attachments provide employers with the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the education and development of students and to the development of students' workplace skills. It also enables them to build relationships with providers and teachers; building industry/provider partnerships that provide for local community needs and endeavours.

Currently there is no legislation or regulations or policies that address structured workplace learning as they relate to learning and/or assessments services against non- accredited or accredited qualifications, skill sets or components of qualification. There is no program approval process to ensure work attachments are embedded within the curriculum and program design, to ensure the appropriateness of work attachments and sites, to ensure appropriate age of students (as most of these require boarding away from the provider), any payment requirements, any insurance requirements and to ensure the rights and safety of students.

The Education Act will include key requirements related to structured workplace learning to ensure appropriateness of these work attachments and the safety and welfare of students.

### **6.5.6 Funding and Incentives**

The Solomon Islands Government contributes the majority of operational funding and scholarships in the tertiary sector.

The main source of funding for TVET is through SIG and donor funding, plus training provider income generating activities. For VRTC's the MEHRD pays registered teaching staff salaries and also allocates a school grant based on the numbers of students at the VRTC, and whether it is a day or boarding centre; a general administration grant; and, a grant for VRTC's that are designated as remote<sup>51</sup>. The Ministry provides grants to Education Authorities (EAs) and may also provide funding for specific projects. The VRTC's rely heavily on government staff salaries and the government grant as well as income generating activities to fund TVET training. Work attachments are the main form of in-kind contributions to training.

For SINU the identified funds from SIG are listed as a line item in the Recurrent and the Development Budgets. Along with student fees, SINU receives monies from SIG in relation to apprenticeship scholarships, constituency scholarships and ministry scholarships. A small proportion of funds may be gained through sale of products and services, e.g. fee for service training. SINU does not disaggregate data according to TVET and higher education but by school.

The MCILI through their budget maintain the apprenticeship scheme and undertakes proficiency assessments of completing apprentices, National Trade Testing and Training (NTTT) assessments for exiting VRTC's students and for training support and assessment of trade related employees for which students pay an assessment fee. The MCILI also provides scholarships for apprentices (from second year onwards).

For private providers the main source of income is from student fees. However, other sources could include donations and enterprise in kind contributions, such as work attachments.

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<sup>51</sup> See MEHRD (2012) *Updated Policy Statement and Guidelines for Grants to Schools in Solomon Islands*, for the formula indicating amounts recommended for grants to schools. See p. 24 of the Policy Statement.



Solomon Island Government funds a contribution fee to USP and through scholarships; there are no SIG payments to University of Papua New Guinea other than scholarships.

The SIG government has no control over program provision at any of the education providers, and sets no targets or incentives for the performance of public providers such as SINU, or for publicly funded programs. Universities follow formal internal procedures for opening and closing programs, SINU for example makes decisions about course offerings based on the availability of funding and equipment, student interest and informal employer feedback. SINU has recently developed processes to ensure that new qualifications align with the proposed SIQF and employer needs.

There are no other sources for funding tertiary education in Solomon Islands, such as a national training fund, loan schemes, bond schemes and tax incentives or rebates.

A 'training fund' is a stock or flow of financing outside normal government budgetary channels dedicated to developing productive work skills. The overall purpose of training funds is to raise the productivity, competitiveness and incomes of enterprises and individuals by providing them with needed knowledge and skills. Most training funds are financed by levies on enterprises, but may also be based on public subsidies or donor financing. Countries such as Fiji have established a levy scheme to fund training.<sup>52</sup>

There are no schemes that support contributions from students, such as loan schemes (which are not generally repaid until after a student has graduated and received employment), bond schemes (which require minimum periods of employment in the targeted fields). Countries such as Fiji have established a loans scheme to cover the cost of tuition.

The Education Act will include as a function of SITEC to research and/or implement options for establishing a training fund, loan schemes or bond schemes.

Currently there are no incentives for tertiary education providers or enterprises to encourage education provision to meet labour market needs and to provide for a flexible and responsive tertiary education sector.

There is no incentive based funding to current providers to encourage the development and provision of programs to meet industry needs or to encourage linkages and pathways with other programs at other providers. Nor are there any financial or non-financial incentives to encourage provider performance, such as retention rates, employment rates of graduates, gender equity ratios.

There are no other incentives such as tax incentives or a tax rebate system for enterprises that offer or participate in formal work attachments or structured work place learning, sponsorship or apprenticeship schemes.

The Education Act will include as a key function of the SITEC the capacity to provide incentivised funding for program delivery.

The Education Act will include as a function of SITEC to research options for establishing a tax incentives or tax rebates for companies that offer or participate in formal work attachments or structured work place learning, sponsorship or apprenticeship schemes.

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<sup>52</sup> Johanson (2009).

### 6.5.7 Scholarships and Student Support Schemes

Scholarships and ‘sponsorships’ in the Solomon Islands are a complex mix of various strategies to provide access to education.<sup>53</sup> Scholarships include:

- Donor scholarships (Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Republic of China);
- SIG scholarships (which includes constituency scholarships direct from Ministers, scholarships those through various ministries such MEHRD and MCILI including apprenticeship scholarships);
- industry sponsorship; and
- APTC scholarships.

SIG scholarship funding has being fraught with questionable funding practices and a disproportionate amount of funding for scholarships relative to funding for the rest of the tertiary sector. Solomon Islands government provides an overwhelming proportion of the tertiary sector budget to providing scholarships, which in 2011 was calculated as 71.7 per cent (including donor contributions).<sup>54</sup> Of these scholarships almost none related to TVET programs.<sup>55</sup> The high proportion of funds allocated to scholarships without a link to labour market needs or access and equity targets has compromised the Government’s financial ability to support and develop tertiary infrastructure, engage in program and resource development, and provide training and professional development of teaching staff.<sup>56</sup>

Most recently the draft Tertiary Scholarships Policy (draft March 2014) outlines the proposed changes in relation to scholarships. The policy aims to clearly articulate to all stakeholders, the strategic directions for the planning, funding and management of all SIG tertiary education and training scholarships. The principal objective of the Policy is to provide the authority and framework to enable merit based access by Solomon Islanders to tertiary level studies that will directly contribute to the economic and social development of the country. To achieve this objective, the Policy is to be implemented without compromise or external interference.

The Education Act will provide for a transparent and effective scholarship scheme which is free of external influences which undermine a merit based process and is linked to performance targets and labour market needs.

Various ministries, such as MCILI also issue scholarships to individuals and to apprentices. It is proposed that the management of scholarships provided by other Ministries should be rationalised within the role of the future SITEC to ensure that issuance of scholarships reflect Solomon Islands labour market needs.

The Education Act should enable all scholarships (e.g. constituency scholarships, all Ministry scholarships) to be managed by the SITEC.

### 6.5.8 Inclusive Education (Equality, Special Needs, Gender Equity)

Geography, gender, disability and the rural-urban divide are some of the significant factors that account for levels of inequity throughout the country. The Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015 (MEHRD 2007) outlines as one of its key outcomes increased access and equity for all groups. Further, the *National Education Action Plan (NEAP) 2013–2015* (MEHRD 2013) focus on equity within TVET includes increasing the number of registered providers, expanding course selection, improving

<sup>53</sup> Bateman et al draft (2014)

<sup>54</sup> Gannicott (2012)

<sup>55</sup> Bateman et al draft (2014)

<sup>56</sup> Bateman et al draft (2014)

infrastructure of VRTC's, and improving access for female students.<sup>57</sup> One of the aims of the *Policy statement and guidelines for tertiary education in Solomon Islands* (MEHRD 2010) is to ensure equitable access for all including men and women from all provinces and students with disabilities.

There are no current strategies (including additional funding for disability centres) in place to support these outcomes. Although universities and other providers may be collecting student profile data there is no requirement for reporting on any such indicators nor is there any incentives to ensure that any benchmarks will be met.

There are limited pathways available for TVET students to progress to other types of programs including higher education programs; several parts of the education system are still disconnected and there have been no significant system wide efforts to facilitate the recognition of prior learning of formal, non-formal or informal learning.

The Education Act should recognise that equitable access to education and training in the tertiary sectors and strong pathways across subsectors should be encouraged through a range of options and strategies.

#### **6.5.9 Overseas/international students**

Tertiary providers have from time to time international students undertaking programs within Solomon Islands. International students in most cases may be at a disadvantage in terms of reimbursement of fees and resolution of student complaints related to training and assessment provision. Therefore provision needs to be included in the Act to ensure that the interests of international students are protected by:

- ensuring that appropriate consumer protection mechanisms exist, including protection of student fees; and
- providing for dealing effectively and efficiently with student complaints and appeals.

The Act shall include provision for protection of international student interests in relation to consumer protection including protection of student fees and providing for complaints and appeals processes.

#### **6.5.10 Quality Assurance and accountability**

The *Policy statement and guidelines for tertiary education in Solomon Islands* (MEHRD 2010) outlines quality provision of tertiary education as a key principle to determine the strategies for planning and implementation. It confirms the approach that institutions need to be of 'high quality, responsive and relevant to Solomon Island needs and culture, provide value for money, are accountable to their stakeholders, are supported in terms of their efforts to improve, and are responsive to the tertiary education vision and goals' (p. 8).

As self-accrediting institutions, universities have in place to varying degrees quality assurance processes. The Solomon Islands National University for example has a Quality Unit responsible for the oversight of university policies and procedures; functions include internal audit of schools and programs.

Although the universities with Solomon Islands have their own internal quality assurance processes, as higher education providers the expectation of the sector internationally requires them to meet expected standards. Quality assurance networks such as the Asia Pacific Quality Network and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education have minimum standards for authorities to be able to participate in the network.

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<sup>57</sup> MEHRD, 2013, *National Education Action Plan 2013-2015*

As in many countries, universities and their programs are subject to external review or audit. Currently there is no requirement by the universities to report externally to stakeholders on these arrangements.

The government does not require any TVET providers such as VRTC's, private providers, licensing or testing bodies to meet implicit or explicit quality standards or performance targets, nor does it provide financial or non-financial incentives for provider performance.

There are no processes in place for the design and development of achievement standards (e.g. curriculum, competency standards) and there are no processes in place for the registration and monitoring of providers.

The Inspectorate of the MEHRD undertakes whole of school reviews of VRTC's.<sup>58</sup> However, there is no independent body that reviews or monitors the expenditure of government funding or undertakes research on policy directions or trends in the sector.

MEHRD does not at this stage have a robust process for auditing or checking of data to ensure accuracy of training provision. There is no consolidated administrative data from training providers for the analysis of provider performance and system trends or to inform policy.

The Education Act should enable the SIQA to quality assure all tertiary providers that issue SIQF qualifications or skill sets, and trade testing/licences; including but not limited to universities, VRTC's, private providers, licensing and/or testing bodies.

#### **6.5.11 Research**

The *Policy statement and guidelines for tertiary education in Solomon Islands* (MEHRD 2010) notes increasing research capacity as a core function of quality provision of tertiary education. Research could be defined as the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative.

In many countries targeted funding is provided to universities as governments recognise the contribution that science and research make towards driving innovation and to addressing the social, economic, technological and environmental challenges confronted by communities. Funding could take two forms:

- supply driven approach through such strategies as research block grants; and
- demand driven approach through research and development tax incentives (e.g. businesses).

Currently Solomon Islands government does not fund research opportunities for universities or enterprises.

The Education Act will include in SITEC's functions the option to fund education research.

#### **6.5.12 Policy directions**

##### *National Human Resource Development*

It could be argued that an integrated TVET/Higher Education is the basis of a high performing tertiary sector for the Solomon Islands and should:

- include a national system with strong regional synergies;
- seamlessly cover all sectors of education and training;
- be flexible and responsive and measurably aligned to the labour market;

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<sup>58</sup> Bateman et al draft 2014

- have industry leadership in relation to policy, strategy, achievement standards and assuring education and training services meet industry needs (i.e. training verification);
- exceed labour market expectations and supply for skills demand;
- be consistent with international best practice;
- embrace quality assurance as a means of producing better outcomes;
- integrate planning and funding practices;
- have sub sectors that communicate and work together;
- bring together the fundamental building blocks of a seamless system of education and training; and
- administer an equitable scholarships program that is aligned with national human resource needs.

The *National Development Strategy 2011-2020* (MDPAC 2011) embodies the aspirations and hopes of the people of Solomon Islands with the overarching theme – ‘To build Better Lives for all Solomon Islanders’. The National Objectives are long term in focus and are at national level, and include Objective 4: ‘to ensure that all Solomon Islanders have access to quality education and for the country to adequately and sustainably meet its manpower needs’.

Government leadership on workforce development comes primarily from MEHRD and MDPAC. MEHRD every three years develops a National Education Action Plan (NEAP) for implementing measures to accomplish goals laid out in the Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015. The most recent NEAP runs through to 2015 and calls for the expansion of private TVET places and subjects taught, creating clear pathways for TVET students through the creation of an NQF, and improving school-based management practices.

MEHRD and MDPAC have collaborated in the *National Human Resource Development Plan 2013-2015* (NHRDTP) and along with the Policy Statement and Guidelines Tertiary Education in the Solomon Islands<sup>59</sup> form the policy basis for workforce development. These two policies endeavour to: 1) create institutional mechanisms to enable more collaborative workforce development strategy making and enable clearer articulation of workforce development inputs to economic development, and 2) create management structures to help guide the roll-out of Solomon Islands’ planned national qualifications framework. The NHRDTP also seeks to foster greater attention to entrepreneurship, the informal economy and labour mobility.<sup>60</sup>

The MEHRD aims to establish two key authorities to manage the alignment of education opportunities with workforce development and to ensure the quality of tertiary education and training provision:

- Solomon Islands Tertiary Education Commission; and
- Solomon Islands Qualifications Authority.

### *Tertiary Education Commission*

The challenge facing the Solomon Islands tertiary sector is to make a major contribution to the transformation of the national economy through more relevant and innovative approaches to the planning, funding and regulation of the tertiary sector complimented by new approaches to national curriculum design and program accreditation. Fundamental to this objective is the active engagement and participation of the private sector; i.e. industry, commerce and the broader business community, where productive enterprises, engaged in high-value-added activities, offer attractive career opportunities to suitably skilled local and regional people.

Central to the *National Education Action Plan (NEAP) 2013–2015* (MEHRD 2013) directions is a strong and transparent alignment between the growth of the economy and the skills match of the people who work in it.

Accordingly if the economy needs transforming so too does the tertiary sector to ensure the constant alignment between skills development and related employment oriented education and training.

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<sup>59</sup> Known from here on as the Tertiary Education Policy.

<sup>60</sup> Bateman et al draft 2014 World Bank.

The demands of the labour market in a developing and diversifying economy cannot easily be segregated into qualifications, skills sets or artificial levels of academic versus applied skills. Internationally, much time has been wasted at government level over the question of ownership of individual sectors within an education and training system. Put plainly, industry and employers do not care about such matters and are only really interested in the outcomes and performance of the graduates from the system and how they can contribute to the economic health of their enterprise or business.

National Education Action Plan (NEAP) 2013–2015 (MEHRD 2013) identifies the need for a new and more strategic approach to raise the standards and performance in schools, vocational institutions and universities. The NEAP 2013-2015 provides an additional context to that objective in that there is a compelling argument the education and training ‘system’ as an ‘entity’ should provide the vehicle for better performance and therefore outcomes from tertiary level education and training in Solomon Islands.

A tertiary sector that can respond quickly to the needs of the labour market are ones that have fewer sectoral divides, i.e. between TVET and higher education, have fewer layers of bureaucracy to navigate when making crucial funding decisions, are at arm’s length to government intervention and leverage off strong public and private sector partnerships.

The Education Act will ensure an integrated tertiary sector, enacted by clear lines of public accountability through an agency that has strong links with the private sector and is independent from government, i.e. A Tertiary Education Commission (SITEC).

The tertiary education and training aspects of the Education Act (2014) will be enabled through the Solomon Islands Tertiary Education Commission (SITEC), a statutory authority created by and responsible to Parliament through the Minister for MEHRD. SITEC will exercise independence and autonomy in its governance and operation while reporting through the Minister.

The responsibilities for SITEC include:

1. The strategic objective of the commission is to promote, plan, develop, coordinate and where appropriate fund (or purchase training) tertiary education and training in the Solomon Islands. It will ensure the maintenance of a high quality and internationally recognised tertiary system;
2. Responsibility for the overall budget, including infrastructure grants and funding allocations, incentives and/or purchasing arrangements with the various tertiary providers. It will also promote quality teaching, scholarships, research and be concerned for community services;
3. Responsibility and accountability for the management of the SIG scholarship program and the implementation of the policy (and associate procedure) through the delegated authority of the Minister to the SITEC Commissioner;
4. Responsibility for researching the potential of a training fund, loan schemes, bond schemes to support targeted workforce development education and training;
5. Responsibility for researching the potential tax incentives or rebates to support Solomon Islanders to access education and training; and
6. Accountability to the Minister for ensuring budget and performance compliance as agreed from time to time between the SIG and development partners. Similarly the SITEC will be accountable for compliance with the requirements of the Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MOFT) and the Office of the Auditor General (OAG).

As a Commission and by virtue of this status, it is proposed that SITEC be overseen by an independent Advisory Board to ensure it can operate at arm’s length to the MEHRD and as far as possible, to government.

It is anticipated the Board's chair will report directly to the Minister for MEHRD and be responsible for the overarching strategic governance of SITEC. The SITEC Commissioner will be responsible for the day to day leadership, management and internal governance of SITEC and be accountable for its performance against its core functions.

The Board is the peak advisory body advising the Minister on the awarding and funding of all categories of government funded scholarships for pre-and in-service training and will consult widely with relevant sectors of government, industry, commerce and business to ensure the allocation of all tertiary places is demand driven and merit based.

If possible the Board would be constituted as a private sector Board with government representation while still being accountable to the Minister. In keeping with the philosophy of an industry led training system, the chair would be drawn from industry and preferably be one of the country's leading private sector CEO's. Membership of the Board will be selected by Commissioner of SITEC and advice the Minister who will in consultation with the Attorney General Chambers appoint the Board. In addition to an independent Chair, representation will include:

- Church and community leaders (x 2);
- Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industries (x 1);
- SIQA CEO (x 1);
- Government ministries, including: MEHRD, MDPAC (NHRDTC), MCILI, MPS and MOFT (x 5); and
- Commissioner of SITEC (non-voting).

There are to be no sitting fees or similar payments to members of the Board. However, travelling and other expenses may be fixed by the Minister from time to time.

SITEC will be adequately staffed through a Secretariat to undertake the following roles:

- Set national tertiary strategy and high level policy;
- Negotiate with the MOFT for funding allocations to the sector;
- Liaise with industry for strategic labour market intelligence, sponsorships and funding support;
- Oversight the development of the annual education and training plan;
- Decide funding appropriations for all aspects of SITEC's business;
- Have governance and management responsibilities for the prioritisation and allocation of SIG scholarships;
- Sign off on SITEC performance targets and plans with public and private providers;
- Determine funding appropriations for incentivised, contestable and other tendered training programs as aligned to the national education and training plan;
- Assuring education and training services meet industry needs (i.e. training verification);
- Sponsor tertiary enhancement projects from time to time;
- Research options to fund or incentivise education and training, such as training levies/funds, loan schemes, bond schemes and tax incentives or tax rebates;
- Liaise with NEB on educational matters, particularly those that relate to senior secondary schooling and tertiary sector and their relationship to meeting workforce needs;
- Liaise with, where appropriate, with the SI Qualifications Authority; and
- Commission Industry Skills Advisory Groups. Industry Skills Advisory Groups shall be commissioned as required through SITEC to provide advice to SITEC in relation to:
  - Labour market demand;
  - Annual skills plan;
  - Training verification;
  - Development and review of national achievement standards, e.g. national competency standards or national skill sets or national qualifications; and
  - Supporting SIQA in quality assurance arrangements.

The Advisory Groups shall be drawn from relevant stakeholders and technical advisors, and act as sub committees of SITEC.

SITEC will liaise, where appropriate, with the SI Qualifications Authority in relation to:

1. tertiary qualification and quality assurance frameworks;
2. development, maintenance and review of national achievement standards including competency standards and qualifications or skill sets; and
3. monitoring and compliance strategies and continuous improvement processes related to provider registration and education and training provision.

Separating SIQA from the commissioning of the development, maintenance and review of national achievement standards including competency standards and qualifications or skill sets allows the authority to take an independent role in the accreditation process.

SITEC will also commission the SIQA to provide independent monitoring and audit services in relation to validating performance targets related to funded education and training and assessment activity.

### *SI Qualifications Authority*

A national qualifications framework is a classification device for ordering qualifications, and can only function supported by other quality assurance processes. Strong quality assurance is critical to confidence in the quality of qualifications. To manage a national qualifications framework and associated national quality assurance framework, it is proposed that the Solomon Islands Qualifications Authority be established.

The Solomon Islands Government is committed to the development of a national qualifications framework, the Solomon Islands Qualifications Framework (SIQF). The SIQF is one of the key national instruments that will contribute to improving the quality of education and training in the country, as well as improving knowledge and skills of its work force in both formal and non-formal subsectors of the economy.

The Draft Statement on the Solomon Islands Qualifications Framework (June 2013) indicates that:

- The SIQF will be responsive to the ever-changing global environment and promotes the development of a nation that is committed to lifelong learning; and
- The SIQF will enhance flexible pathways to future educational opportunities, employment options or improved livelihood in the communities.

The proposed Solomon Islands Qualifications Framework (draft 17/06/2013) addresses the following sectors: higher education, vocational, school and community based. The SIQF has the following features:

- 10 level framework based on 3 domains (knowledge, skills and application); and
- A series of qualification titles and descriptors accompanied by a volume of learning allocation<sup>61</sup>.

Although the SIQF draft relies heavily on the Pacific Qualifications Framework, the Pacific Qualifications Framework is a regional framework and cannot emphasise features that would normally be included in a national qualifications framework. The SIQF draft document needs further refinement to emphasise recognition of skills through other pathways such as recognition of prior learning and credit transfer, and to ensure that certification processes are clear.

The SIQF also includes as an adjunct to the qualifications framework those features that appear in the Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards<sup>62</sup>, which are:

- professional licensing and occupational standards (PLO; )
- traditional knowledge and indigenous skills; and
- national and regional standards for basic skills in literacy, numeracy and life skills.

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<sup>61</sup> Qualifications include: Certificate levels 1 – 4, Diplomas (levels 5 & 6), Bachelor degree, Graduate certificate, Graduate diploma, Bachelor with honours, post graduate certificate, post graduate diploma, masters degree, doctoral degree.

<sup>62</sup> This Register is not a qualifications framework but a register of various information e.g. list of recognised qualifications, traditional knowledge and skill competencies, professional licensing and standards information, and a set of literacy and numeracy benchmarks.



There is little information as to why or how these three additional features shall be addressed within the Solomon Islands Qualifications Framework or the Solomon Islands qualifications system and will require further development and enhancement under the SIQA.

There are three separate draft documents to support the SIQF:

- Solomon Islands Quality Standard;
- Guidelines for Accreditation of Programmes; and
- Guidelines for Provider Registration.

The *SI Quality Standard* outlines the key standards for registration of providers but does not outline the sector scope of the standard or such critical requirements as minimum qualifications of teachers and trainers. In addition, the Standard does not provide a link to the SIQF – the key underpinning purpose of the Standard is to ensure confidence in SIQF qualifications. The *Guidelines for Accreditation of Programmes* outlines key quality elements and processes for accreditation of qualifications. This document assumes a limited process for accreditation of qualifications and includes some inconsistent references. The *Guidelines for Provider Registration* outlines the process for registration and registration criteria; however it does not allow for two stage process (i.e. recognition and registration) and the again does not include critical benchmark standards.

The SIQF and associated quality assurance framework require further refinement, and once established will require monitoring and review to ensure currency and appropriateness to changing needs and circumstances of the education and training sector.

To provide for flexibility and responsiveness to changing needs the SIQF and the related quality assurance framework should be promulgated in associated regulations and/or policy, rather than in the Act.

To implement and manage the SIQF and associated quality assurance framework there needs to be an independent authority or body. The independence and the level of power of the authority are critical to the future confidence of Solomon Island qualifications.

An independent statutory authority i.e. Solomon Islands Qualifications Authority shall be established through the Act to oversee the development, implementation and management of the national qualifications framework and related quality assurance framework.

The SIQA shall be the authority for quality assuring SIQF qualifications and recognised/registered institutions to ensure confidence in SIQF qualifications nationally and internationally.

This authority shall be independent statutory authority created by and responsible to Parliament through the Minister. SIQA will exercise independence and autonomy in its quality assurance role while reporting to the Minister. The scope of the authority is focussed on the tertiary sector and for all providers registered and qualifications accredited through its powers. The Board is the peak advisory body advising the Minister on policy directions of the tertiary education in relation to:

- qualifications frameworks;
- quality assurance frameworks;
- sector issues, including quality assurance; and
- international education and liaison, including mutual recognition and student mobility.

SIQA needs the authority to:

- approve tertiary institutions, monitor and audit institutions, sanction poor practice (including suspension and cancellation);<sup>63</sup> and
- approve and monitor achievement standards national or locally developed by tertiary institutions or through SITEC (including qualifications and skills sets, and components of qualifications).<sup>64</sup>

The SIQA shall:

- monitor and report to SIG and tertiary sector stakeholders on the activities, overall resourcing and performance of the tertiary sector in relation to national strategic goals for social, economic and cultural development;
- monitor and report to SIG and tertiary sector stakeholders on the findings, monitoring or evaluations conducted;
- promote links and pathways between the tertiary sector and other education sectors;
- promote links and engagement with international agencies in relation the SIQF and related quality assurance framework;
- promote quality assurance in non-formal sector programs;
- promote linkages with relevant national, regional and international stakeholders and agencies to facilitate the international recognition of Solomon Islands' qualifications and to provide for the recognition of international qualifications;
- liaise with NEB on educational and quality matters, particularly those that relate to tertiary sector;
- liaise with SITEC on educational matters and quality, particularly those that relate to tertiary sector;
- monitor and report to SITEC on the funded provider performance as determined by SITEC and verifying training and assessment activity in relation to funding by SITEC; and
- be subject to external review via collaborative international quality assurance networks.

The SIQA shall have sufficient staff to operationalise its roles and responsibilities, including:

- development, implementation and maintenance of national qualifications framework, the SIQF;
- development, implementation and maintenance of the associated quality assurance framework for the accreditation of qualifications or skill sets under the remit of the SIQF;
- development, implementation and maintenance of the associated quality assurance framework for recognition and registration of tertiary institutions and licensing and/or testing bodies<sup>65</sup>;
- monitoring of quality education and training and assessment provision, including audit and moderation processes;
- provide policy, guidelines or advice in relation to quality assurance issues related to accredited qualifications, skills sets and components of qualifications, including setting fees, work attachments/structured workplace learning, assessment, audit and moderation processes;
- maintaining registers of recognised/registered tertiary providers and licensing bodies and accredited qualifications, of professional bodies or associations, of audit activity, and where appropriate of persons recognised by their relevant professional association;
- maintain (with input from tertiary providers) a student database for qualifications, skill sets and competencies achieved. Data will be recorded in conjunction with tertiary providers (excluding universities and those that have demonstrated capacity to maintain records for more than 30 years);

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<sup>63</sup> This is defined as registration. This includes trade testing centres that include learning and/or assessment services against accredited qualifications, skill sets or components of a qualification. Sanctions would also include powers to sanction organisations/providers not registered or approved to deliver nationally recognised qualifications/skill sets who claim otherwise.

<sup>64</sup> This is defined as accreditation.

<sup>65</sup> This is to be a two stage approach similar to Samoa and Fiji. It allows providers to be listed with the SIQA as meeting minimum standards but not to provide accredited SIQF qualifications. Registered providers include those that fully meet all the quality standards for provision of specific qualifications or skill sets. Currently the draft Quality Standard does not allow this two stage approach.

- provide advice to the Minister and to the tertiary sector on findings and implications arising from research; and
- make recommendations to the Minister with respect to issues consistent with its functions including special projects.

If possible the Advisory Board would be constituted as a private sector Board with government representation while still being accountable to the Minister. Membership of the Advisory Board will be selected by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry and/or the Minister, who will in consultation with the Attorney General Chambers appoint the Board. The Board members shall appoint a Chief Executive Officer as manager of the Authority. The Board membership includes:

- SITEC Commissioner;
- a representative of the Ministry selected by the Minister;
- a representative of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration selected by the Permanent Secretary of that Ministry;
- a representative from civil society selected by the Permanent Secretary;
- a representative of higher education institutions selected by the Permanent Secretary;
- a representative of vocational education and training institutions selected by the Permanent Secretary;
- a representative of a theological institutions selected by the Permanent Secretary; and
- CEO of SIQA (non-voting).

There are to be no sitting fees or similar payments to members of the Board. However, travelling and other expenses may be fixed by the Minister from time to time.

It is critical in the role of the Authority that decisions of registration or providers and accreditation of achievement standards are not compromised in any way to ensure confidence in Solomon Island qualifications. Much of the transparency of the SIQA processes will be documented in accompanying regulations and policy to ensure that the decisions made at operational level are transparent and not compromised.

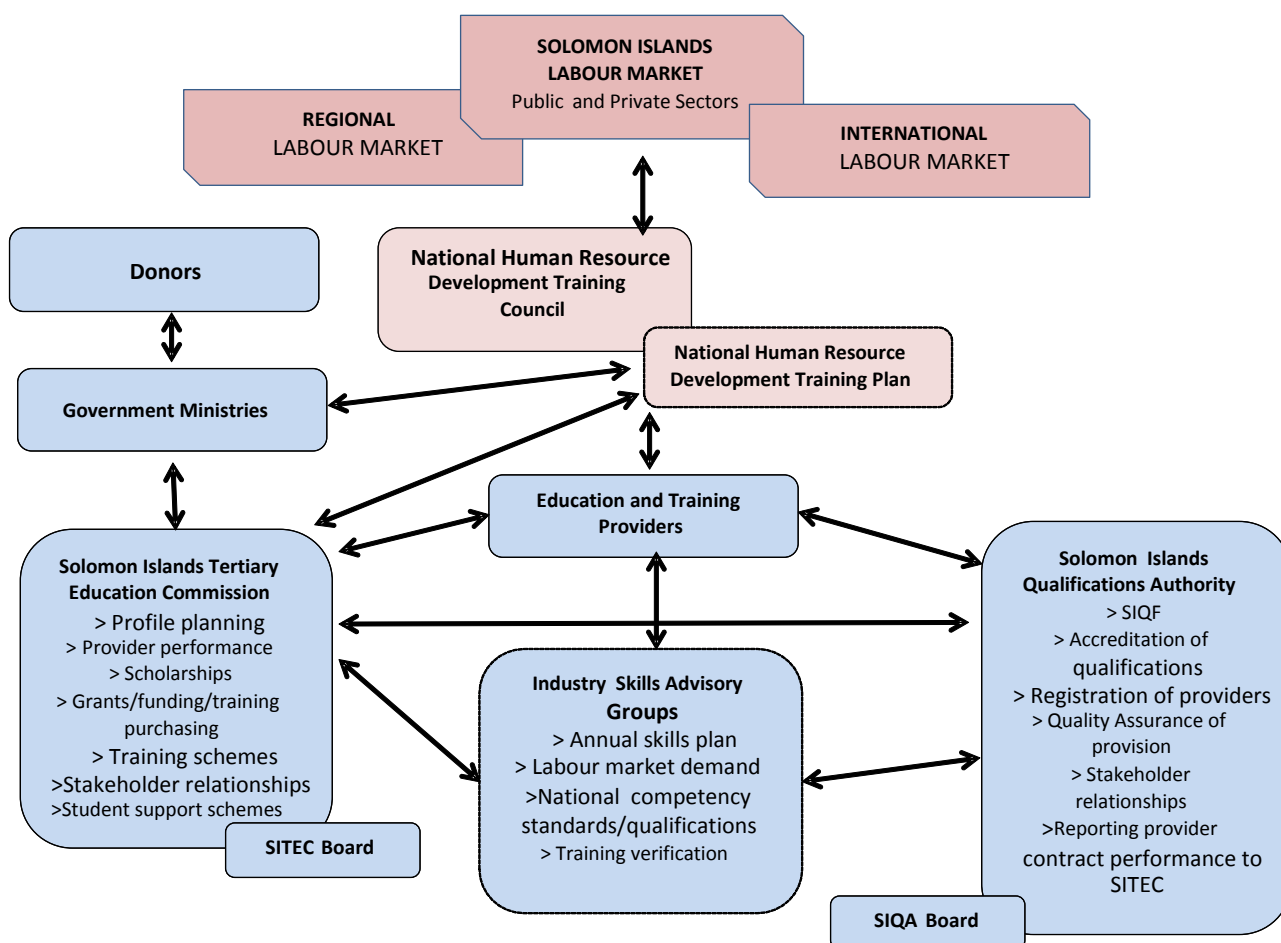
To ensure independent operations, the Authority will appoint a CEO with the power to undertake all the functions of the Authority. The SIQA CEO will be responsible for the day to day leadership, management and internal governance of SIQA and be accountable for its performance against its core functions.

The Authority will have the capacity to commission committees, sub committees and subject matter experts to assist in undertaking its function and regulatory decision making.

In addition, the legislation will ensure that the SIQA has the authority to audit tertiary institutions and accredited programs to ensure that quality standards are met and will continue to be met. This requires the legislation to enable access to premises, documentation, facilities and staff, and the authority to obtain information. In turn, it will also require tertiary institutions to facilitate such processes.

Figure 2 outlines the profile of the tertiary sector bodies (SITEC and SIQA) and their interrelationships with other bodies, donors and stakeholders within the context of workforce development.

**Figure 2: Interrelationships of relevant agencies and bodies**



## 6.6 Adult and community education

Within Solomon Islands there are a range of providers of non-formal and informal learning, including, NGOs, community based training centres, church missions and some industry bodies. The adult and community education sector plays an important role in developing Solomon Islanders, especially those who are underprivileged, to receive compensatory education and training within their community setting to develop literacy and numeracy skills, to build employment opportunities, and to develop capacity and enhance sustainability of communities.

Adult or community based programs are intended principally for adults and community groups and include general, vocational and basic education, as well as recreation, leisure and personal enrichment programs. These programs aim to support community needs and for individual provide for return to study options, improved literacy and numeracy skills, learning new skills and broadening employment options possibly in the informal economy.

As adult and community education is based within the non-formal and informal sector it is currently unregulated. However, the Education Act should acknowledge this sector and provide the avenue for regulation if required. SITEC should be provided with the avenue to fund programs within this sector if required.

The Minister of Education in 2013 has required that MEHRD give greater emphasis to community education to improve opportunities for adults who have not been able to access quality learning opportunities in their life. Not only will this improve future life opportunities but it will also enhance feelings of self-esteem and self-worth. In addition, the Minister wants to ensure there are greater opportunities for parents and communities to assist their children's readiness for school. Research shows that parents who are themselves literate have children who do better at school.

Consequently, MEHRD is in the process of undertaking a study to identify the best ways to enhance community education opportunities in Solomon Islands that will inform future policy development and implementation,

The Education Act will acknowledge the adult and community education sector and provide an avenue for future regulation if required.

## **PART 7: THE SOLOMON ISLANDS TEACHING SERVICE**

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### **7.1 The Teaching Service**

The quality, morale and status of the Teaching Service are of central importance to the nation's aspirations to develop a high quality education system. Teachers are central to this educational goal and the teaching profession must be positioned to attract teachers of high calibre and commitment.

Teachers have made a staunch contribution to the development of Solomon Islands. The contributions of the nation's past and present leaders to the political, social, economic, religious and cultural development of the nation attest to the service of teachers in educating the nation's leaders. It is important therefore that the teaching service continues to attract talented teachers and that the profession continues to be professionally rewarding to serving teachers. This section of the White Paper intends to ensure that the status and integrity of teachers and the teaching service are enhanced and maintained in order to attract applicants, both male and female, of high quality.

#### **7.1.1 Establishment of the Solomon Islands Teaching Service**

The Solomon Islands Teaching Service, the Teaching Service, boasts the largest labour force of public officers, with more than 9,000 registered teachers across ECE, primary and secondary and including VRTC's. The Teaching Service also has governance and management systems and mechanisms that have been established to ensure its efficient and effective operations. Examples of these are the Teaching Service Commission, established through the Constitution with powers which include appointment, removal and exercise of disciplinary control or hearing of appeals of teachers; The Teaching Service Division, which serves as the secretariat and administrative arm of the Teaching Service Commission; and the Teaching Service Handbook, which in effect is the teacher's manual regulating for a wide range of issues related to teachers and the teaching profession, including terms and conditions of service of teachers.

The existence of the Teaching Service is assumed. The current Act simply refers to the Teaching Service but nowhere in the Act was the Teaching Service established.

Given the central role of the Teaching Service in the education sector, the Education Act shall make specific provision for the establishment of the Solomon Islands Teaching Service.

#### **7.1.2 Registration of Teachers**

Registration is of paramount importance to the Teaching Service. Section 29(1) of the current Act requires that only registered teachers can teach in the country's schools. This implies registration prior to employment as teachers and places a legal requirement on the Permanent Secretary to ensure registration of teachers prior to their appointment and subsequent deployment to schools. The experience of Solomon Islands teachers has been contrary to this: most teachers are not registered prior to their employment but rather are appointed and later registered through their employing Education Authority.

Similarly, even though section 30 of the Act clearly provides for application for registration to the Permanent Secretary, this has not been the practice and, there is no prior registration of teachers. This needs to be addressed through awareness raising with education authorities and education students at universities.

To avoid non-compliance with the requirement for registration prior to employment but ensure as far as practicable that only qualified teachers are recruited, consideration should be given to the creation of a lesser level of registration that applies automatically to teaching graduates. Such graduates could then have a period of time in which to apply for full registration but would not be prevented from being employed in the meantime.

Presently, teacher registration is compulsory only for teachers serving in primary and secondary education and those whose remuneration and terms and conditions are covered under the Teaching Service e.g. vocational and rural training centres. This is limited in scope as the landscape for education and training has changed in recent years. This will require widening of the requirements for

teacher registration to include early childhood care and education and the proposed provincial colleges but excluding other tertiary providers such as universities, theological colleges and private providers.

The registration of teachers shall not include those in the tertiary sector, including those that provide formal accredited Solomon Islands Qualification Framework accredited programs under the remit of the proposed Solomon Islands Qualification Authority. In a number of countries, e.g. Tonga, registration applies to all educators, teachers and trainers. Minimum qualifications for trainers and educators in the tertiary sector will be established under the proposed Solomon Islands Quality Authority.

Accompanying regulations of the Education Act will provide for minimum qualifications such as academic and teaching qualifications, police and health check, in order for an applicant to be registered as a teacher for early childhood care and education, primary and secondary sectors.

Section 6(a) of the Act provides for the National Education Board to advise the Minister on matters concerning the operation and development of the education system. It makes no explicit mention of advice pertaining to the quality, calibre and capacity of teachers but should do so.

The Teaching Service Handbook provides for provisional registration for 'qualified' teachers and newly graduated trained teachers who are on probation. 'Qualified' teachers have a trades or specialist qualification without a teaching qualification. These are vocationally qualified but not trained teachers. The qualifications for trained teachers are contained in the Teaching Service Handbook.

The Teaching Service Handbook provides for a registration process through a registration form (Appendix K), and it also provides for minimum academic qualifications to be considered for registration. The Teaching Service Commission has no direct role in the process of teacher registration. The Ministry for Education and Human Resource Development performs that function.

It is proposed that:

- teacher registration is a statutory obligation for all sectors from early childhood care and education through to secondary education;
- the power to make determinations concerning teacher registration and responsibility for maintenance of the Register of Teachers being with the Permanent Secretary will also be legislated for;
- explicit mention is made in the Act to ensure the registration of quality teachers for the education system; and
- the appropriate regulation on teacher registration will clearly stipulate the processes and procedures and the requirements for teacher registration. The regulations will be firm and specific on the accountability mechanisms for non-compliance with the requirements for teacher registration.

The Teaching Service Handbook vests the Teaching Service Division with the responsibility to manage and keep under review the Register of Teachers.

### **7.1.3 Meaning of 'Employee' and Responsibility for Management of Employees**

The definition of 'employee' and its application to teachers has been a longstanding issue for teachers who are paid out of Government finances. Teachers and trainers not paid by a Ministry are not considered public servants and are therefore not affected.<sup>66</sup> The recently drafted Public Service Bill takes the view that teachers are part of the public service and that the Teaching Service Commission is responsible for their employment. This is in keeping with the Constitution but not with the High Court decision in *The Church of Melanesia Trust Board Incorporated v The Attorney General* [2000] SBHC 52. In that case education authorities were found to be the employer of teachers. It followed an earlier Court of Appeal case, *Tri-Ed Association v SI College of Higher Education* [1985/1986] SILR 173 which concerned the then College of Higher Education but in which one of the three judges commented that all teachers, including those in schools, were not in the employment of the Crown. The *Church of Melanesia* case does not seem to be a particularly strong decision but was not appealed and there have been no subsequent contrary cases.

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<sup>66</sup> Trainers and educators may be based within a range of Ministries.

Teaching staff of Vocational and Rural Training Centres will be eligible for registration under the Teaching Service if they meet the requirements of the Teaching Service and if their VRTC is recognized by the SIQA as meeting minimum standards and/or criteria.<sup>67</sup>

The management of teachers has historically been a joint responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development. Besides, the Teaching Service Handbook has been the instrument for setting the remuneration, terms of employment and conditions of service for teachers.

Education Authorities also have functions and responsibilities to teachers. Those responsibilities are prescribed under the Education Act and further described in the Teaching Service Handbook. Teachers are required to enter into two year individual contracts of employment with the education authority responsible for the school they are working in. It is anticipated that those functions and responsibilities will be preserved and so far as possible continue to be undertaken by these key stakeholders, in consultation with the Ministry of Public Service.

According to the Solomon Islands National Teacher's Association (SINTA), the issue of the employer of teachers must be settled by law. Who the employer is directly affects teacher remuneration and their terms and conditions of service. SINTA strongly supports the view that teachers should be considered as public servants and should therefore be entitled to the same salaries and terms and conditions as all other public servants. It therefore follows that the duties and responsibilities of employers towards their employees should be clearly stated in the Education Act. It will be the obligation of the employer to fulfil their roles and responsibilities towards their employees.

#### **7.1.4 Management of Teachers**

The entire Part VI, sections 29 to 37 of the Act are devoted to teachers. However, the Act is unclear on the matter of the status of teachers. As defined by the Constitution and assumed by the draft Public Service Bill, teachers are public servants.

The Education Act is not specific on who is the employer of teachers. In other Pacific countries such as Fiji and Samoa for instance, teachers paid by the Ministry of Education are public servants and that settles, not just their status and their employment, but also their full terms and conditions of employment.

There are differing views throughout the education system on the employer of teachers and there can be differing views in relation to the same group of teachers depending on the particular aspect of the employment relationship being considered. There are reports of this confusion being exploited by teachers seeking a more favourable response in relation to employment issues.

It is a strongly held view amongst key partners that church, private, and independent authorities can develop employment policies, guidelines or rules that are in line with their ethos, the Teaching Service Handbook and the Labour Act, which can be implemented pending the Ministry's approval.

#### **7.1.5 Terms and Conditions of Service of Teachers**

The terms and conditions of service of registered teachers are of central importance to the teaching service and critically influence the effectiveness of schools and the quality of education provision. Provisions for the terms and conditions of service of teachers are legislated for under section 37 of the Act. Section 37(1) provides for the Teaching Service Handbook to set out the terms and conditions of service of teachers. Likewise, the employment of teachers is based on the terms and conditions of service set out in the Teaching Service Handbook.

In practical terms the employment of teachers is managed by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development with education authorities. The Teaching Service Handbook, Chapter 4, addresses the employment of teachers. The employment of all teachers commences with a two year contract which teachers enter into with an education authority which is expressed as being the employer. Appendix C of the Teaching Service Handbook also sets out the Teaching Service Scheme.

Salaries and allowances of registered teachers are provided for under Part A section 5(3) and Part B section 10(1) of the Grants Code made under the Education Act.

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<sup>67</sup> This is limited to not for profit VRTCs under the authority of an Education Authority, provincial government or council.



It is acknowledged that if left as it is, the new Public Service Bill will impact on these sections of the Act and the Teaching Service Handbook. The treatment of the public service in the draft Public Service Bill covers teachers and is extremely detailed. The management of teachers will therefore require ongoing close collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development and the Ministry of Public Service. This cumbersome relationship may not be desirable for the sake of the efficient and effective management of teachers.

It is therefore proposed that teachers be excluded from the Public Service Bill and all matters related to teachers be legislated for under the Education Act. This will shift the responsibility for the management of teachers, their employment, terms and conditions of service, professional development and training entirely to the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development. This will settle the function for setting the remunerations and terms and conditions of teachers under the Minister of Education and Human Resource Development and the Teaching Service Handbook. Trainers and educators outside the public service are under the management of their respective organisations including for salaries, allowances and conditions.

Excluding teachers from the Public Service Bill will allow MEHRD to be in full control of all aspects of management of the teacher workforce, and simplifies that management. It also allows for a clearer separation and description of the schemes of service, job descriptions, the nature of the work and the like into the Teaching Services Handbook. Moreover, it allows for easier separation of remuneration agreement from the scheme of service, and may help to simplify the issue of who is the employer of teachers: MEHRD or The Education Authorities.

The revised Education Act will recognize Education Authorities as the employer of teachers and will make provisions for resourcing Education Authorities to effectively fulfil their obligations as good employers.

Furthermore, the revised Education Act will legislate for teachers and all other matters related to the teaching service such as terms and conditions of service, remuneration, management of teachers and other legal issues.

## 7.2 Teaching Service Commission

The Teaching Service Commission is not provided for under the Education Act as it was established separately through section 116A of the Constitution (Amendment) Act 1982.

The powers and functions of the Teaching Services Commission, which include appointment to office, removal, and exercising disciplinary control or hearing of appeals are provided for specifically under section 116B of the Constitution. Previously, those functions were performed by the Teaching Service Board through the provisions of section 36 of the Education Act (Cap 69).

Under section 116B (2) of the Constitution, the Teaching Service Commission may, subject to such conditions as it thinks fit, delegate any of its powers under this section by directions in writing to any member of the Commission or to any public officer or to any provincial government officer. This White Paper acknowledges that through the Teaching Service Delegation Resolution, the power to confirm teacher appointments has been delegated to the Permanent Secretary, the Under-Secretary (Administration), and the Director of the Teaching Service Division of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development.<sup>68</sup>

This White Paper also acknowledges the substantially increased roles and reporting responsibilities as proposed in the Public Service Bill. The Public Service Bill is premised on the Teaching Service Commission carrying extensive oversight responsibility and presumably therefore being provided with the necessary tools and resources to effectively fulfil this role.

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<sup>68</sup> MEHRD 2011, *Teaching Service Handbook*, Appendix A

### 7.3 The Teaching Service Division

The Teaching Service Division of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, the engine room, as it were of the entire Teaching Service functions as the administrative arm and secretariat for the Teaching Service Commission.

The Teaching Service Handbook describes the functions of the Teaching Service Office, which in effect is the Teaching Service Division. Those functions are the following:

- (1) the secretariat for the Teaching Service Commission;
- (2) maintenance and regular review and upkeep of the Register of Teachers;
- (3) issuance of Teacher Registration Certificates;
- (4) monitoring and facilitation of teacher appointments, promotions, demotions and salary payments; and
- (5) follow up actions subsequent to confirmation of appointments, promotions, demotions and payments of salaries.

Through the Teaching Service Delegation Resolution, the Teaching Service Commission has delegated the power to appoint teachers to the Permanent Secretary, the Under-Secretary (Administration), and the Director of the Teaching Service Division.

The pilot project with identified provincial and faith-based education authorities including the delegation of certain powers to them for the efficient and effective performance of roles and responsibilities otherwise undertaken by the Teaching Service Division is acknowledged.

It is important that these initiatives in the pilot project are formally recognized through appropriate legislative provisions which could be invoked in the future through the necessary delegation instruments to achieve an efficient and effective teaching service.

### 7.4 Teaching Service Board

The Teaching Service Board was established under the Education Act (Cap 69) and its functions were retained under the 1996 revised Education Act. Its functions and duties included the power 'to confirm all appointments made to schools and the relevant salary scale entry points'.<sup>69</sup>

The Constitution established the Teaching Service Commission and duly vested in it the power to appoint teachers, which includes the power to confirm appointments. The establishment of the Teaching Service Commission and vesting those functions under the Teaching Service Commission by the Constitution indicates that the Teaching Service Commission has superseded the Teaching Service Board. Consequently the Board has ceased to perform those functions mandated to it under the Education Act (Cap 69).

As a consequence of the Board ceasing to operate, the other functions of the Board, which are deemed important by the Solomon Islands Teaching Service, have been neglected. Those functions include: (i) to exercise general oversight on all matters relating to the terms of service and welfare of members of the Solomon Islands Teaching Service; (ii) to advise the Minister on salaries and conditions of service for members of the Solomon Islands Teaching Service; and (iii) to consider and act upon recommendations made by Education Authorities or their appointed Boards or Committees in matters of discipline within the Solomon Islands Teaching Service, and to consider any appeals made by teachers against those recommendations.<sup>70</sup> These important responsibilities need to be assumed by the Teaching Service Commission or dealt with in another way under the Education Bill that ensures they are properly fulfilled.

<sup>69</sup> Education Act [Cap 69], Section 36(c). The Education Act 1978, revised 18 years later in 1996 retained the Teaching Service Board with its functions.

<sup>70</sup> Education Act (Cap 69), Section 36

The Teaching Service Board and its functions should be repealed from the Act but the functions of the Board included in the role of other bodies under the Public Service Bill and/or Education Bill.

## **7.5 Teacher's Professional Development**

The professional development of registered teachers is of central importance in the education and training system. The quality of the system hinges on teacher competence and commitment. Providing education and training that is responsive to the demands and needs of a changing society requires teachers who are adaptable and reflective practitioners and who have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to facilitate learning.

Under its Teacher Training and Development Division, TTDD, the Ministry has major pre-service and in-service teacher training and development programs. The focus of these programs is to provide extensive teacher training and development. This is in order to improve the knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers, including a deep understanding of the contents of the subjects to be taught and of the learning and pedagogical theories necessary for teachers to impact the quality of teaching and learning in schools.

Expenditure on registered teachers' salaries and social security, which account for over eighty per cent of the total education budget, underlines the long term importance of quality pre-service education, well managed induction procedures, in-career development programs throughout the teaching career, as well as the terms and conditions of service of teachers.

Ensuring that educators and trainers in the tertiary sector remain up to date and current in their field and also continue to improve their teaching and assessment capability, the requirement for professional development of educators and trainers shall be addressed by the proposed new Quality Standard Authority.

## **7.6 Code of Professional Conduct and National Professional Standards for Teachers**

### *Code of Professional Conduct*

The Code of Professional Conduct for teachers was established and adopted for members of the Solomon Islands Teaching Service and the teaching profession generally. The Code is a set of expected professional standards for teachers and covers a wide range of areas from responsibility to the child, the community and the nation, commitment and responsibility to the profession, and responsibility to the employer and the agency. The Code of Professional Conduct has been approved and subsequently published in the Teaching Service Handbook.

### *National Professional Standards for Teachers*

Like the Code of Professional Conduct, the National Professional Standards for Teachers was developed and adopted for the teaching profession in consultation with stakeholders and key partners. The National Professional Standards set out the professional responsibilities of teachers pertaining to the teaching and learning process and the development of learners, responsibilities towards colleagues and teacher's responsibility to themselves. Furthermore, the National Professional Standards are based on agreed-upon professional values and attitudes that teachers, as professionals, are expected to uphold. Ultimately, the National Professional Standards are intended to enhance the effectiveness of teachers and to improve the quality of education.

The Code of Professional Conduct and the National Professional Standards are part and parcel of the same package. Their desirability is without question. This White Paper therefore recommends the formal recognition of these professional codes and standards. In doing so, the codes and standards will have a legal basis. Their application will be limited to those teachers on the Teaching Service Register.

The Code of Professional Conduct and the National Professional Standards for Teacher should be referred to in the Education Act.

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