

Contribution to the discussion of the Appropriation bill

28th March 2018

By Hon. Ester Anna Nghipondoka, Deputy Minister of Education Arts and Culture.

Repudiy
Hon. Speaker

I would like to start my contribution by thanking the Hon Minister of Finance, The Permanent Secretary and the entire staff of the Ministry by guiding all government O/M/AS in the right direction through a Fiscal strategy which is educative and informative about the economic outlook globally, regionally and locally and sets out the fiscal policy stance and policy priorities and interventions which I believe will guide the planning and implementation decisions of O/M/A/s

Our government is worth applauding for a budget which a pro-growth, pro-poor policy stance. The previous two years of the budget consolidation and reallocation of funds to first priority areas resulted in a learning curve for O/M/AS to emerge more informed and able to do efficient and effective fiscal planning. I believe through budget consolidation and reviews many of us as O/M/AS and individuals have learned good practices of selective, efficient, effective and speedy budget execution. In the process us as government through different O/M/AS have learned and continue to learn to be strategic and focused on spending where it matters most and identifying low hanging fruits. I also believe that the time we passed through has given us more wisdom on how to realistically set our strategic objectives and smart targets when we draw up our Strategic Plans, Annual Plans and Performance Agreements. The other benefit from operating on meagre resources is that we learned to value Performance Management System which is the only tool to ensure that our resource planning and implementation aims at a commensurate relationship between inputs and outputs and thus insuring consistent internal efficiency.

Repudiy
Hon. Speaker

I continue to thank our government for persistently allocating more resources to the social sector which is Health and Education. It is however a hard reality that more resources allocated to e.g. Education, Arts and Culture is spend on the salary bills. This is due to the fact that this Ministry is the largest employer and our teachers need to be all well qualified to impart knowledge and skills efficiently in their field of specialization. This does not mean that the Ministry remains ignorant of other factors that have a negative impact on the salary bill and thus efforts are done to identify the loopholes and insure improved efficiency e.g. the payroll audits and the identification of non-productive schools etc.

*economical
Schools.*

I have a genuine appeal though that while the Ministry of Education is doing all in our powers to tighten the holes we require support from stakeholders to insure a conducive learning environment in all our institutions.

Hon^{Rep} Speaker

The increment of the Development budget by 30% while it is a highly appreciated move, will only be effective if the expenditure modalities are properly looked at and the stifling bureaucratic processes which delay implementation at different levels of capital projects implementation is addressed to insure speedy implementation and avoid overflow of overdue payments to new financial years and thus bring confusion in the whole process^{of} managing expenditures. This requires thorough planning, commitment and avoidance of mediocrity and procrastination at all levels in implementing OMAs

Hon speaker I'm appreciative of allocation of more resources to the social sector. I anyhow feel that additional to efforts to cut down on the salary bill to realistic levels, I really want us to consider the impact of a conducive environment coupled with efficient and effective leadership to internal efficiency of our organisation. Researchers explain internal efficiency to be " an internal operation of an organisation relating to avoidance of wastages through judicious use of resources" or " internal efficiency is a measurement of the use of resources to achieve the desired results ".

Hon members, with the understanding of what internal efficiency is supposed to mean, and what insures it, I see either our allocation to education, or the utilisation of the resources is skewed. There need to be a balance between human capital resource and material resources, in this case meaning teaching and learning materials and physical infrastructure in order for those dealing with education to be able to deliver. With this assertion I'm not in any way implying ignorance to, neither condonation of incompetence, lack of initiative and poor performance but I'm rather appealing for the empowerment of those who are already achieving a lot under direr circumstances. I thus call on OMAS and the private sector to join hands and meet government half way to insure the availability of educational material and physical infrastructure, through proper coordination of effort to insure conducive environment where internal efficiency is insured and thus high production of skills for the development of this country. For your information, the shortage of educational resources affects more schools that serves the socio- economically disadvantage rural^{population} and by implication render impractical the pro poor, pro-growth policy stance of this government.

The focus on tertiary and vocational skill development as a critical component to enhance employability is a welcome gesture. My genuine call here is for the private sector to play an important role in skills development and discourage a producer versus receiver relationship between the education sector and the private sector. Many a times the education system is blamed for an irrelevant supply driven focus. We have experiences of countries where the private sector is the integral part of VET.

Germany with its dual education system and training is one good example from where we can learn. Our current curriculum reform aiming at our education system to be demand driven, informed by our Vision 2030 and our NDPs has taken care of the reintroduction of Vocational skills subjects in a number of school across the country for a start from grades 8 to 12 after having done Design and Technology in grades 5 to 7

Our resource school which are known as special schools taking care of our children with learning difficulties and /or disabilities are being prepared to implement basis prevocational courses year and year two done at grade 8 and 9 levels respectively, after which they either take up employment or study further at different VTC. It is a sure case that government efforts needs to be supplemented in the area of VET in terms of financial resources for VET equipment. For exposure to practical skill to avoid students graduating with only theoretical skills and thus avoiding retraining as Hon. Ankama alluded to in his contribution yesterday, our private sector need to open up for internship, incentivised if possible for our learners at Vocational schools and students^{at} VTC to be afforded a holistic skills acquisition for them to be ready for immediate intake in the job market or self-employment.

Hon.^{Rep} Speaker

In conclusion I agree fully with the Hon. Minister of Finance when he put emphasis on the fact that “successful implementation of a pro-growth physical consolidation programme requires coordinated implementation of saving and spending measures”. My emphasis is coordination especially of planning through National Planning Commission even before we come to implementation. This way we avoid disjointed wasteful implementation of programmes which are supposed to be focused on serving the same recipient.

With this humble contribution I support the Appropriation Bill.

I thank you Hon speaker and Hon members for listening to my humble contribution.