

**CONTRIBUTION ON THE MOTION ON CURRENT DEEP
CRISIS IN OUR EDUCATION SECTOR WITH THE VIEW TO
FIND LONG TERM INTERVENTION TO OVERCOME POST
COVID 19 IMPACT WITH IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM BY
KLETUS H. KARONDO, SWAPO MP**

**Thank you for the floor, Honourable Speaker and
Honourable Members**

I rise to make my contribution on this very important motion tabled in this August House by Honourable Swartboo. The Mover of this motion stated very clearly in paragraph three that the intention of the motion is and I quote "our intervention today is not to offer any critic nor take a detour into the whole education system in its totality, but to offer a social and global perspective on the specific level of the primary and secondary phase, with few recommendations going forward" end of quote.

The route taken by the mover of this motion clearly calls for a dialogue as we strive to transform our education system, unpacking the challenges that we are facing in order to instill functional literacy, skills and expertise needed to function in a knowledge-based economic system.

I would like to start off my intervention by arguing that Coronavirus has proven to be a massive challenge for the entire world because it was unexpected and we were not prepared. The education systems, including that of Namibia were affected

at all levels which forced us to respond and adapt to the crisis by implementing emergency modes.

At the height of Covid 19 pandemic, the economies of many countries suffered greatly from the lockdowns and other restrictive measurements and people had to adopt to a new lifestyle where our primary concern was to survive by keeping ourselves safe from contracting the deadly virus. In Namibia, the education system has not been exempted from these series of unfortunate events inflicted by Covid 19. The closing of schools and campuses rendered online teaching and learning the only viable solution to the problem of access to education. As a result of this sudden migration to learning and instruction online quite a number of schools in Namibia and especially those in remote rural areas could not cope and were negatively affected.

However, the phenomenon of schools and higher education institutions having to shift their instruction to online spaces is not something new to the education community and academia. Johnsons (2020) explains that prior literature on this subject indicates that in the past, schools and institutions of higher learning resorted to online or electronic delivery of instruction in times of serious crises and uncertainties, including but not limited to natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes.

Considering the scale and severity of the Covid 19, and the impacts that it had on education in particular there is a great need

to develop and implement plans and strategies aimed at reducing its devastating effects. The Covid19 pandemic has disrupted education globally, to which the education sector has responded with a range of pedagogical ideas, innovations and strategies. Schools and higher education institutions changed dramatically in a short time, implementing distance learning in many cases for the first time as a new normal.

Comparatively speaking, the Covid 19 period exposed the economic inequities and realities that exist amongst our various schools in Namibia. These persistent inequities have resulted into a serious lack of infrastructure and resources for schools such Bavel Mankumpi for the marginalized San learners in Kavango West Region and schools in the vicinity of Omega 1 and 2 situated in the Bwabwata National Park, just to mention but a few.

It was generally observed that the biggest challenge during Covid 19 pandemic lay in capacity building and competency development for teachers. These missing abilities and competencies of teachers and their limitation to use existing tools and the need to adapt to new environments often led to the call for stronger, brave and resilient leadership. Many if not all, will agree with me that weak and poor school management demoralizes teachers and undermines positive learning outcomes. It is a clarion call upon Teachers, School Management Teams and Principals to get out of their comfort

zones, be held accountable, and take responsibility for the success and failure of their respective schools. Thus, I am of the opinion that the Post-Covid 19 period should afford us the opportunity to pause and reflect, to honestly ask ourselves whether we are still on the right track or not.

The Covid 19 period has brought into focus the broadening digital divide with quite a high number of learners from the low-income, poor and marginalized households unable to participate in formal education, because of their inability to access materials and information put on various communication platforms due to a lack of internet connectivity. I am aware that our Namibian government has prioritized the provision of ICT, but due to insufficient provision of electricity access to internet is limited in remote rural communities and schools. Thus, the motion on Free-WiFi that was debated in this August House will come in handy as a welcome relief to the majority of our learners and teachers alike.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members

The Report on the National Conference on Education (2022:60), stress that transforming education should be informed by radical change in how schools facilitate learning and how the youth are prepared to cope in the rapidly changing world. It further on explain that to be successful in transforming education, it is

important to analyze the current curriculum, ensure alignment to the attributes of education transformation.

Thus, the Report call upon teachers that learners should be taught and encouraged to understand current challenges and to transform these challenges into opportunity. It is also important to state that to succeed in the 21st century job market high school students need to graduate with more than academic knowledge. They need the skills, confidence and creativity to meet the challenges of a changing world. A good high school education ensures that all students have the knowledge and the necessary academic background to pursue post-secondary tertiary education.

Therefore, I would suggest that during the Post-Covid 19 period there is a need to provide teachers with opportunities to further develop their digital technical competencies, there is a need to equip teachers with greater competency in technology and online teaching. This will in return increase teacher engagements to encourage a culture of cooperation, collaboration and coordination. In the same vain, teachers should be encouraged to engage into continuous professional development programmes to enhance their own growth, develop professional networks to increase motivation and support amongst themselves.

To succeed in transforming our education system, we need to tackle head on, some of the basic common challenges that we are experiencing such as multi-grade teaching, lack of textbooks, non-availability of teaching and learning resources as well as the demoralizing aspect of overcrowded classrooms particularly in urban schools due to rural-urban migration. It is a well-known fact that over the years the Ministry of Education Arts and Culture has been receiving the largest chunk of the national budget but despite this generous allocation the results have been disappointing year in and year out.

To transform our education system there is an urgent need to review how we finance our education. For example, countries in the sub-region such as Zimbabwe do not spend a high budgetary allocation on education such as Namibia does but their results cannot be compared to that of Namibia. Thus, we need to find and adopt new funding formula that works for us.

In conclusion, one important aspect that the Ministry of Education Arts and Culture should pay attention to is the monitoring and evaluation role played by the Inspectors of Education. The essence of monitoring and evaluation at school level are among others to identify shortcomings in performance and take pro-active preventative and corrective measures.

As the situation stands, Inspectors of Education were negatively affected by the re-grading system that down-graded their

positions to that of a Principal of a school, there is currently a very low morale among these group of officials. From the look of things, the plight of the Inspectors of Education is far from over, can you imagine being paid the same salary as the person that you are supposed to supervise, we need to correct this anomaly if we are to get our education system back on its knees again.

I so submit and I thank you.

