



STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Consolidated Review of Report of the Ministry of Education Heritage and Arts 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021 Annual Report



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
Parliamentary Paper No. 154 of 2024

October 2024

Table of Contents

CHAIRPERSON’S FOREWORD	3
ACRONYM	4
COMMITTEE MEMBERS	5
RECOMMENDATION	6
1. INTRODUCTION	6
1.1. Committee Procedure	6
2. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, HERITAGE & ARTS	7
2.1Background	7
2.1.2 Strategic Priorities.....	7
3. KEY FINDINGS	8
4. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS	9
5. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS	10
6. CONCLUSION	11
COMMITTEE MEMBERS’ SIGNATURE	12
ANNEXURE	12

CHAIRPERSON’S FOREWORD

I am privileged to present the report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs concerning the Consolidated Review of the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts for the years 2018 to 2021.

In accordance with Standing Orders 109(2)(b), our committee is tasked with scrutinising issues related to health, education, social services, labor, aviation, culture, and media.

Through our comprehensive review, we have identified several key concerns and challenges affecting the education sector and have put forward a series of recommendations to address these issues.

We recognise and commend the Ministry of Education's ongoing efforts to enhance the education sector through its current policies and procedures. Nevertheless, we believe that a thorough review of the Education Act 1966 is essential for further advancement. Additionally, appointing the Education Commissioners is crucial to ensure the continued improvement and effectiveness of the Ministry’s services.

As part of our duties under Standing Orders 110, the Committee conducted site visits to schools across the western and central divisions. These visits highlighted several concerns, which we subsequently raised with Ministry officials during their public submissions to the Committee. Our report details these concerns and offers actionable recommendations to address them.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Permanent Secretary and her team for their valuable contributions to this review process.

I also wish to acknowledge the outstanding leadership and guidance of the former Chairperson of the Committee, Hon. Alitia Bainivalu. My thanks go to former Committee Members Hon. Parveen Bala, alternate members Hon. Ketan Lal and Hon. Penioni Ravunawa, and the current Committee members for their dedicated efforts in finalising this report.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this report to Parliament and encourage all members of this esteemed House to review its findings and recommendations.



.....
Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu
Chairperson

ACRONYM

Acronym	
PS	Permanent Secretary
MP	Member of Parliament
SO	Standing Order
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
QVS	Queen Victoria School
ACS	Adi Cakobau School

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs (**‘Committee’**) is established under Section 70 of the Constitution and SO 109. The Committee’s mandate and functions are provided under SO 109 (2) and 110 (1) (a)-(d) & (f). The Committee consists of the following members:



Chairperson

Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu MP
Government Member



Deputy Chairperson

Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure MP
Government Member



Member

Hon. Sashi Kiran MP
Government Member



Member

Hon. Viam Pillay MP
Opposition Member



Member

Hon. Ioane Naivalarua MP
Opposition Member

RECOMMENDATION

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs conducted the Consolidated Review Report of the *Ministry of Education 2018 to 2021 Annual Reports* and recommends that Parliament take note of this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs ('**Committee**') was referred to the *Ministry of Education 2018-2019 and 2020-2021* on the 15th of April 2024, as pursuant to SO 38 (2). Therefore, the Committee was referred to review the annual report as pursuant to its mandate as stipulated in SO 110 (1) (c).

1.1. Committee Procedure

The Committee Deliberation and formulation of questions pertaining to the *Ministry of Education Heritage and Arts 2018-2021 Annual Report* were undertaken. Following this, the executive management presented its responses. The Committee also conducted a site visit on 14th May 2024. Upon receipt of all relevant information, the committee compiled its findings and endorsed it on the 17th of September 2024.

The committee received a written response from the *Ministry of Education* for this annual review. It is available on the Parliament website at the following link: <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>

2. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, HERITAGE & ARTS

2.1 Background

The Ministry of Education is a Government Ministry that is responsible for providing an education that is holistic, innovative, responsive, inclusive and empowering. This is an education system which will enable all children to realise and appreciate their inheritance and potential contribution to a peaceful and sustainable Fiji.

The Ministry of Education conducts services for the following:

- Early childhood care education, kindergarten services.
- Primary and Secondary education.
- Specialised Schools for children with special educational needs.
- Vocational studies.
- Teaching personnel
- Capacity building for School management committees and authorities dealing in leadership and decision making.

2.1.2 Strategic Priorities

There are strategic goals in place aligning to the National Development Plans to produce better and skilled creators that support and grow economies for future of Fiji. These are the ten major Strategic Priority Categories for the Ministry.

- Infrastructure and Assets
- Legislation and Planning
- Systems and Processes
- Standards, Monitoring and Quality Assurance
- Workforce Engagement & Development/ Human Capital
- Access and Equity
- Curricular (Learning and Teaching)
- Culture, Heritage and Arts.
- Partnerships, Cooperation and Communication
- Research and Development.

2.2 Deliberation and Analysis

The Committee notes in its deliberation and analysis the following key findings:

3. KEY FINDINGS

3.1 Denarau Declaration – Formation of Education Commission –

- The Denarau Declaration addresses the challenges faced by the Ministry of Education's current and future issues.
- The Denarau Policy Framework contains the strategic way forward for the Education Sector for the next 10 years. It is important to acknowledge the policy.
- Implementation of the declaration.

3.2 Education Act –

- The Education Act review is now a priority for the Ministry of Education and is reflected in the 2023 Denarau Declaration thematic Area 3 and 4.
- The Committee deliberated that the Education Act needs to be aligned to the needs and challenges of the Ministry.
- It is also appropriate that the review of the Act needs to be expedited to bring it in line with current best practices, societal changes, and educational priorities.
- To update the Education Act, consider renaming it the Education Act 2025 to reflect the comprehensive changes as the current Act is outdated. Engage stakeholder policies and align the new Act with existing policies, and develop a clear communication and implementation plan. Ensure all legal aspects are reviewed to facilitate a smooth transition and effective modernisation.

3.3 Education Commission –

- The appointment process is currently with the Prime Minister's Office, and it needs to be expedited because the Education Commission plays an important role in reviewing the National Education Curriculum Framework.

3.4 Retention and alternative learning methods for drop-out students –

- The report has highlighted that the retention of students has declined as they progressed to higher years.
- The Ministry cannot effectively track their whereabouts.
- Schools are also aware that there is room to offer flexible learning options for students who face challenges attending school regularly, such as evening classes, distance learning, or vocational training. However, it is not clear how effective this is. This methodology is being used for those having difficulty in school or have dropped out.

3.5 Drug issues –

- Teacher training on handling drug.
- Drug testing in schools.
- Drug is a major issue in school and the Ministry is undertaking actions to combat the issue however it will need support.

3.6 Counsellors in School –

- Shortage of trained counsellors in schools.

3.7 Build more Schools in Suva- Nausori Corridor –

- The Committee notes that there are a smaller number of Secondary schools in the Suva-Nausori area in comparison to the number of students The Ministry of Education has identified this as high priority and has submitted to Ministry of Finance to build more schools in the Suva-Nausori corridor.
- The audit of the need to build more schools in the Suva-Nausori corridor is in process.

3.8 Shortage of Teachers –

- Mass migration.
- Insufficient knowledge and skills in certain fields such as PEMAC teachers.
- Reforms in the public service have resulted in high staff turnover, disrupting continuity and focus on SDG goals.

3.9 SDG –

- Frequent changes in leadership within the Ministry have led to shifting priorities, impacting the consistency of SDG target implementation.
- The Ministry has not met its SDG goals because of the reasons highlighted in the report.

3.10 Budget for Transport –

- Funds need to be allocated to the RSL providers.
- Bus card providers are due for review. Vodafone Fiji Limited facing lots of complaints regarding the bus card business. Bus operators' upkeep of machines has not been properly monitored and Vodafone Fiji Limited has also neglected to upgrade their system. The 3 stages of the bus route are the primary area of service (higher stages are still legible) all assisted students who qualified for the subsidies qualify from combined household income below \$16,000.

4. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Upon deliberation and review of the annual report, the committee recommends:

- 4.1 That the Ministry submits its Annual Reports on time.
- 4.2 That the Education Act review process be expedited.
- 4.3 That the Committee takes note of the Denarau Declaration and strongly supports its implementation that is currently underway.

- 4.4 That the Education Commission Commissioners be appointed at the earliest.
- 4.5 That the Ministry introduce different learning programmes to address the increasing number of students drop out.
- 4.6 That the Ministry in collaboration with other key stakeholders undertake collective measures to combat the issue of drugs in schools.
- 4.7 That the Ministry appoint more professional counselors in schools to effectively address students who have been affected by drugs and other social issues.
- 4.8 That the Ministry budget for the RSL providers be reviewed as a matter of urgency.
- 4.9 That the retention policy for Teachers be reviewed.
- 4.10 That the Committee supports the submission by the Ministry to build more schools in the Suva-Nausori corridors.
- 4.11 That the Ministry take appropriate measures to meet its SDG targets.

5. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Ministry reports on SDG 4 which entails 17 targets ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Challenges faced by the Ministry in implementing the SDG

Frequent changes in leadership within the Ministry have led to shifting priorities, impacting the consistency of SDG target implementation.

Some of the challenges that the Ministry faced in the implementation of SDG target include:

- High staffing turnover due to the reform done at the Ministry
- Budgetary allocation which affects relevant activities aligned with SDG targets
- Pandemic and natural disaster which have a significant impact on their budget allocation as funds have to be diverted to cater for the rehabilitation programs

Committee Site Visit



These are the site visits for QVS and ACS.

6. CONCLUSION

The Committee commends the Ministry for its operations during the pandemic and looks forward to the implementation of the recommendations put forward. The Committee appreciates the effort and dedication of the wider branches of the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts towards nation building. These various branches including teachers serving our far-reaching islands, all our maritime institutions of learning up to the isolated mountains in our beautiful highlands. The Committee applauds the show of patriotism showcased by all civil servants serving under the Ministry in these locations as well as the relevant corporate arms that support them directly and indirectly. The Committee also thanks the Permanent Secretary and her hardworking senior staff for their continued dedication towards the upskilling of knowledge and abilities in our budding young students.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS' SIGNATURE

We, the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, hereby agree with the contents of this report:

Committee Member	E-Signature
Hon. Ilesia Vanawalu Chairperson	
Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure Deputy Chairperson	
Hon. Sashi Kiran Member	
Hon. Viam Pillay Member	
Hon. Ioane Naivalarua Member	
Date: 18/9/2024	

ANNEXURE

Published evidence

Written evidence, transcripts, and supporting documents can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link:

<https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>