

23/6/09

SANSKRIT LANGUAGE - TEACHING AND LEARNING

(No. B/633) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked Minister of Education, Culture & Human Resources whether, in regard to the teaching and learning of the Sanskrit language, he will state the steps taken by Government to encourage same.

(Withdrawn)

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS – CURRICULUM REFORMS

(No. B/1161) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to curriculum reforms, he will state if Government will consider introducing arts, sports and civic values as examinable subjects at primary and secondary levels.

Reply: In the context of reforms which are being undertaken by my Ministry in the education sector, due consideration has already been given to Arts, Sports and Civic Values in the school curriculum. The National Curriculum Framework for the Primary Sector which was developed in 2006 places a lot of importance of the teaching and learning of these.

With regard to the Primary Sector, Arts is covered as a component in the teaching of other subjects at Standards I and II levels. Arts exist as a subject from Standards III to VI.

Sports, for its part, is already covered in the subject of Health and Physical Education in the primary sector and will be further strengthened as from January 2010. Civic Values, on the other hand, are integrated into the different subjects across the curriculum from Standards III to VI.

These subjects are not examinable but with the introduction of Continuous Assessment at primary level, consideration is being given to these subjects being assessed.

At Secondary level, Visual Arts is an examinable subject from Forms I to III. In addition, Art and Design, is offered as an optional subject from Forms IV to VI and is examinable.

Music is also offered as a subject in Forms I and II but is not examinable presently.

Sports, also known as Physical Education, are practised by students in classes starting Form I to Form VI. An evaluation is carried out at school level in Forms I and II. Consideration being given to extending the evaluation exercise to students of Form III, and also for the introduction of Physical Education as an examinable subject at School Certificate as from 2011. In this context, a pilot project is being initiated as from 2010 in Form IV in fourteen (14) secondary schools, both State and private, to offer it as an examinable subject.

“Civic Values” is integrated in the various subjects taught at secondary level and the question of making it an examinable subject does not arise. Moreover, I am informed that, the subject “Civic Values” or “Citizenship” is not available as an international syllabus for examinations at either Ordinary or Advanced Level.

29/6/10

61

SCHOOLS - KREOL MORISIEN LANGUAGE

(No. 1B/172) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Kreol Morisien language, he will state-

- (a) if Government proposes to hold a national forum thereon, indicating its objectives, and
- (b) whether a time frame for the introduction thereof within the curriculum has been agreed to.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, in my reply to PQ B/92 on 30 March 2010 on this issue, I informed the House that my Ministry would be embarking on a national consultation process involving all stakeholders, namely, members of academia, researchers, pedagogues, linguists as well as those who in, one way or another, can contribute to the debate and whose inputs would be central to the discussions and deliberations of the National Forum to be organised.

The main objective of this Forum is thus to build a consensus on the implementation of the policy enunciated in the Government Programme 2010-2015. In effect, in that Programme, we have reiterated our commitment to work towards the introduction of the Kreol language and Bhojपुरi as optional subjects in schools. The Programme highlights the need to consolidate and supplement existing research work so as to develop a standardised spelling and grammar essentially for the Kreol language.

As a first step in this direction, my Ministry, by way of a Press Communiqué dated 10 June 2010 has already invited interested parties to send their contributions on the matter by the 24 June 2010. In fact, we have received quite a number of contributions and they are still coming despite the date has elapsed, but we are still accepting them because a Committee is working and is looking into all these.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, as pointed out in my previous reply, the implementation of the proposal for the introduction of Kreol, will have many implications in terms of the production of teaching and learning resource materials, recruitment and training of teachers, and above all, a nationally accepted and standardised written form of the language including grammar, orthography and other linguistic mechanics required for both spoken and written Kreol. All these will be carefully scrutinised during the Forum and, subsequently, the curricular orientation and a

time frame for the introduction thereof will be worked out, in the light of the findings arising therefrom.

I propose to appoint a Steering Committee comprising, *inter alia*, experts determined consensually who will be mandated to undertake the process leading to the introduction of Kreol as an optional subject, and to propose an implementation schedule.

Mr Obeegadoo: I have a few supplementary questions, Sir. There appears to be some confusion even in the Presidential Address and in what the hon. Minister just said. Reference is being made to an optional subject, which is good, but the Presidential Address also refers to use of mother tongues to facilitate teaching and learning. So, do we understand that the National Forum will address both issues, that is, use of mother tongue as medium of instruction, teaching and learning, and teaching of a subject?

Dr. Bunwaree: Of course, it will take into consideration both. In fact, the *graphie de l'harmonie*, which everybody knows now, mentions itself that "it should not be confused with the written language or the written norm of the language. The latter develops over time, through a gradual process of elaboration of the written code". This is what we are doing. In fact, we have two aspects; one is the linguistic aspect, which is not ready yet. In fact, I hope that we will go very quickly. Then, there is the pedagogical aspect, where we have to set up the programme of training of teachers, looking for the resource materials and so on. It has already been mentioned in the Government's Programme, and I think that is a big step ahead.

Mr Obeegadoo: My good friend, the hon. Minister, has not addressed the supplementary question I just put. There are two distinct issues. One is the use of Mauritian Kreol or even Bhojपुरi as mother tongue medium of instruction, to which the Presidential Address appears to commit Government. On the other hand, there is the more complicated issue of introducing subject learning of Kreol or eventually Bhojपुरi. My question was: is the National Forum meant to address both issues?

Dr. Bunwaree: I said yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But, the more important is to get the Kreol language itself, to be able to establish it as a medium. For the time being, it is the oral Kreol that is being used as a medium. But you do not have the written Kreol. We are moving in that direction.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister agree that we are not starting from scratch? Will the hon. Minister agree that, since 2004, there has been the standardised form of writing agreed by everybody? There has been a *Diksyoner Morisyin* produced; there has been the experience of the BEC in using the Kreol language in the pre-vocational stream and on a pilot basis in primary schooling. Therefore, will the hon. Minister agree that we need not await the conclusions of this National Forum, which may take months, and then await the Steering Committee, to start preparatory work in terms of developing the grammar, in terms of preparing manuals for teachers, in terms of preparing a teacher training programme? That can be started in parallel right now, while the National Forum, which is a good thing, goes on.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we start making a dictation in this Assembly on the Kreol language, then you will find the difficulty. All this is interesting; there is no problem on that. People come forward with various ways of looking at it. But, I think the best thing that we are doing is to go in the direction of the National Forum, bring all people together, and then establish an expert committee to continue the work that has already been started. The *graphie de l'harmonie* is already a good thing. But we should work from there as quickly as possible, to be able to introduce this language *dans la panoplie des langues à l'île Maurice d'abord* and then, of course, as an optional language in school.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not mean to doubt the hon. gentleman's words, but I fear it will be a repeat of the 2005-2010 experience of '*bouge fixe*'. My question is: since there was a pilot project for the use of Mauritian Kreol as medium of instruction in three schools, with the agreement of parents in 2005, under the MSM/MMM Government, which was abruptly stopped after the elections of 2005, will the hon. Minister, at least, consider starting such a pilot project, which was supported by UNESCO, right from January 2011, while the National Forum goes on with its debates?

Dr. Bunwaree: I think the hon. Member means Government schools. But, in Government schools, we need so much other preparation, as I said. Materials, resources, training of teachers, educationists, and so on, have to be looked into. In fact, the MIE has already started, in parallel, without waiting for the Forum to come, thinking of how to train the trainers, the educators. But we cannot do it off hand like this. It is interesting if it is in one or two schools,

but for us to move ahead, I think we are in the right direction in what we are doing. In fact, we have gone quite steps further.

Mr Obeegadoo: Do I understand the hon. Minister to agree that a pilot project in a select number of schools can be started in January, next year?

Dr. Bunwaree: I did not mention in January. We will wait for this Forum and then, from there, we will decide on the course of action.

17/8/10

64

SCHOOL CURRICULUM – HISTORY OF MAURITIUS

(No. 1B/525) Mr J. Seetaram (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the school curriculum, he will consider the introduction of the History of Mauritius at primary and secondary levels with a view to promoting nation building among the students.

Reply: The History of Mauritius is already anchored in the Primary and Secondary School curricula.

In the first cycle of the Primary level, the History of Mauritius is taught in an integrated manner through languages. As from 2009, 'History and Geography' as a combined subject has been introduced in its own right in Standard III and IV and is examined at CPE level. The syllabus that is examinable at CPE comprises the history of Mauritius and its dependencies. Throughout the Primary level, pupils are made conversant to the history of our country.

As regards the lower secondary level (Form I to III), Mauritian history is taught from a wider perspective, that is in the context of the civilisation in the Indian Ocean, trade, colonisation, the British period till the independence and the proclamation of Mauritius as a Republic.

The school curricula at both the primary and secondary levels have been devised to instill a sense of belonging to the nation which is a key component of the building of national consciousness. All new textbooks, even those pertaining to the Asian Languages and Arabic carry components purportedly to foster the concept of nation building.

23/11/10
65

RODRIGUES – SCHOOLS - CRÉOLE RODRIGUAIS

(No. 1B/659) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the introduction in schools of the *Créole Rodriguais* and of the setting up of the *Académie Kréol Morisien*, he will state where matters stand.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with the announcement made in the Government Programme 2010-2015 regarding the need to encourage the use of mother tongues to facilitate the teaching and learning process and Government's commitment to work towards the introduction of '*Mauritian Kreol*' as an optional subject in schools of the Republic of Mauritius, my Ministry has initiated action towards the introduction of the language as an optional subject in schools.

Following submissions of inputs on the matter from various stakeholders, a national forum on this issue was organised on 30 August 2010 and was attended by a wide range of stakeholders including a representative of the Rodrigues Commission for Education. The objective of the Forum was to reflect on and come up with proposals for the introduction of *Mauritian Kreol* in schools.

During deliberations at the forum, consensus was reached to establish a Technical Committee known as '*Académie du Kreol Morisien*' that would look into all the aspects related to the introduction of a harmonised version of written *Kreol* for use in schools.

Rodrigues is represented on the '*Académie*' through the Commission for Education and its representative attends the meetings of the academy.

At its second meeting which was held on 10 November 2010, the '*Académie*' was honoured by the presence of the Deputy Chief Commissioner and Commissioner for Education of Rodrigues who expressed his satisfaction that the '*Académie*' will ensure that due consideration is given to the specificity of *Kreol* as spoken in Rodrigues.

Furthermore, it has been decided that a Working Group will be set up in Rodrigues as soon as possible and it will be assisted by resource persons from the '*Académie*' and the MIE. The views and inputs of the Working Group will be submitted to the '*Académie*' through the Commission for Education for Rodrigues. I am also informed that an appropriate mechanism is being set up at the level of the Commission for Education to submit materials on the language specificity of Rodrigues.

I shall personally Mr Speaker, Sir, ensure that the Working Group in Rodrigues examines all views and suggestions expressed by the stakeholders in Rodrigues such that the specificity of Rodrigues be taken on board.

Mr Francois: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that in 2003/ 2004, Government sent Professor Hookoomsingh to Rodrigues to meet and discuss with all stakeholders in Rodrigues with regard to *Créole Rodriguais* and the *graphie l'harmonie*. I have been advised that there is a report that was published where he proposed for the creation of a Rodrigues *Créole* language and as our *Créole* is different to that of the mainland, may I invite the hon. Minister to consider this report for all that will be taken on board?

Dr. Bunwaree: I am sure the report is being considered because the same person, Mr Vinesh Hookoomsingh is the Chairman of the academy, he is presiding over the works of the council.

Mr Obeegadoo: Will the hon. Minister give us some indication of the time frame decided upon for the introduction of Kreol as an optional language?

Dr. Bunwaree: I am very satisfied with the progress that is being done at the academy and I am sure it is going to come very quickly because we have the training of teachers also to consider. All this is being taken care of but I am sure that it is not going to take too long.

Mr Obeegadoo: Can the hon. Minister tell us precisely what measures are under consideration for training of teachers because the big question is who is going to teach Kréol?

Dr. Bunwaree: We are being advised by the Academy on that point.

Mr François: As the hon. Minister said Rodrigues is being represented on the *Académie Kréol* by a public officer and that is for invitation for institutional representation. May I ask the hon. Minister to call for a proper representation of Rodrigues, not from public officer but from the other stakeholders also?

Dr. Bunwaree: I think we are advised by the Rodrigues Commission for Education on that purpose.

At 12.59 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.41 p. m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised the Parliamentary Question Number 1B/667 has been withdrawn. Hon. Dayal!
