

GOVERNOR'S SYMPOSIUM 2014
REPORT OF RECOMMENDATIONS



**GOVERNOR'S
SYMPOSIUM**

EDUCATION

For

DEMOCRACY

Organizing committee Governor's Symposium 2014

- Mrs. Jorien Wuite (chair)
- Mr. Bastiaan Bolt (secretary)
- Mrs. Astrid Plantz
- Mrs. Anenda Zaandam
- Mr. Ajamu Baly and
- Mrs. Naomi Richardson

Table of contents

	Page
Introduction	2
Contributions	4
Recommendations	
Education for Democracy	5
Education as a civic value	6
Education as an economic value	6
Democracy and small island states from a historic perspective	7
Democracy from a civic perspective	8
Conclusion	9
Appendices	10

INTRODUCTION

The theme of the third Governors symposium 2014 “Education for democracy” was embraced by the symposium committee as essential and relevant for St. Maarten’s future development. As His Excellency Governor Holiday entrusted us with all relevant preparations for this symposium, the committee considered this broad subject as an excellent opportunity to sensitize the invited guests about current regional and local developments and recommendations related to education and democracy.

The annual Governors symposium is considered to be a supportive platform for all invited stakeholders to focus, raise awareness and hopefully function as a catalyst for good practices and priority setting. On St. Maarten and throughout the Caribbean education, democracy as well as education for democratic citizenship are increasingly seen as important subjects for discussion, new insights and commitments. The committee is honored to have been able to contribute to this process by working with the contributing keynote speaker Dr. Jules Didacus and speakers, Minister of Education Mrs. Patricia Lourens-Philips, Her Excellency Mrs. Lucita MoenirAlam, Mrs. Linda Richardson, Mr. Gaston Bell and Mrs. Jorien Wuite.

The final task of the committee is the preparation findings of the symposium. It is therefore our distinct honor to present the report with recommendations resulting from the respective speakers.

Together with His Excellency, we express gratitude to the speakers for sharing their valuable insights and hope for the follow up and execution of recommendations for government and other stakeholders in society and we hereby therefor confirm our sincere support to the recommendations and conclusions shared in this report.

As we created opportunity for the voice of St. Maarten’s youth through the presentation of St. Maarten’s youth parliamentarians let us highlight their vision of Education for democracy“ *Potential is untapped power, dormant ability, reserved energy and unreleased talent. In education for democracy we need to ensure that our children’s potential is released*”.

It is with this vision that we are confident that these recommendations support continuous dialogue, new insights & innovation in education as well as a culture of nurture of our democratic values and principles.

On behalf of the Symposium Committee 2014

Jorien Wuite
Chair Governors Symposium 2014

Organizing Committee:

Organizing committee Governor's Symposium 2014

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CONTRIBUTIONS

The Minister of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs gave an introduction speech eluding on the importance of our choices where we need to be with our education system in the 21st century.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Didacus Jules, was tasked with highlighting the correlation between education and democracy. In his speech the speaker touched on the philosophy and purpose of education, how education builds democracy and that education is an ecosystem and as a result needed interventions must be multi- and inter-sectoral.

The second speaker, drs. Linda Richardson was tasked with highlighting the purpose and aim of education, underscoring the role of education for leadership and social capital and providing insight on the development of contemporary education models.

The task of the third speaker, drs. Jorien Wuite was to present the state of affairs of St. Maarten's education system based on facts and figures and emphasize the relationship between education and the economy whilst touching on topics such as employment, income, economic growth, the knowledge economy and strengths and opportunities for return on investment.

The role of this fourth speakers, Her Excellency Mrs. Lucita MoenirAlam, was to underline democratic achievements, fundamental rights and freedoms, and regional developments in the aforementioned areas for small island states (within the Caribbean).

The role of the final speaker, mr. Gaston Bell, was to underline the reform in St. Maarten's democratic institutions, illustrate active democratic citizenship principles versus practices and emphasize why knowledge of the democratic system is a crucial component of civic engagement.

In addition, Ms. Murielle Jean-Michel and Dwayne Griffith representing the youth made a presentation on the topic. The full text of their speech has been included in the appendix to this report.

Based on the contributions of the speakers and the responses from the audience, the committee has derived a number of key recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations on Education for Democracy:

1. Systemic reengineering is required as our failure is systemic.

This refers to the following problems and rising trends in the Caribbean such as:

- Growing unemployment among youth: in some islands as high as 30% associated with a rising tide of hopelessness contributing to a high crime wave.
 - Under-skilled and under qualified persons for the job market.
 - Drug use and drug culture on the rise.
 - Migration between the islands.
2. Invest in active policy development to combat the above mentioned problems to enhance the ideals of democracy and the goals of education. It is emphasized that highly skilled professionals need to be delivered that are able to innovate and solve problems.
 3. Review existing educational legislation and evaluate if the system needs to be revamped in accordance to the needs of the job market.
 4. Evaluate the curriculum within our schools and assess if we are:
 - Facilitating empowerment through knowledge and practice,
 - Cultivating tolerance.

Recommendations following presentation on Education as a civic value:

1. Holistic education should be emphasized.
2. Revamp traditional educational models once proof and evaluation indicate that they are out of touch with current social economic developments. .
3. As this is considered critical for Sint Maarten, let us make sure to develop a language policy as teaching and language of instruction in your mother tongue is of proven importance to learning.
4. Helpful for our language policy and language of instructions is the establishment of a bilingual education committee.

Recommendations on Education as an economic value:

1. Invest in early childhood development as “The productivity argument” in young children” should be further recognized.
2. Improve St. Maarten learning outcomes, vocational learning and develop critical thinking as an important factor for economic development and innovation.
3. Performance based & accountable with result orientation.
 - Expansion of education budget is not the way forward. It is relevant to make shifts in current available education budgets based on needs and priorities for human capital development.
 - Evaluate FBE teaching and the preferred LOI (Language of instruction): consider Dutch examination as a foreign language
 - Strengthen the linkage between education and Social – Economic sectors to secure relevance of education for society and job creation.
4. Efficiency and innovation in (higher) education.
 - Higher education policies and standards should be developed and introduced, to enhance opportunities for students on island and adult education
 - Reform St. Maarten’s study financing model to ensure access, return of investment and sustainability of the system. Studying on island and in the region should be a priority.

- St. Maarten as an educational hub and profit center (USM, NIPA and beyond) should be strengthened.
- Adapt for a fast changing world and the knowledge economy: expansion of “IT in education” should be the way forward.

Recommendations on Democracy and small island states from a historic perspective:

1. As one would think that democracy is easier in a small or micro-state, we should be sensitive to the risks and limits of micro states and its effects on democratization as the international observations highlight that essential checks and balances and accountability can be weakened with negative consequences for corruption.
2. Besides elements of government and governance, it is emphasized that all actors in society are relevant and that the roles of NGO’s, the private sector and media are important.
3. In recognition that the roles of individuals are also important as they clearly display their current discontent with elections and democracy, it should be a priority to respect political and civil human rights as they are inherent for democracy.
4. The correlation between education and democracy is obvious and the awareness of this should be strengthened.
5. Lessons on democratization in small (Caribbean) states can be summarized as follow:
 - The better educated a nation, the higher the survival of democracy.
 - Democracy should not be taken for granted.
 - Vigilance, commitment, continuous education is essential. Small size itself will not make or break democracies.
 - What really counts practice what we preach in democracy.

Recommendations on Democracy from a civic perspective:

1. Create a more active citizen through enhancing knowledge of the democratic system (facilitate adult education).
 - a. Incorporate constitutional education in the school curriculum.
 - b. Encourage professionals in the field (e.g. law firms) to inform and educate society on pertinent topics of democracy.
2. Ensure more active citizenship through participation in helping society grow such as:
 - a. Provide information (sessions) on new laws via the Department of Communication and Community centers.
 - b. Raise public awareness of the democratic institutions of our country and their purpose. This can be done via these institutions themselves where applicable or via the Department of Communication.
3. Create apps on mobile devices to cater to a larger audience.

CONCLUSION

The committee members would hereby like to express their sincere appreciation to His Excellency, Governor Eugene Holiday for the opportunity to serve and play a role in bringing awareness to St. Maarten through this symposium. It has truly been an honor, and we thank you for placing this confidence in us.

As the committee we hope that the recommendations provided in this report will be put in working via the policy makers, to ensure that as a country we continue to educate our populous and further elevate our educational systems and embrace our democratic rights and responsibilities.

Our general recommendation is to explore possibilities to apply and actively use the introduction of the Youth parliamentarians contribution. This is considered an interesting and valuable instrument and medium to sensitize a wider audience about the importance of *Education for democracy*.

**On behalf of the
Organizing Committee Governor Symposium 2014**

Ms. Drs. Jorien Wuite, Chairlady

Mr. Bastiaan Bolt, Secretary

Appendices

Speech of the reps of the SXM youth reps

Potential is untapped power, dormant ability, reserved energy and unreleased talent. In education for democracy we need to ensure that our children's potential is released.

His Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning,

My name is Murielle Jean-Michel and my name is Dwayne Griffith. It's with great pleasure that we stand here today to introduce the topic: **Education for Democracy.**

The first question we'll pose is: What is the principal goal of education?

The principal goal of education is to ensure that people are intellectually, physically and emotionally inclined and are capable of doing new things, being exceptionally creative and not simply repeating what other generations have done.

The coat of arms of Sint Maarten consists of a shield with a rising sun and a motto. We want to direct your attention to the motto. The motto is written in Latin and it states Semper Pro Grediens. The English translation is - always progressing; or in simple terms always moving forward.

So by educating people and teaching them to think instead of what to think, they will be inspired to have unlimited ideas. With these unlimited ideas they are going to build a better future by not just learning but also improving on the mistakes of the past and present.

Now we'll pose another question: What is the principal goal of democracy?

It's a common practice to refer to goals rather than the actual goal of democracy.

The fundamental goal of democracy is the well-being of each individual as a distinct and significant member of the community.

With the objectives that best serve the interests of the people, in terms of human rights, living standards and the quality of life standards that reflect their highest aspirations.

After saying all of this, some people might be wondering what point are we trying to make?

Gone are the days of ancient when only the privileged had access to knowledge or when women weren't permitted the same type of jobs as men. Through education no matter your race, religion one can achieve what one works for; democratically

So to satisfy its purpose a democracy is obligated to use honorable and effective means to accomplish the honorable objectives of the people.

After researching the final question is: What is the link between education and democracy?

We conclude that in autocratic and dictatorial societies people are indoctrinated to think according to the doctrine of the country. As a result, they are not taught that they have the right to an opinion. Contrary, in democracies we are allowed, No, we have the right to choose our path of education. That's why we encourage the saying; if you want a stronger Democracy why not invest in Education.

The current leading hypotheses to promote democracy through education are:

Education increases the benefits of political activity because it increases human capital.

Education lowers the costs of political activity because the citizens are better able to make decisions.

Legislators have school instill democratic values in order to have the students support the system.

Education affects socialization equally, including its manifestation in politics.

From these hypotheses you can see that education and democracy are an inseparable duo.

Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.

We must prepare them from a very tender age and provide the education needed to bring the country on a higher platform with high standards and to inspire teachers to teach better.

Closing statement: Let's stop telling our students "the sky is the limit" when there are footsteps on the moon.

Stop telling them "to think out of the box" when we wonder why we are in the box in the first place?

We need to educate our people to understand that they are one idea away from curing cancer

one idea away from being a billionaire

one idea away from making the impossible possible.

Always inspire with unlimited ideas and different perspectives.

This Your Excellency, ladies and Gentlemen, and Distinguished Guests is Education for Democracy.