

International Bureau of Education

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

National Report of the Republic of Namibia

by

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NATIONAL REPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

1 The education system at the end of the twentieth century: an overview

Namibia attained independence on 21 March 1990. Formerly, under the apartheid government of South Africa, Namibia had been fragmented on ethnic lines into 11 education authorities. At independence the 11 education departments were combined in a single Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (MECYS).

In 1991 “youth and sport” were removed from the ministry’s portfolio, leaving it as the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC). In 1995 the ministry was split: higher education and vocational training became the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology (MHEVTST), and the ministry responsible for school level education and adult literacy became the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC). In 2000 the Ministry of Youth and Sport was abolished, with sport being added to the ministry’s portfolio and “youth” going to higher education. Currently the ministry is the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC).¹ Responsibility for early childhood education, initially with the MEC, was transferred first to the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing, and subsequently to the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare.

1.1 Major reforms and innovations introduced in the education system during the last ten years, in particular concerning:

(a) The legal framework of education

The legal basis for education was provided by the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, particularly Article 20, and by those sections of the National Education Act, 1980 (Act 30 of 1980) which had not been repealed prior to independence. No attempt was made to rush into drafting new legislation, as it was believed that there should be space for debate and experimentation before a new framework was developed. However, the Minister issued policy directives which provided the necessary guidance in the development of a new dispensation. In particular it should be noted that the Constitution, drafted prior to Jomtien, made provision for compulsory primary education, although it was not anticipated that it would be possible to implement the provision fully for some years. The drafting of a new education bill commenced about the middle of the decade, but was tabled in Parliament only in September 2000. At the time of writing, it had been passed by the National Assembly but still required approval from the National Council. The Bill provided for determining policy on basic² education and coordinating and supervising its provision. It provided for the establishment of a National Advisory Council on Education, Education Forums and Offices, a National Examination, Assessment and Certification Board, School Boards, and of a Teaching Service Committee by the Public Service Commission. There were also sections relating to state schools and hostels, private schools, learners, study courses, inspections, adult education, inspections, cultural institutions, and support for pre-primary education.

¹ In this report, references to the “ministry”, are to the MECYS, MEC, MBEC, or MBESC, depending on the date of the event

² The definition of “basic education” in the Bill is “formal education which is provided from the level of the first grade to the level of the twelfth grade”. Previously “basic education” had been defined as extending to the end of grade 10.

The Namibian College of Open Learning, NAMCOL, was established first as a directorate within the ministry, but in 1997 by Act of Parliament³ it became a parastatal entity, offering junior secondary and senior secondary education and various other programmes to out of school youth and adults.

(b) The organization, structure and management of the education system

The initial head office structure of the Ministry was cumbersome, as the ruling party at independence had undertaken to accommodate all serving civil servants. A number of resignations in the years immediately following independence made it possible to produce a more appropriate structure, which was approved in 1993. Some of the positions in the new structure were never activated, largely on account of budgetary constraints, and some small changes were made to the structure to meet changing needs.

For administrative purposes, the country was divided into six education regions, each with its own regional education office headed by a director. The number of regions was subsequently expanded to seven, each education region embracing either one or two or three of the country's thirteen administrative regions. When two subsequent delimitations modified the boundaries of some of the administrative regions, the boundaries of education regions were adjusted accordingly.

The ministry was managed by a Permanent Secretary, assisted by a Deputy Permanent Secretary⁴. There were two departments, one for Formal Education and one for Culture and Lifelong Learning, headed by Under Secretaries. Following some rationalisation the Department of Formal Education comprised two directorates,⁵ and that of Culture and Lifelong Learning four directorates.⁶ Four head office directorates⁷ reported directly to the Permanent Secretary, as did the seven regional directorates.

The ministry had an Executive Management Team which met fortnightly to advise the Permanent Secretary, and a Management and Policy Coordinating Committee which met trimesterly. The former body included the two under secretaries and the heads of the four head office directorates; the latter body included the heads of all head office and regional directorates.

Schools were encouraged to establish school boards to assist in the management of the institution. In the absence of clear guidelines for their functioning and a firm legal basis,⁸ the performance of these bodies varied greatly, some playing an insignificant role while others made well-argued recommendations to their regional offices, managed substantial school development funds, enhanced the teaching programme of the school and attended to the maintenance of facilities.

³ Namibian College of Open Learning Act, 1997 (Act 1 of 1997)

⁴ The position of Deputy Permanent Secretary was abolished in 1993, but reinstated in 2000.

⁵ Comprising the Directorate of Educational Programme Implementation and the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment

⁶ Comprising the directorates of Adult Basic Education, National Library and Information Services, Arts Programmes, and Cultural Heritage Programmes

⁷ The National Institute for Educational Development, the Directorate of Planning and Development, the Directorate of General Services, and the Directorate of Sport

⁸ Although the relevant sections of Act 30 of 1980 allowed school committees very restricted powers, there was no attempt after independence to enforce these restrictions

In each administrative region a Regional Education Forum was established to provide for consultation with the elected regional councillors. The functioning of these bodies was constrained, it would seem, largely by the lack of a budget to cover the cost of meetings. Since the Education Bill made provision for funds to be provided to cover these meetings, it was anticipated that the promulgation of the Education Act would enhance the effectiveness of these bodies by giving them a clear mandate.

(c) Evaluation policies, methods and instruments

The Public Service implemented a personnel appraisal system in 1997, which was applied retroactively for one year and then suspended. A personnel appraisal system for teachers was not implemented, on account of reservations expressed by the recognised teachers' union.

All directorates of the ministry reported annually on their activities, noting highlights, constraints and challenges. These reports were only moderately evaluative.

During 1999 a Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training conducted a review of what had been achieved during the first decade of independence, and made recommendations for the opening years of the twenty-first century. The Commission consulted with ministry officials as well as conducting public hearings around the country. It studied documents generated by the ministry, collected written submissions, and conducted an electronic discussion. In August 1999 a national conference was held, at which the Commission's findings and provisional recommendations were tabled. The final report was handed to the President in October 1999, and was publicly released in September 2000.

The recommendations in the draft report of the Commission were drawn on extensively in the drafting of a strategic plan for the ministry for the period April 2001 to March 2006. The plan was structured around eight "national priority areas": equitable access, education quality, teacher education and support, physical facilities, efficiency and effectiveness, HIV/AIDS, lifelong learning, and sport, arts and cultural heritage. Implementation of the plan would be monitored by head office and regional education directors, and by the Management and Policy Coordinating Committee. The precise modalities were still under discussion, and it was anticipated that adjustments would be made during the first two years of the process, as staff learned by doing. However, it was anticipated that monitoring and evaluation would be more objective than in the case of the annual reports, since indicators had been determined for all the targets in the strategic plan.

The monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of programmes at school level remained unsatisfactory at the end of the twentieth century. Apart from the measures provided by fully external examinations at the end of grade 10 and of grade 12, a semi-external examination had been introduced at the end of grade 7 (end of primary school) in 2000. The Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training had recommended in 1999 that a national inspectorate be created to provide information annually on the functioning of every school in the country, and the modalities of establishing such a service were being investigated in 2001.

The National Literacy Programme for Namibia was evaluated in 1995 and in 1999.

(d) Objectives and principal characteristics of current and forthcoming reforms.

At independence the broad goals of the emerging education system were set as access, equity, quality and democracy. These were elaborated in the policy brief *Toward education for all*, published in 1993.

The curriculum was structured in four phases, lower primary covering grades 1 to 4, upper primary from grade 5 to 7, junior secondary including grades 8 to 10, and senior secondary grades 11 and 12.

At independence the schools in Namibia were following South African curricula. Immediately following independence the revision of the school curriculum was initiated in order to make it learner-centred and relevant to the needs of Namibians, taking into account the pre-independence experience of SWAPO in exile. The new curriculum subsequently underwent a full revision and in 2001 was being subjected to a thorough review. The basic education curriculum, covering grades 1 to 10, was fully Namibian. For senior secondary the Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) was selected to ensure comparability with international standards and to open opportunities for further study abroad, but the curriculum was adapted at Namibia's request by the development of a number of subjects at Higher IGCSE level, as well as by the addition of subjects at IGCSE level. Syllabuses were developed for ten Namibian languages.

Following research done by SWAPO in exile, and consultation⁹ following independence, a new language policy for education was implemented. The mother tongue was to be used wherever possible as the medium of instruction for the first three years of schooling, after which a switch would be made to English, the official language. Namibian languages and some foreign languages would continue to be taught as subjects up to senior secondary level. English would be taught as a subject from grade 1, to prepare for the transition to English in grade 4. In practice, a number of urban schools made use of a provision which allowed a one-language curriculum to be taught (English only), although the intention behind the provision had been to cater for learners who did not speak a Namibian language. Following a language conference in 2000, revisions to the language policy were being drafted to bring implementation within the spirit of the policy.

It was recognized that the majority of teachers were inadequately or inappropriately qualified for their task.¹⁰ A new teacher education curriculum leading to the Basic Education Teacher Diploma, with grade 12 as the admission requirement, was devised for the training of teachers of grades 1 to 10, to be taught by the four colleges of education and through distance mode.¹¹ The Instructional Skills Certificate (ISC) was introduced in 1997 for serving teachers who did not qualify for admission to the BETD, but who could not be replaced, largely because they were serving isolated marginalized communities. The training of senior secondary teachers would be the responsibility of the university. Numerous in-service training courses were mounted, generally using a cascade approach, but restricted resources

⁹ E.g. Namibian national conference on the implementation of the language policy for schools, held at the Ongwediva Training Centre, 22 to 26 June 1992

¹⁰ Prior to independence it had been possible for teachers to enter teacher training with a grade 10 level qualification, while many of the older teachers from the Bantu Education system had an even lower level of qualification.

¹¹ The curriculum was developed within the National Institute for Educational Development, although it was to be taught by the colleges of education falling under the Ministry of Higher Education. In 2001 the distance BETD was still being coordinated by NIED, although the possibility of having it taken over by the University of Namibia's Centre for External Studies was being investigated.

prevented the level of follow-up that was necessary for new techniques to become part of the teaching routine in many schools. Investigations by the ministry, with the assistance of consultants, resulted in 1998 in a ten-year plan for the upgrading of teachers, which was substantially endorsed by the Presidential Commission. The recommendations were, where possible, incorporated into the ministry's strategic plan.

Following independence, new adult literacy programmes were developed, and a national system of literacy promoters and literacy organisers was established. Subsequently, adult upper primary education (AUPE) programmes were designed for those who had completed the third stage of the literacy programme. Successful completion of the AUPE course would allow access to the junior secondary programme of the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL).

1.2 Major achievements, both quantitative and qualitative, attained over the last ten years, especially in terms of:

(a) Access to education

Education in 2000 was provided in 952 primary schools,¹² 359 combined schools,¹³ and 118 secondary schools,¹⁴ with private providers managing a further 46 primary, 19 combined and 11 secondary schools. Most of the private schools were in receipt of a government subsidy. In 1990 there had been a total of 1204 schools.¹⁵

There were 514,196 learners in school in 2000, of whom 50.7% were female.

Year	Total	Lower primary	Upper primary	Junior secondary	Senior secondary	Other grades ¹⁶
1990	382,445	212,786	100,742	53,998	7,743	7,176
2000	514,196	232,386	156,111	100,267	23,530	1,902

The government endeavoured to accommodate all learners of school-going age seeking access to primary school, in compliance with its Constitutional mandate. In addition, access was provided as far as possible for learners completing primary school and wishing to proceed to junior secondary school. The external Junior Secondary Certificate examination, at the end of grade 10, was used to regulate admission to senior secondary grades.

Net and gross enrolment ratios for 1992 and 2000 are shown in the following table as percentages.¹⁷

¹² Offering both lower and upper primary phases, or only one of the phases, or only part of a phase

¹³ Offering a combination of primary and secondary grades

¹⁴ Offering both junior and senior secondary phases, or only one of the phases, or only part of a phase

¹⁵ From the ministry's EMIS database

¹⁶ In 1990 "other grades" included pre-primary and a so-called "bridging year", which were excluded from the 2000 statistics, since they were no longer the responsibility of the MBESC

¹⁷ The NER and GER were not calculated for 1990 or 1991, since baseline data was not available. Data collected in the 1991 national population and housing census was used to make the calculations in 1992 and subsequent years. The next census was scheduled for 27 August 2001.

Age group	1992						2000					
	Total		Males		Females		Total		Males		Females	
	NER	GER	NER	GER	NER	GER	NER	GER	NER	GER	NER	GER
7-13	88.3	134.2	86.2	133.6	90.4	134.8	91.5	119.4	89.3	119.5	93.6	119.2
7-16	87.6	115.4	85.0	112.8	90.2	118.0	92.1	110.2	89.5	109.0	94.8	111.5
7-18	84.3	100.2	82.1	98.1	86.6	102.3	88.7	98.8	86.5	97.7	90.9	99.9
14-18	27.2	48.8	23.2	44.0	31.0	53.4	45.5	64.1	40.3	60.8	50.7	67.4

The national literacy programme (NLPN) was offered in three stages. Of those who enrolled for the course annually, not all took the examination. The figures for enrolment in the three stages of the course, with the success rate in the examination, are provided for the year 1993/1994 and for the year 1999/2000.¹⁸

Year	Stage 1			Stage 2			Stage 3		
	Enrolled	Tested	Passed ¹⁹	Enrolled	Tested	Passed	Enrolled	Tested	Passed
1993-1994	16,995	12,456	70%	11,799	10,515	91%	5,613	3,372	90%
1999-2000	22,040	16,089	69%	15,026	10,668	81%	16,965	11,197	84%

In 1999-2000 just over 1,000 learners attended the adult upper primary pilot programme (AUPE).

Enrolments with the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) (and its predecessor units in the ministry) increased from 6,100 in 1991 to 21,303 in 1999. The composition of the 1999 enrolment was as follows:²⁰

Programme	Distance education				Face-to-face mode		
	JSC	IGCSE	CED	Total	JSC	IGCSE	Total
Enrolment	3,509	6,682	72	10,263	7,155	3,885	11,040

(b) Equity in education

Absolute equity will always remain an ideal. In Namibia, ten years after independence, there were many children scattered in small and isolated communities in which cost-effective class groupings could not be established. Although multi-grade teaching was employed in many of the smaller schools, it was regarded as second best both by the teachers and by the clients. In larger centres a shortage of classrooms necessitated the use of buildings in the mornings and afternoons for two different sets of learners and teachers. The children attending the afternoon session, often in lower primary grades, were generally tired and unable to concentrate as well in the afternoon as could their peers attending morning sessions. In the formerly disadvantaged areas of the country there were still many classes housed in temporary structures, ranging from fairly acceptable thatched structures to corrugated iron sheds with little illumination, cold in winter or the early mornings, and unbearably hot by mid-morning. All of these inequities were gradually being addressed during the last decade of the twentieth century and efforts would continue.

¹⁸ Figures for 1993/1994 are from the EMIS statistics. Those for 1999/2000 were provided by the ministry's Directorate of Adult Basic Education.

¹⁹ The pass rate is given as a percentage of those who took the examination

²⁰ *NAMCOL statistical digest 1999*, p.12. JSC is the Junior Secondary Certificate and IGCSE the International General Certificate of Secondary Education, both as taken by learners in the formal school system. The CED is the Certificate in Education for Development, offered in conjunction with the University of South Africa.

One of the greatest causes of the inequitable distribution of the education budget was the inherited situation at independence of well-qualified teachers drawing relatively high salaries, mainly in the central and southern parts of the country, and poorly qualified teachers drawing relatively low salaries in the more populous northern parts of the country. Despite efforts to upgrade the qualifications of under-qualified teachers, the situation was still heavily skewed in 2000. Not only did the average learner-teacher ratio range from 20.7 to 35.7 across education regions, with a national average of 29.1, but 48% of the teachers had either no formal teacher training or, although having formal training, had less than three years of tertiary level training. In general female teachers, accounting for 61% of the teaching force, were better qualified than their male counterparts.²¹

(c) Quality and relevance of education

In the absence of external monitoring at most levels of the system, quality was difficult to assess. The fully external junior secondary and senior secondary examinations showed a small but steady annual improvement in performance. In 2000 a semi-external examination was introduced at the end of primary school. Although externally set, the examination was internally marked. It was envisaged that arrangements would later be made for the objective remarking of a sample of scripts, which would allow a comparison of learner performance across regions and within regions. In 1995 the country participated in the first SACMEQ (Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality) survey, addressing grade 6 English reading comprehension and factors affecting achievement, with poorer average results than those achieved by the four other participating countries.²² The results of the second SACMEQ survey²³ of grade 6 performance in English and in mathematics, conducted in 2000, were still being analysed at the time of writing.

In the revision of the curriculum, attention was given to addressing such issues as sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, and environmental degradation. Mathematics and natural science were made compulsory subjects up to the end of grade 10. At junior secondary level every learner was required to take two “pre-vocational” subjects,²⁴ but in many schools the practical orientation of these subjects was neglected. Agriculture proved to be a popular subject in this slot, even if full justice was not always done to the practical dimension. Enrolment in technical subjects was low. The curriculum drew criticism because relatively few of the grade 10 school leavers and grade 12s who did not proceed to tertiary studies were absorbed into the formal labour market. The recommendation of the Presidential Commission that entrepreneurial skills be taught in secondary schools was under consideration as part of the ministry’s investigation during 2000 and 2001 into the place of pre-vocational education and careers guidance within the formal education system.

(d) Participation by society in the process of educational change

The establishment of regional education forums, one in each of the thirteen administrative regions, was encouraged as a mechanism for political and community leaders to assist in guiding the development of education in their regions. These forums had uneven success. Provision for the forums in the Education Bill might in time be superseded by the decentralisation process which would devolve school education to a regional level under the auspices of the elected regional council.

²¹ The statistics in this paragraph are from the ministry’s Annual Education Census of 2000

²² Mauritius, Zambia, Zanzibar, and Zimbabwe

²³ With 15 participating countries, two of which were yet to conduct their survey at the time of writing

²⁴ The range of pre-vocational subjects included technical, homecraft, commercial, agricultural and arts subjects and foreign languages

At school level, various donor-assisted initiatives were launched on a selective basis to involve school boards and communities more effectively in the running of their schools. These efforts were likely to continue.

Most notable was the wide consultation with all interested parties by the Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training in 1999.

After the Education Bill had passed the first reading in the National Assembly in 2000, it was referred to a Parliamentary Committee, which conducted hearings on the provisions of the Bill in all administrative regions of the country, before recommending modifications to the draft.

1.3 The lessons learned in the process of changing and reforming education systems: approaches adopted, successful or unsuccessful strategies, major difficulties encountered, etc.

At independence the government embarked with determination on reforms which would extend access to basic education, provide a relevant and learner-centred curriculum taught by well-qualified teachers, allow for the equitable distribution of available resources, and increase the participation of stakeholders in decision-making processes.

In the first three years of independence several policy directives were issued by the minister; these were largely consolidated in the 1993 education brief *Toward education for all*.

To improve access, schools were to be open to any learner seeking admission; although preference would normally be given to those living close to the school. Government funding was used for the construction of new schools in urban and rural areas, for the construction of classrooms to replace unsatisfactory traditional structures, and for the provision of other needed facilities such as toilets, administration blocks and specialist teaching rooms. New senior secondary schools were equipped with hostels, since they were expected to serve learners whose homes were a considerable distance from the school. Donors were encouraged to participate in the provision of classrooms for basic education, and several successful programmes were implemented, some of them involving community assistance. All construction was done to standardised designs developed within the ministry.

Access to adult programmes was ensured by taking the programmes to those wishing to participate, using whatever facilities were available. Enrolment in the senior secondary phase during the years 1994 to 2000 was not allowed to exceed the 1993 numbers, with the additional facilities at this level being utilised to reduce overcrowding. From 1994 and still in 2000 the numbers qualifying for admission to grade 11 (the first year of the senior secondary course) according to the performance level set as appropriate, were lower than the number of places available, with the result that candidates who fell somewhat short of the desired level of performance were also admitted.

The entire curriculum was reformed to make it relevant to the needs of the learners and of the country, and a new teacher education curriculum was developed.

The level of competence of many teachers was identified as an obstacle to providing quality education. This was to be addressed by encouraging underqualified teachers to upgrade their

formal qualifications to at least grade 12 plus 3 years of tertiary training, and by providing in-service training courses related to the new curriculum. The ministry and the colleges of education were unable to provide sufficient places in the pre-service programme to meet the demand of teachers in service wishing to upgrade their qualifications, with the result that many teachers enrolled for privately offered courses which were later found not to be recognised for salary purposes by the ministry. The cascade model accepted for in-service training proved much less effective than expected, partly because of inadequate budgeting for the further tiers of training, and partly because the content was less effectively presented lower down the line. Follow-up which was to be provided by advisory teachers did not take place as intended because many of the advisory teacher posts remained unfilled for lack of finance or for lack of suitably qualified applicants. Transport was frequently also a problem. In a small number of subjects, donor funded projects providing in-service training tended to be more successful than ministry programmes because of their restricted scope and stronger human and financial resources. At the end of the decade concern was being expressed at the low level of competence of many teachers in English,²⁵ the medium of instruction from grade 4 up. In many subjects little or no in-service training had taken place, while in critical subjects such as mathematics and natural science insufficient in-service training had been provided.

Ad hoc clustering of schools had been used as a delivery mode for some of the in-service training provided by donor agencies. In the closing years of the decade the systematic clustering of schools was embarked on in four of the seven education regions, with the intention of extending it to the other three early in the twenty-first century. Regional directors reported an almost immediate improvement in school administration and management training as a result.

Progress towards the equitable distribution of resources was slow. Two factors in particular influenced the situation: the number of teachers in a school relative to the number of learners, and the level of qualification of the teachers, which influenced their salary level. Generally the two factors reinforced each other, with the result that the schools and education regions with the higher learner-teacher ratios also had a higher proportion of poorly qualified teachers. The practical difficulties encountered in transferring teachers meant that the formerly well-staffed schools (in terms of teacher qualifications) continued to be well-staffed, while other schools continued to be served by inadequately qualified teachers. Overcrowded schools remained overcrowded because of a lack of funds to recruit sufficient teachers to staff all schools at the level of the well-resourced schools. It took some years before it was accepted that the pre-independence staffing norm used in the schools of the former Administration for Whites could not be implemented and sustained in the country as a whole. In the middle of the decade new staffing norms were developed, but disagreement with the teachers' union dragged on until the end of the decade. It was hoped that the new norms would be approved in 2001 and phased in over a three-year period. Although these norms would be sustainable, they were recognised as providing too few teachers for small schools or for the offering of much variety within the curriculum of individual schools. In particular, the delivery of life skills and career guidance was expected to suffer. The Presidential Commission recommended that schools be financed on a uniform per capita allowance, phased in over three years, but the modalities for achieving this were still to be worked out.

²⁵ *English language proficiency of Namibian teachers*, English Language Teacher Development Project in conjunction with the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, February 2000

Stakeholder participation increased at school level wherever school boards were established and met regularly. Various donor-funded initiatives for the training of school board members were piloted. While these improved the competence of school boards they suffered from the lack of clear guidelines and a legal basis for the functioning of school boards. Education forums in the regions, when they met regularly, provided a platform for the exchange of information and views between education officials and community members. Curriculum panels and subject committees drew practising teachers and college lecturers into the revision of the school curriculum. The teachers' union was invited to many of the discussions on policy development in the ministry, and was formally represented on certain bodies such as the Examinations Board. The language conference which was held in 1992 prior to the finalisation of the ministry's language policy for schools, was attended by representatives of many interest groups, while the Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training consulted widely with stakeholders in 1999. It appeared that where there was sufficient interest on the part of stakeholders, there would be involvement even in the absence of formal structures. But where the critical mass of interest was lacking, clear guidance would have to be provided by the ministry on the nature of involvement to be encouraged. It was likely that this would be forthcoming once the Education Act and its regulations were promulgated.

1.4 The main problems and challenges facing national education at the beginning of the twenty-first century

The ministry's strategic plan for the period 2001 to 2006, launched in April 2001, made provision for addressing a number of challenges.

(a) Equitable distribution of resources

The greatest challenge would be to implement the recommendation of the Presidential Commission regarding the equitable distribution of resources. If approached simplistically, the rapid implementation of a strict per capita allocation might, for example, lead to a reversal in the inequitable distribution of teachers. Other things being equal, regions with the best qualified teachers might be compelled to increase class size well beyond the recommended norms, while regions with poorly qualified teachers might receive funds beyond their capacity to absorb them. The expected phasing in of new learner-teacher norms would only partly address the problem. The challenge would be to devise and implement a formula which would allow for steady progress towards a strict per capita funding basis, while restricting the impact of any negative side-effects. The allocation of the development budget for capital works was already based on a formula taking account of relative shortages and needs.

(b) Improving the quality of education

To the extent that quality was affected by a shortage of facilities, it was envisaged that good progress would be made during the period up to 2006, provided that donors continued to top up the government funds allocated for this purpose.²⁶ The greatest challenge to the improvement of quality was enhancing the competence of teachers, which would be done by focusing both on the upgrading of formal qualifications and on in-service training. The ministry had largely accepted recommendations providing for this to happen over a ten-year period. However, there had been delays in the initial phase of this programme, which

²⁶ In 2001/02, for example, donors added about N\$33 million to the government allocation of N\$44 million for basic education facilities. Apart from this support, via the State Revenue Fund, there were other donor-funded construction projects.

involved the restructuring of the advisory service and the filling of vacant advisory teacher posts. Financial constraints were also expected to have an impact on the programme.

A further problem, to which no acceptable solution had yet been proposed, was the escalation of the remuneration bill caused by the improvement of formal qualifications of teachers and general pay increases. Since government was already allocating a quarter²⁷ of its budget to the two education ministries, there was little hope of increases in the budget proportionally greater than growth in the country's economy.

(c) Access for members of marginalized groups

The Presidential Commission had recommended that emphasis should shift from access, which had received unrelenting attention during the decade ending in 2000, to equity and quality. However, as part of the government's constitutional obligation to provide compulsory primary education, the ministry had undertaken to continue with its provision of schooling for children from marginalized groups. While good progress was being made with close-knit marginalized communities, the needs of scattered small groups were difficult to address, including, for example, children on large commercial farms.

The need to reach marginalized groups was underscored by government's overall efforts to combat poverty, as proclaimed in the country's First and Second National Development Plans.²⁸ In this regard, continuing efforts were to be made to bring adult literacy and adult upper primary education programmes to groups where these skills needed to be developed.

(d) Efficiency and effectiveness

Government had approved a broad framework for the decentralization of services to the thirteen elected regional councils. The initial planning for the decentralization of education services, entailing the restructuring of seven regional education offices²⁹ as components of thirteen offices,³⁰ resulted in a design that would be too costly to implement. The ministry would continue to refine the plan to a level where cost-effectiveness was achieved.

In general, efforts had been made and were continuing to enhance the productivity of staff at all levels. Factors such as staff commitment and dedication, a sense of responsibility in the approach to one's work, the efficient use of time and resources, and taking initiative, were some of the aspects being addressed. In the school situation time on task, the mastery of basic competencies, the flow of learners through the system, and a reduction in the level of drop-out, were some of the challenges being faced.

In 2001 the National Institute for Educational Development was undertaking a review of the full school curriculum. One of the issues to be addressed was the possible rationalisation of the many optional subjects at junior and senior secondary level. The gradual localisation of the senior secondary examination was expected to bring about cost savings along with building competence among Namibian teachers as examiners.

²⁷ For the 2001/02 financial year, the two education ministries jointly received 24% of the government budget

²⁸ NDP1 covered the period 1995 to 2000. NDP2, covering the period 2001 to 2006, was almost ready for publication at the time of compiling this report.

²⁹ "Decongested" offices in the terminology of the plan.

³⁰ Which would operate under delegated authority for an interim period, leading to the full devolution of responsibility to these offices.

(e) HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS pandemic was an increasingly serious problem facing Namibia in the closing decade of the twentieth century. If the rapid spread of the disease could not be halted, the population of the country would be greatly reduced and the plans for national economic and personal development would be nullified. The impact on the educational system would also be profound. Many teachers and learners would become HIV/AIDS positive and, even if there were a long period of remission, would be likely to die of AIDS. In 2001 the ministry was engaged in a comprehensive study of the impact of HIV/AIDS on the educational system and of the interventions which should be made. The school curriculum had already been modified to include teaching on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

The Presidential Commission recommended that effective teaching on HIV/AIDS should be given in schools and all education institutions and offices. An integrated approach to the prevention of HIV/AIDS must be adopted. Schools should work with parents and community leaders as well as children to try and address this problem. The ministry formed a small Task Force to energise this process in collaboration with the National AIDS Coordination Programme. The Strategic Plan of the Ministry 2001-1006 identified HIV/AIDS as one of the ministry's priority areas within the plan period. The recommendations of a workshop in March 2001 on "Strategic and operational planning for the management and mitigation of HIV/AIDS in the Namibian education sector," conducted jointly by the two ministries of education, were expected to result in modifications to the targets and strategies in the strategic plan.

2 Educational content and learning strategies for the twenty-first century

2.1 Curriculum development, principles and assumptions

(a) The decision making process

The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) in the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture was responsible for spearheading educational reform and for the on-going development of curricula and teaching programmes for the school system.

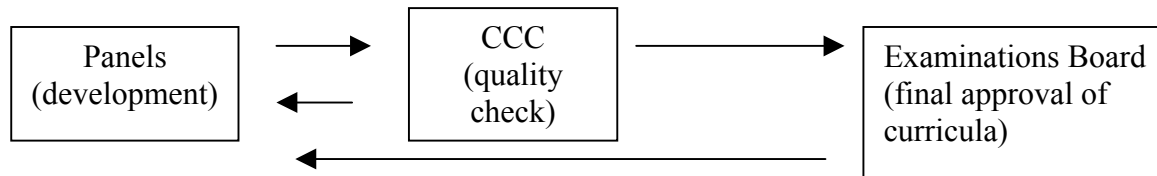
The Institute established and managed the national Curriculum Panels and Committees, which were obliged to provide continuous support to NIED on curriculum issues. NIED and these bodies carried the prime responsibility for all curriculum issues, since they kept in contact with the grass roots level in monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing the curricula. Where necessary changes were proposed to the Curriculum Coordinating Committee and the Examination Board for approval.

Textbooks were generally commissioned by publishers in the private sector and submitted to NIED for evaluation and approval, but when necessary NIED and its bodies initiated the development of learning materials. These bodies also developed teachers' guides and support materials and participated in teacher upgrading.

The Panels and Committees submitted all suggestions for changes to the curricula and teaching programmes, to the Curriculum Coordinating Committee (CCC) in the Institute for consideration. If needed the submissions were referred back with directives or for further research. If accepted by the CCC, the issues were endorsed and forwarded to the National

Examinations Board for consideration and approval. The Examination Board carried ultimate responsibility for approving the study programmes as per curriculum and subject syllabuses.

The process was mostly from bottom to top. However, the Examinations Board was also obliged to instruct the Institute to pursue specific curriculum issues or suggest policy changes or areas to be included in the curriculum in the national interest. Such an issue could be the teaching of information technology (IT) in schools, the inclusion of HIV/AIDS information, or attention to entrepreneurship, etc.



(b) Curriculum planning and design

The Institute ensured that all curricula adhered to the national priorities in education: *quality, access, equity* and *democracy*. Furthermore, the curricula should be relevant and useful to the national and local needs, mirror the expectations and aspirations of the nation and allow for individual needs as far as possible. In line with national policies all study programmes recognised the demography of the Namibian population and were geared to strengthen the national vision of *unity in diversity*. In recognition of world-wide requirements, the curriculum was gender sensitive, unbiased regarding race, culture, colour or creed, promoted human rights and was firmly founded on internationally accepted curriculum theories.

Since the curriculum was strongly committed to competency and skills development, the educational aim was intellectual development through the promotion of functional literacy and numeracy, language development, mathematical thinking, personal development and self-fulfilment, health and physical development, spiritual and ethical development, aesthetic development, social and cultural development, vocational orientation, economic development, political development, national unity and international understanding and the development of understanding environmental and population issues. The teaching content and competencies required competencies of learners included investigating, interpreting, communicating, valuing, participating and the application of knowledge and skills.

Subject matter was organised according to the different study disciplines such as mathematics, language and science. Where appropriate, different disciplines were integrated, such as “environmental education” in the lower primary phase which integrated science, home ecology, civic issues, family life, historical and geographical aspects, as well as cultural information. In the upper primary phase “social studies” integrated history, geography, civics, culture and life skills. In the junior secondary phase the subject “life science” incorporated the biological and agricultural sciences into a single subject area. Throughout the educational system “religious and moral education” was not only about morals and ethics, but also the study of all the major religions in Namibia and the world.

The knowledge contained in each one of the study areas was divided into subjects and the content was selected to suit the developmental level of the children, and captured in subject syllabuses per grade. Between the different grades the content and competency demands increased in a spiralling approach by linking up with previous knowledge and progressively setting higher demands. By applying internationally accepted curriculum theories the developers used instruments to ensure appropriate depth and breadth in the curriculum. It was

important to ensure that all the learning domains were included in each one of the syllabuses in order to provide for balanced development. These domains were crucial to ensure cognitive development, psychomotor development, affective development and inter-personal development. The syllabus developers were sensitive in ensuring an acceptable balance between the domains in subjects and determined the weighting of domains and levels of knowledge according to the nature of the subject content.

(c) Teaching and learning strategies

The teaching policy in Namibia was learner-centred. Consequently, it was expected of teachers to create learning opportunities in class for learners to be exposed to problem solving, to be creative and innovative and to develop skills in a participative way, as well as to be able to work individually and to do minor research. Project work and assignments where learners work individually or in groups was part and parcel of the teaching approach endorsed in the Namibian education system.

Teachers received teachers' guides, syllabus guides and subject policies to support them in following the correct methods. The subject syllabuses were user friendly and communicated the learning content, topic objectives and basic competencies in a measurable and easily understandable way.

All learning materials were developed according to the requirements of the syllabi and provided substantial guidance to teachers through tasks and exercises.

A network of support services existed in the ministry. Locally based advisory teachers frequently visited teachers and support them on the ground while regional teacher resource centres (TRCs) ran different courses on demand for teacher self-development. However, the intention of supporting teachers through regular in-service training courses could only partially be met, in consequence of financial constraints, distances between schools, and a shortage of advisory teachers.

(d) Assessment policies and instruments

For the lower primary phase all assessment was continuous. The national continuous assessment policy and guidelines were in the possession of teachers and grading schedules were provided.

The upper primary and junior secondary phases partly used continuous assessment, while most of the assessment was formative through written tests and examinations. Learners were internally assessed and promoted according to national promotion guidelines and assessment requirements as stipulated in the teaching syllabuses. All test papers were checked and provided with a memorandum and marking scheme according to the stipulations of the syllabus.

External assessment was done in Grade 7, Grade 10 and Grade 12. Grade 7 assessment from 2000 was partially an external examination where the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment set the papers and the examination and grading was conducted internally at the schools. Grades 10 and 12, being the exit points from the school system, had fully-fledged external examinations. The assessment papers were externally set, marked and graded. Quality assurance was applied through a rigorous moderation and monitoring process supported by strict regulations and requirements.

It was intended that learners who were not up to standard during teaching would have access to remedial teaching and compensatory programmes to be conducted by the schools. In many schools this assistance was inadequate on account of over-large classes or shortcomings in teacher competence. Learners failing to meet the required level at the end of a school year could repeat a maximum of one grade in each one of the three school phases in basic education. In cases where learners showed no aptitude or severe scholastic retardation, they might be scholastically tested and referred to special classes or special schools catering for their specific needs; however, in many parts of the country these facilities were not yet available.

(e) Time tabling

For the *Lower Primary Phase* the percentage time allocation on the teaching time table for a school week was as follows:

- Linguistic and literacy 36%
- Mathematical 21%
- Scientific and social 23%
- Aesthetic 5%
- Spiritual and ethical 5%
- Physical 5%
- Technological 5%

For the *Upper Primary and Junior Secondary Phases* the percentage time allocation on the teaching time table for a school week was as follows:

- Linguistic and literacy 22%
- Mathematical 16%
- Natural scientific 16%
- Social and economic 16%
- Technological 20%
- Aesthetic and physical 5%
- Spiritual and ethical 5%

In the *Senior Secondary Phase* the learners were obliged to take six subjects from a wide selection available in the Broad Curriculum. At least one language in the curriculum was compulsory. All learners took the official language (English), while another language (Namibian language) was the norm. Learners selected four more subjects from to the following fields of study: Agricultural field; Commercial field; Home Economics and Health Education field; Social Sciences and Humanities field; Natural Science and Mathematics field; Technical field of study.

The time allocation for the school week for the *Senior Secondary Phase* was as follows:

- Official language 17.5%
- Another language 15%
- Four promotion subjects 60%
- Physical education 2.5%
- Life skills 2.5%
- School organisation/Assembly 2.5%

2.2 Changing and adapting educational content

Curriculum content needs to be changed or adapted from time to time to ensure the inclusion of new knowledge and the elimination of outdated information. Educational content also needs to be aligned with emerging and developing needs of society.

The ministry embarked on the transformation of the entire education system when Namibia gained its independence in 1990. The transformation was necessary to ensure that educational provision was in line with the new goals of education (access, equity, quality, democracy) and the paradigm of education adopted by the Government of Namibia. The first curriculum reform cycle started in 1991. The first full cycle for curriculum implementation from grade 1 to 12 was completed at the end of 1999. The ministry decided in 2000 to review the experiences of curriculum development and reform of the first decade of independence, and to look ahead to the needs and challenges of curriculum development in the next decade and the 21st century. The ministry established a Curriculum Review Task Force consisting of the major partners and stakeholders in education, including teachers' unions, the University of Namibia, the Polytechnic of Namibia, vocational training and the colleges of education. The task force had to analyse the recommendations made by the ministry's 1996 Efficiency Programme Report and by the Presidential Commission in 1999. Some of these recommendations suggested streamlining and rationalisation of the curriculum, while others suggested the inclusion of new subjects or new elements in subjects. However, the curriculum review would go beyond the recommendations of the above reports and would examine the basic education and senior secondary curricula in terms of design, relevance, efficiency, language issues, assessment, consistency and coherence. The processes of curriculum development as well as the models utilised would also be evaluated.

The overall questions which would be addressed during the review were:

How well was the curriculum functioning? What should be done about it? Why and how?

What methods should be used to find answers to these questions?

Some of the key issues arising from these questions are tabulated below.

AREA	KEY ISSUES	COMMENT
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there coherence across subjects within grades and phases? • Is there articulation from grade to grade and phase to phase? • Is there consistency throughout? • What other examples of curriculum design are there which might inform Namibia? • How well do they function in their contexts? 	The fundamental issues are the concepts of knowledge, of learning, of society and the values which underpin the curriculum, i.e. in relation to what does a curriculum have to be coherent, articulate and consistent?
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the curriculum meaningful from the learners' point of view with regards to employment, the creation of work, and for further study? 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does the curriculum and its resourcing and implementation really reflect national policies (e.g. language, gender, environment, human rights, children's rights, minority rights, special needs, equity, access, efficiency, etc)? • How should the tension between globalisation and local relevance be resolved? • What cultural capital does the curriculum presuppose and what should it presuppose? 	
Internal efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the learners actually receiving in terms of the curriculum? • How well are the learners actually achieving and under what circumstances? • What would a fully resourced curriculum cost at the different phases? • Is the curriculum teachable? What level and what type of teacher competence does it presuppose? How many teachers have attained that level? 	
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would be the optimum way to design and develop curriculum documents for Namibia? • How often should curricula be reviewed and changed, and in what order? • What policies are needed to ensure that agreed curriculum processes take place? • What curriculum development processes are used elsewhere, and how well do they function? • What is the best way to organise textbook and materials production and distribution? 	
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the current curriculum policy for language being implemented? • What constraints are there on the language policy as it is? • What is the situation regarding materials, teacher education and assessment and examinations in the various languages? • What are other countries doing? 	The language issue is not explicitly mentioned in the terms of reference, but is recognised and will be treated as a central issue in the overall review.
Assessment and examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are assessment and/or examination being conducted according to curriculum intentions? • Do the curricula and syllabuses describe and prescribe assessment and examination clearly and consistently across subjects and phases? 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do teachers understand what they are to assess, and how? • How are teachers trained in assessment? • Is assessment manageable? • How reliable are the results of assessment and examinations, and what information can be obtained about the curriculum and teaching and learning process from them? • What in the curriculum is not assessed, and why? 	
Developments in educational and cognitive theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What advances have been made in our understanding of knowledge, intelligence, development, learning, teaching, etc., and what are the potential implications for curriculum development? • To what extent can these developments be made applicable to the African and rural contexts, and what is missing? 	
Perceptions and opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are children actually learning to read and write, and do arithmetic, in lower primary? • Why are children not learning good English? • Why are children not literate in their mother tongues? • Is the level of the junior secondary examination too low? • Is the H/IGCSE a foreign examination? • Why does school not prepare learners better for work? 	<p>Social ratification of the curriculum is important. What society expects from the curriculum and its perceptions about the curriculum depend on experience (in school or from anecdotes), understanding of the vision and goals of education, aspirations, values, etc. Some fieldwork will have to be done in this respect.</p>

The various curriculum panels and working groups were assigned specific terms of reference to investigate, research, and on which to make recommendations to the task force. The task force would then consider their findings and recommendations, and might request further investigation or research. The task force would inform and consult with various stakeholders throughout the process of the review. A draft report of the review would be widely disseminated and discussed, after which the final report would be developed and plans and strategies for implementation of the recommendations would be devised.

The problems encountered were that curriculum developers do not always keep abreast of developments in their subject areas, while some curriculum developers lack the necessary expertise and attitudes necessary for successful curriculum development. Furthermore, the general public and some politicians often speak as if all the problems of society can be addressed through adapting the school curriculum. Such unrealistic expectations, if implemented, would lead to curriculum overload.

3 Documentary references used in the preparation of the national report

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Republic of Namibia. *Report of the Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training, Volume 3, Annex (ii)*. Windhoek. Capital Press, 2000, reprinted Gamsberg Macmillan, 2001 (ISBN 9991602844).³¹

³¹ This volume contains a comprehensive bibliography of literature consulted by the Commission.