

NATIONAL REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN NAMIBIA



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MINISTRY OF BASIC EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MESSAGE BY HONOURABLE JOHN MUTORWA: MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE

In his statement to the International Conference on Education , the Minister of Basic Education, Sport and Culture wrote:

Namibia



John Mutorwa

Minister of Basic Education, Sport and Culture

Creating Learning Societies

Namibia has made considerable progress since its political independence in early 1990. Inequalities in education have been substantially reduced, yet unemployment rates for especially the youth, poverty, and low economic growth still prevail. In order to deal with these and other challenges, Namibia developed its national development strategy, Vision 2030, in which education and training are expected to play critical roles.

The challenges for the education sector in Namibia are to translate this vision into realistic and implementable programmes, and to develop and adopt a set of interventions which will raise the quality of educational provision, lead to the elimination of inequalities, establish affordable and sustainable systems, enhance institutional and management capacities, and produce knowledgeable, competent and innovative graduates.

In our efforts, to prevent HIV and AIDS and mitigate its effects on our young people, to decentralize educational services to communities, enhance community involvement, eradicate illiteracy especially among our rural population, and take advantage of the new technologies, we need to remember that it is not only what happens in the classroom that has an impact on young people's achievements, but also whether they are part of a learning society, with an integrated approach to learning – one that seeks synergies between different components of the education system.

If it is true that literate parents have literate children, then it is important to invest in the literacy of especially women. If it is true that our teachers must be well qualified and keep updating their knowledge, then we need to invest in open and distance learning systems, from which many others in society will also benefit. If we want learning to be relevant to people's interests and to contribute to national development, then we must invest in libraries and information systems so that research at many levels is possible.

Facts about Namibia

Colonial history

South Africa occupied the German colony of South-West Africa during World War I and administered it as a mandate until after World War II, when it annexed the territory. In 1966 the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) Movement launched a war of independence for the area that was soon named Namibia, but it was not until 1988 that South Africa agreed to end its administration in accordance with a UN peace plan for the entire region. Independence came in 1990 following multi-party elections and the establishment of a constitution. President Sam Nujoma is the country's first and Founding President and will be handing over the presidency in 2005 after the National and General elections to be held in November and December 2004.

Geography

Namibia is located in the south western part of Africa bordering the South Atlantic Ocean, Angola in the north, Zambia in the north east, Botswana in the east and South Africa in the south. Its geographic coordinates are 22 00 S, 17 00 E. The country covers an area of 825 418 sq km. It has a desert climate that is generally hot and dry with sparse and erratic rainfall.

Population

The July 2004 population estimates put Namibia's population at 1, 954,033. However, these estimates explicitly took into consideration the effects of access mortality due to HIV and AIDS which can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality and death rate, lower population growth rates, as well as the distribution of population by age and sex. The 2004 population growth rate percentage estimate is 1,25 %. The HIV and AIDS adult prevalence was estimated at 22.5% in 2001.

Economy

The economy is heavily dependent on the extraction and processing of minerals for export. Mining accounts for 20% of GDP. Rich alluvial diamond deposits make Namibia a primary source for gem-quality diamonds. Namibia is the world's fifth-largest producer of uranium, and the producer of large quantities of lead, zinc, tin, silver, and tungsten. The mining sector employs only about 3% of the population while about half of the population depends on subsistence agriculture for its livelihood. Namibia normally imports about 50% of its cereal requirements. In drought years food shortages are a major problem in rural areas. A high per capita GDP, relative to the region, hides the great inequality of income distribution. The Namibian economy is closely linked to South Africa with the Namibian dollar pegged to the South African rand. It is hoped that privatisation of several enterprises in coming years will stimulate foreign investment. Mining of zinc, copper, and silver and increased fish production were the leading growth points in 2003.

INTRODUCTION

At independence in 1990, Namibia inherited a society segregated along ethnic and racial lines. The apartheid ideology and policies led to dramatic inequalities and disparities in the quality of education services rendered to the various ethnic groups. The content, pedagogy, assessment practices and ethos of the colonial education was irrelevant and unsuitable to the needs and aspirations of the Namibian people. One of the biggest challenges was to build a new education system, where quality education for all became the cornerstone.

Following independence, the Ministry of Education undertook a comprehensive education reform process aimed at access, equity, quality, democracy and lifelong learning as principal means of investing in human capital to promote socio-economic development. While emphasis on structural change, learner-centered education, and universality provided strong foundations for a democratic educational system, the introduction of a new medium of instruction policy and insufficient attention to gender equity, complicated a comprehensive transformation.

In order to ensure that the education system is able to respond to the challenges of the 21st century, the development of a knowledge based society has become the driving force as contained in the just completed *Vision 2030* National Document. *Vision 2030* has challenged and put forward an agenda for education that aims to move Namibia from an export industry based to a knowledge-based economy, where the key components are specialized services, specialized industries (such as Mining and Agriculture) with value addition and processing, and communications and information technologies. According to *Vision 2030*, for this to happen, Namibians will require a total transformation into an "*innovative, knowledge based society, supported by a dynamic, responsive and highly effective education and training system*". In this regard, key steps are already being undertaken to ensure that the responsible government institutions play their roles in realizing the vision. For education, the following have been identified and are being pursued towards the realization of *Vision 2030*:

The Education System at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century: Overview

1.1 Major problems and innovations

(a) The legal framework of education

The Education Act of 2001 was promulgated in December 2001. The primary objectives of the Education Act are to:

- provide for an accessible, equitable, qualitative and democratic national education service.
- provide for the establishment of the National Advisory Council on Education, the National Examination, Assessment and Certification Board, Regional Education Forums, School Boards and the Education Development Fund.
- establish state and private schools and hostels
- establish the Code of Conduct for the teaching profession.
- establish the Teaching Service Committee.
- provide for incidental matters.

Other Policies and Legislation of Importance to Education

National Gender Policy

Both the National Development Plan (NDP) 2 and Education for All (EFA) documents indicate that gender equity is not a major issue in primary education in Namibia, due to the considerable efforts made since independence to ensure equal access. However, there are still barriers to girls studying subjects traditionally considered to be male dominated. Staffing ratios are still unbalanced with far fewer women in senior teaching and management positions, and a high number of women teachers at lower primary level. *The National Gender Policy* specifically states that 'gender balance in education and training' is an area of concern within the wider gender policy framework.

The National Gender Policy outlines the framework by which implementation of constitutional issues can be encouraged, supported and sustained, sets out principles for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of gender sensitive issues. The framework and principles are aimed at enhancing effectiveness in the continued management and planning of the developmental processes in the different cultural, social and economic sectors of the Namibian nation.

National Policy Options for Educationally Marginalized Children

The Poverty Reduction Strategic Action Plan highlights gender, marginalized and vulnerable children and disparities reduction as key strategies in poverty reduction. Building on that, the *National Policy for Educationally Marginalized Children* is comprehensive and clear in defining categories of educationally marginalized children, and the main reasons for marginalization in education, inclusive of those with special learning needs. It sets out an implementation framework and defines the roles of NGOs and development partners in this area.

HIV/AIDS Policy

In the education sector, HIV and AIDS presents a big challenge to access and quality, as well as to the actual management of the sector. The rising number of orphans and children caring for terminally ill parents, coupled with depletion of family resources will, in the long run, make it difficult for children to enroll and remain in schools. Even if they access education, quality is likely to be affected by the psychosocial impact and the roles they will have to assume in support of the family. Namibia's teachers are at high risk of HIV and AIDS infection. Projections suggest that around one-in seven educators was HIV positive in 2002. This will have a major impact on the quality of education as the efficiency of such teachers is affected. The Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC) and the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation (MHETEC) are both committed to minimizing the social, economic and developmental consequences of HIV and AIDS to the education system, all learners, students and educators, by providing leadership in the implementation of the HIV and AIDS policy. The MBESC strategic plan states that "*The Ministry is to deal urgently and purposefully with the HIV/AIDS pandemic in and through the education sector, in cooperation with other ministries and agencies*".

Namibia realizes that *Vision 2030* cannot be achieved if more efforts and resources are not allocated to address the HIV and AIDS pandemic. In this regard, the education sector has established a Unit that is dedicated to initiating, coordinating and implementing strategies developed to combat the spread of HIV and AIDS. The 2001 estimate for people living with HIV and AIDS in Namibia was 230 000, while deaths associated with HIV and AIDS was at 13 000 per year. These figures are of great concern for the small Namibian population. This is the reason why *Vision 2030* has highlighted this issue and made it a requirement for all sectors of society to contribute through programmes aimed at arresting the further spread.

The education sector has developed a policy on HIV and AIDS which it is vigorously being implemented and will continuously be updated to keep abreast of changing circumstances.

Policy on Learners with Disability

The Government of the Republic of Namibia places specific responsibilities on the Ministries of Education to ensure that children and adults with disabilities are integrated into mainstream education. *The National Policy on Disability* states that: "*The Government shall ensure that children and youth with disabilities have the same right to education as children without disabilities*".

In order to realize this right for all children with disabilities and learning difficulties, the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture is currently examining the *Policy on Inclusive Education* to prepare for implementation. At present, the needs of children with disabilities and learning difficulties are met through special classes in mainstream schools or special schools. However, access to both special classes and special schools is limited due to the shortage of places. It is suspected that the educational needs of a significant number of children with disabilities and special learning needs are not being addressed. This is especially true for girls with special needs.

National Language Policy for Schools

The language policy in education recommends the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction from Grades 1 to 3, with Grade 4 as a transitional grade, and therefore a mixed medium grade. English is used as the medium of instruction from Grades 5 to 12. Thirteen national languages are used as media of instruction in the lower primary phase. National languages are taught as subjects from Grade 4 onwards. Only San languages are not yet fully developed for use in schools in the upper phases.

(b) The Organization, Structure, and Management of the School System

A single Ministry of Education was created at independence in 1990 to unify the previous racial and ethnically based education authorities. A single Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture has its headquarters in Windhoek. The Permanent Secretary is the administrative head and accounting officer of the Ministry, and is assisted at the executive level by a Deputy Permanent Secretary and two Under Secretaries. In 1995 the Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training Science and Technology (MHEVTST) was created, thus making a clear separation between basic and higher education. The administration of the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture is carried out through the department of Formal Education Programmes and the department of Culture and Lifelong Learning, which are headed by the two Under Secretaries.

Department of Formal Education Programmes

This department consists of the following Directorates:

- Directorate of Educational Programme Implementation and Monitoring
- Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment
- National Institute for Educational Development

Department of Culture, Arts and Lifelong Learning

This department consists of the following Directorates:

- Directorate of Adult Basic Education
- Directorate of Arts Programmes
- Directorate of National Heritage and Culture
- Directorate of National Library and Information Service

Working closely with the two departments are the Directorates of General Services, Planning and Development and the Directorate of Sport, which fall under the office of the Deputy Permanent Secretary. The Directorate National Institute for Educational Development services both Ministries of Education in that it deals with curriculum and professional issues for Formal Education, as well as for teacher preparation programmes.

After independence, Namibia was divided into 13 Political Regions headed by Regional Governors but 7 Education Regions headed by Directors of Education. However, in compliance with the central government policy of decentralizing central government functions to the 13 political/administrative regions, education was equally decentralized to all regions in 2003. While the Ministry is overall responsible for the running of the education system, it is the regional education offices that shoulder the bulk of the implementation of educational programmes on a day to day basis, by working closely with schools and communities in their respective regions.

The formal school system in Namibian government schools consists of 12 years of schooling broken down as follows:

- 4 years of lower primary (Grades 1-4), using mother tongue as a medium of instruction;
- 3 years of upper primary (Grades 5-7), (English as a medium of instruction starts in Grade 4 and goes up to Grade 12);
- 3 years of junior secondary (Grades 8-10); and,
- 2 years of senior secondary (Grades 11-12).

However the formal school system may also be divided into the following phases, some of which have combined phases:

- **Pre-Primary Phase**

This phase was transferred from the Ministry of Education to local communities under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Regional, Local Government and Housing in 1995. With the creation of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare in 2000, pre-primary education and broader aspects of early childhood development, catering for the under 6 years age group, were assigned to this new Ministry with the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture being responsible for curriculum content.

- **Primary Phase**

This phase consists of Lower Primary (Grades 1-4) and Upper Primary (Grades 5- 7). The policy of continuous assessment based on a set of competencies that learners are expected to acquire, provides the basis for the promotion of learners from one grade level to the other. A national Grade 7 examination in Mathematics, English and Science was introduced for the first time in 2000, to help monitor learner acquisition of the basic competencies in key subjects at the end of the primary phase.

- **Secondary Phase**

The secondary phase consists of Junior Secondary, catering for Grades 8-10 and the Senior Secondary, which caters for Grades 11 and 12. Learners write the International General Certificate for Secondary Education (IGCSE/HIGCSE) examination at the end of Grade 12. The examination has been conducted since 1995 with the help of Cambridge University, but efforts are underway to localize the system with effect from 2007.

- **Combined Schools**

These are schools "offering both Primary, Junior Secondary or Senior Secondary grades under one roof". Very few of the combined schools offer all primary and secondary grades.

(c) Curricular Policies, Educational Content and Teaching and Learning Strategies

To eradicate apartheid mentalities and replace the pre-independence Bantu education methodologies characterized by rote learning, democratic education pedagogical methods were adopted and promoted by the Government. This approach to teaching and learning seeks to create a classroom environment where the educator builds on the knowledge and experiences of the learners, encourages them to ask questions, focuses on systematic analysis, and promotes critical thinking, investigation, experimentation and discovery.

Promotion Policy:

For efficiency reasons, as well as quality issues related to widespread repetition, the Government introduced a semi-automatic promotion policy in 1996. Learners are permitted to repeat only once in each school phase, but not in Grade 10, though there are exceptional circumstances under which repetition in Grade 10 is allowed. In terms of policy, learners who fail to meet the minimum entry points to Grade 11 are encouraged to study through the Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) to complete formal education, or to upgrade their symbols/points and rejoin formal education. There is automatic promotion from Grade 11 to Grade 12, as it is a unified course offered over two grades. As a result of this policy, repetition rates have fallen overall.

Assessment and Examination:

The Continuous Assessment (CA) policy was introduced to provide criterion-based evidence of each learner's progress and level of achievement in relation to the minimum competencies specified in the curriculum and subject syllabuses. The Grade 10 Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) examination was introduced in 1993 for promotion to the Senior Secondary phase. The International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and the Higher International General Certificate of Education (HIGCSE) examinations were adopted in 1994 through a partnership with the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES). For the purpose of monitoring quality, a semi-external examination was introduced at the end of Grade 7 in 2000.

(d) Objectives and Principle Characteristics of Current and Forthcoming Reforms

Inspectorate: *The Strategic Plan 2001-2006* calls for the establishment of the National Inspectorate to assure quality and to review and monitor performance of schools. Data available from national examination registers (Grades 7, 10 and 12) and other sources make it

possible to identify schools that are performing exceptionally poor or well, with respect to certain criteria. The National Inspectorate is to be established in 2005 to evaluate the performance of schools and to execute quality assurance functions. National standards have been developed and piloted in 2004 to assist in ensuring quality of teaching and learning in schools. These standards are to be implemented in the 2005 academic year.

Lifelong learning: As indicated earlier, Government commitment to achieving Education for All, is not limited to formal schooling only. Non-formal education provision was developed and targeted for both adults and out-of-school youth, with literacy as the principal focus. Today there is a three-stage programme comprising basic literacy courses available in 10 Namibian languages, reading and writing fluency courses also in local languages, and a basic English component. A programme for the acquisition of basic vocational skills has been developed.

Curriculum revision: The formal school curricula are being revised to strengthen cross-curricular themes like HIV and AIDS and health education, human rights and democracy, environmental education, Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) entrepreneurial skills development and other emerging issues, and to eliminate obsolete content and practices. The acquisition of literacy, numeracy and life skills is emphasized at the lower primary level and the curriculum has been streamlined to reflect that emphasis. At the senior secondary level the emphasis is on the localization of the H/IGCSE curriculum in order to ensure more relevance and local application. The teacher education curricula offered by the Colleges of Education and the University of Namibia will be revised once the revision for the formal school system has been done. This will ensure that the teacher education curricula would be aligned and responsive to the needs and requirements of the school curricula.

National standards for the teaching profession: A National Standard Setting Body (NSSB) for the Teaching Profession has been established to develop a competency framework and standards for teaching. These standards will guide the development of teacher education programmes, the performance of teachers, and articulation between programmes offered by different institutions. The process is envisaged to be completed by the end of 2006.

1.2 Major Achievements

(a) Access to education

Implementation of the Education Policy on Access in Namibia has enabled the country to reap the benefits in the form of 95% enrolment rate of 6 to 16 year olds in the last few years. The net enrolment ratios for the 7-16 age group were 1999: 92.9%; 2001: 90,8%. However there is a serious concern about the access of San and OvaHimba children, children on commercial and communal farms, and street children and orphans, mainly due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic and inaccessibility and availability of services and infrastructure to these communities. The Ministry has therefore introduced specific interventions to improve access, e.g. the mobile school system for the OvaHimba children, satellite schools for the San communities in accordance with their nomadic life style, and the National School Feeding Programme for those poor communities where parents cannot afford three meals a day. In addition the *Policy on Teenage Pregnancies* provides for the readmission of girls to school after giving birth. Access of children with special needs to education lags behind the general increase in enrolment. Refugee children in Namibia also benefit from the national education budget through the provision of education to the Osire Refugee Camp.

(b) Equity in education

One of the major hurdles for achieving equity in the Namibian education system is the inequitable distribution of resources to the regions. This is a pre-independence legacy which will take a long time to rectify. During the implementation of NDP 1 efforts were made to equalize the distribution of educational expenditure per learner across regions. It was aimed

at reducing repetition, focusing on schools in those regions that lag behind, and allocating funds for textbooks and other materials equitably. The introduction of new staffing norms in January 2002, which are to be phased in gradually, is also aimed at bringing about equity in the school system. It is planned to deliver advisory services in the small entry subjects, like technical subjects, arts and craft, foreign languages etc. across Education Regions in order to facilitate equity.

(c) Quality in Education

The quality of education is influenced by many factors, such as teacher qualification, effectiveness, professionalism, resource allocation, language proficiency and management. To tackle these problems the Ministry embarked upon a huge programme of provision of classrooms, laboratories and libraries. More teachers are being trained to address the shortage of qualified teachers and to improve the competencies of serving teachers. The improvement of school management and governance is being done through the establishment of School Boards and the continuous in-service training of school principals.

(d) Content of Education

Since independence, education reform has been a major agenda of the education system. By 1999 the major part of the education reform process was completed. Curricula had been developed, together with new learner-centered teaching methods, continuous assessment procedures and semi-automatic promotion which allows a child to repeat only once in a phase with compensatory teaching being provided. New teaching materials are constantly being developed as curricular changes are being introduced by the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED).

One crucial aspect that has been receiving attention ever since independence, is the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools. Other new areas of study such as environmental studies, HIV and AIDS, human rights and democracy awareness, population education, information technology, entrepreneurship, resource based and lifelong learning are taking centre stage as cross-curricular issues. A Task Force on Curriculum Review was set up to identify needs and gaps and recommend how to rectify them.

(e) Policy Dialogue, Partnership and Participation by Civil Society in the Process of

Educational Change

Namibia advocates the process of consultation and participation believing that education is a participatory and partnership venture. In the process of any change to policy stakeholders are engaged in the policy debates. Stakeholders such as parents, teacher unions, student unions, the private sector, political and non-governmental organizations are consulted on policy development or change. The current educational debates centre around:

- Setting of National Standards and guidelines to ensure quality of education
- Putting in place a competency framework and National Standards for the Teaching Profession
- Effective utilization of teachers and improving teachers' conditions of service, especially accommodation in rural areas
- Mitigating the effect of HIV and AIDS in the education sector, and providing relief arrangements for the teachers who are terminally ill
- Empowering school boards in order to guide and run schools effectively, especially in the management of the school development fund
- Restructuring the inspectorate and advisory services in order to improve the quality of school supervision, teaching and learning and support to teachers
- Expanding the use of mobile schools in order to support access to education of the

- marginalized especially the OvaHimba, San and other vulnerable children
- Strengthening the provision of education for children with special educational needs
- Equitable distribution of resources to regions through the review of the funding formula in line with the decentralization policy.
- Reduction of cost in the running of hostel services.

1.3 Main Problems and Challenges facing the Education System at the beginning of the Twenty First Century

The Namibian Education system faces a number of challenges as indicated below:

- Fourteen years after independence the country has been unable to provide adequate skilled human resources and the country continues to experience high rates of unemployment and underemployment.
- Current levels of expenditure on education may not be sustainable in the long run owing to low economic growth and increasing government budget deficits. Even if the education sector receives the largest share of the government budget, over 80% of this goes to personnel costs and less than 20% is left for capacity building, educational materials and equipment and other running costs. It is hoped that the implementation of the new staffing norms will help in devising a more equitable formula for allocating resources according to education units.
- There is still a need to improve the conditions for teaching and learning, especially in the rural areas in order to improve the quality of educational outcomes, particularly in critical areas such as Mathematics, Science and English. This may partly be achieved by more in-service training and support to teachers to acquire relevant competencies for effective teaching.
- The MBESC is in the process of organizing and strengthening advisory service structures by establishing educator development and support (EDS) units in all Education Regions. This is to go hand in hand with developing continuous professional development (CPD)/INSET programmes for advisory teachers and TRC managers, as well as supporting their advanced studies for qualification upgrading purposes.
- A number of policies, all essential to the successful implementation of EFA have been developed and are in place. However, there are still challenges in ensuring coordination of efforts towards their wide dissemination and implementation by all stakeholders:
 - National Early Childhood Development Policy
 - National Gender Policy
 - School Health Policy
 - Policy on Teenage Pregnancies
 - HIV / AIDS Policy
 - Policy on Disability
 - A policy framework for Libraries and Allied Information Agencies for Namibia.
 - The envisaged establishment of the proposed National Inspectorate to monitor the

provision of quality education for all according to set national standards and the localization of the IGCSE examinations, are major challenges that are being tackled.

- In addition, the intention is to provide for new models of learning and acquiring knowledge with the conviction that education can contribute substantially towards creating responsible citizens who are able to build their own lives and make their own living. A special challenge is to reach out to the educationally marginalized, the impoverished, and those living in the most remote areas of the country.
- The population growth has been affected by the increasing HIV and AIDS infection, which has led to many deaths, particularly among the young productive age groups. This has resulted in a number of children becoming orphans. To date the HIV and AIDS orphans in Namibia are estimated to be around 70,000. (Report on the Global HIV and AIDS Epidemic, UNAIDS 2001) This is a challenge to the education sector. In addition, the number of education sector workers, including teachers, who are lost due to HIV and AIDS, is creating an additional staffing challenge for the whole sector.
- An influx of refugees in Namibia has resulted in a growing number of refugee children. The Government is faced with the challenge of providing quality education to these children and adults since they have fundamental rights just like any other citizen.
- The Government, in conformity with the Salamanca Framework for Action (1994), makes provision for all children, irrespective of their special educational needs, to benefit from the same education through mainstream education. However, in Namibia, the reality is that children with severe learning difficulties receive education and training in a few special schools. There are still various barriers that exist with regard to the education of children with special needs and orphans and vulnerable children. Awareness to avoid negative attitudes and stereotypes needs to be reinforced, especially among teachers, peers and communities. The challenge is therefore to train teachers and personnel and to provide teaching and learning facilities that can cater for the needs of children with special needs in mainstream school.
- Coupled with these challenges, Government is faced with the daunting task of decentralizing functions to regions, the high unemployment rate, particularly among the youth, and the inadequate financial resources available to address these issues. .

2. Quality Education For All Young People: Challenges, Trends and Priorities

2.1 Education and competence for life

Namibia is fully aware of the fact that access to education, at secondary school level is limited. This trend was brought about by the strong emphasis placed on primary education after independence. The Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture is now in the process of preparing for the expansion of secondary education to allow more young people access to further and higher levels of training as well as better job prospects. Currently, the transition rate from Grade 10 to 11 is determined by the number of points acquired and the places available at Senior Secondary level, allowing for only approximately 50% transition. The majority of those who are not being placed in formal schools continue with their studies through the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL).

The education system in Namibia has recognized that secondary education provision has to be improved and expanded to adequately prepare school leavers for the world of work and further studies. To achieve this, the following priorities have been identified.

- Standardize the examination at Grade 7 to prepare learners entry to Junior Secondary .
- Increase intake and retention of learners at secondary school level to about 80%.
- Systematically review curricula to provide broad foundation skills for the world of work and further studies.
- Increase allocation of resources e.g. textbooks, and address regional disparities.
- Upgrade teacher qualification and pedagogic competence.
- Strengthen access to and use of modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) and relevant services in order to participate in the global and technological world.
- Expand physical infrastructure and improve the learning environment.

2.2 Conduct a comprehensive review of all curricula.

Currently, the education system in Namibia is undergoing its second reform since the country's independence. This was necessitated by the accumulated experiences of the last 14 years and the need to link school to the world of work. Whereas the first 14 years of independence were guided by the need to redress the past inequalities and injustices through access to education for all, equity of resource distribution to all , building and consolidating a democratic culture, and encouraging the population to become a learning nation, the years to come as seen from *Vision 2030*, will focus on relevant quality education which embraces the ever changing world of work, and prepare learners who are critical thinkers and scientifically as well as technologically literate. The process of curriculum revision is seen as an on-going process as the nation seeks to establish itself among other nations.

2.3 Develop and implement Human Resource Development Plans

For any nation to prosper, it is important that its human resource development is of high standard to ensure that it is able to compete with the rest of the world. Whereas Namibia inherited an undeveloped human resource base, *Vision 2030* has set in motion challenges that all sectors of the Namibian society will have to overcome in order to have a well developed human resource base capable of competing internationally. Education and training is one of the driving forces towards the achievement of this target. As Namibia continues to reform its system of education and governance, it is hoped that with targeted interventions, it will be able to achieve this goal as per the Human Resource Development Plan articulated in *Vision 2030*.

2.4 Establish more Vocational Training Centres and Community Skills Development Centres (COSDEC)

Vocational training and skills based Community Centres have been identified as critical elements to skilling communities and particularly out -of -school youth. In this regard, the National Standards for Vocational Training in Namibia are being developed to which all vocational training and skills based institutions will be required to adhere. This has been necessitated by the drive for uniform quality driven vocational programmes that correspond to the needs of the economy and the country. As Namibia pursues this objective, it is hoped that more institutions of this nature will be established to bring training closer to communities, and make it more relevant and responsive to their needs and that of the nation.

2.5 Strengthen the teaching of Mathematics, Science and Technology at all levels

The teaching of Science and Mathematics has been a challenge since independence in 1990. This has been due mainly to the neglect by the previous regime which excluded the majority of black Namibians from the teaching of these subjects. Coupled with this is the Information Communication Technology (ICT) era in which Namibia finds itself. In accordance with *Vision 2030*, all efforts are being undertaken to ensure that enough Mathematics and Science teachers are trained through bilateral and national programmes. Currently several Mathematics and Science teachers are being trained in Zimbabwe and South Africa through grants and loans by the Government of Namibia, in addition to those trained at Namibian institutions. Namibia has developed an Information Communication Technology policy which guides the ICT development of all line Ministries. The Ministries of Education have taken the policy and further developed a sub sector policy to guide education and training. As more of the country's schools get connected, it has become urgent and imperative that teachers become knowledgeable in the technologies available. All institutions of higher learning are required to have this component as part of their training programmes to ensure that they keep to the targets as set in *Vision 2030*.

2.6 Integrate entrepreneurship-training into the education system

After 14 years of independence and having gone through a complete cycle of curriculum implementation, Namibia has realized the need for entrepreneurship as part of the general education system. This was necessitated by the fact that not all who enter formal education complete with adequate and relevant skills for the world of work. In the current curriculum reform, entrepreneurship features strongly with the understanding that it will equip learners with appropriate skills that will enable them to be self employed if they cannot find formal employment.

2.7 Quality Education and the Key Role of Teachers

At independence, teacher education was reformed in line with the four major goals of education, which are *access, equity, quality* and *democracy* that were to be realised through the educational principles of learner-centred education.

Learner-centred education presupposes that teachers have a holistic view of the learner, valuing the learner's life experience as the starting point for their studies. Teachers should be able to select content and methods on the basis of a shared analysis of the learner's needs, use local and natural resources as an alternative or supplement to ready-made study materials, and thus develop their own and the learner's creativity ... A learner-centred approach demands a high degree of learner participation, contribution and production ... (it) is based on a democratic pedagogy; a methodology which promotes learning through understanding, and practice directed towards empowerment to shape the conditions of one's own life (NIED 2003: 7).

Teacher education reform in Namibia should be understood from the above contextual framework. It was considered one of the most important areas of reform at Independence, because of teachers' strategic role in the reform efforts. Within the new paradigm of education, teachers were seen to be 'both agents and implementers of change', and thus had to be adequately prepared for the task.

To meet the new expectations and demands of the emergent basic education system, a mere re-organisation and integration of components of the pre-independence teacher training programmes were neither politically acceptable, nor practically feasible. It is argued that for educational change to have any social significance, it has to restructure the way knowledge is organised.

It was recognised that teacher educators hold the position of authority and control over the structure of knowledge to a certain extent, and therefore it was crucial to work with them on changing their beliefs, attitudes and practices. The role of the teacher had to be examined very closely in relation to the stated goals and policies, and had to be redefined to align them to the prevailing conditions and situation. The design of the post-independence teacher education programme rested on the premise that deliberate and conscious interventions were to be made through teacher educators to meet the demands of the basic education system. The then Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) in its policy document, *Toward Education for All* (MEC, 1993: 37) expresses itself on this issue as follows:

Perhaps the most important challenge in improving the quality of our education system is to ensure that our teachers are well prepared for the major responsibilities they carry. More than anything else, it is the teacher who structures the learning environment.

It is essential therefore, that we help our teachers develop the expertise and skills that will enable them to stimulate learning. Their professional education must begin before they enter the classroom and continue during the course of their professional careers.

Within the new paradigm of education, teacher education, particularly pre-service teacher education, was seen as an initial step in an ongoing process of professional growth and development. Teacher education reform in Namibia has since independence been used to spearhead the efforts to transform the formal school system.

The Ministry of Education and Culture introduced the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) Pre-Service programme in 1993 at the four Colleges of Education,

founded on the principles of learner-centred pedagogy. The goal of the BETD programme is *to provide a national and common teacher preparation related to the needs of basic education, the educational community, and the nation at large. It strives to foster understanding and respect for cultural values and beliefs, “social responsibility,” “gender awareness and equity.”* It also strives to *instil an awareness of how to “develop a reflective attitude and creative, analytical and critical thinking; understanding of learning as an interactive, shared and productive process; and enabling the teacher to meet the needs and abilities of the individual learner”* (MHEVTST & MBEC, 1998: 39). The BETD programme aims to produce teachers who can meet the demands and rise to the challenges of the post-independence basic education system. Student teachers are exposed to a variety of teaching and learning styles, strategies and techniques, which will equip them to become competent and professional teachers. The BETD programme strikes a balance between subject knowledge on the one hand and professional skills and insight on the other.

The BETD programme places a stronger emphasis on the professional aspects of teacher education than the pre-independence programmes, i.e. the pedagogical and social aspects of teaching have a much larger portion in the school-based component of the programme of study. It emphasises learner-centred pedagogy and reflective, analytical and productive methods and approaches. It attempts to integrate various types of exposure to classroom situations so that theory and practice can be integrated meaningfully for the benefit of the student teacher

The central concept in the BETD programme is Critical Practitioner Inquiry (CPI). Critical Practitioner Inquiry, a term used in Namibia since 1995, is an umbrella concept used in teacher education and professional development courses for teacher educators. CPI is a concept developed to establish a new relationship between educational practice and inquiry. In this paradigm, teachers are viewed as researchers who can reflect critically on their own practice and the contexts in which they teach, change their practice according to the outcomes of their inquiry, while growing professionally and changing social reality in the process. Drawing on research, the assumptions underpinning CPI in the Namibian context are as follows:

- Teachers should not be regarded as “technicians” who are required to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations uncritically.
- Teachers are active, independent learners and problem solvers rather than passive recipients of information.
- Teachers are assumed to have the required skills to critique the written knowledge.
- The process of understanding and improving one’s own teaching should start from reflection on one’s experience.

- The process of professional development is a dialectical one generating theory from practice and practice from theory.
- Knowledge for teaching is constructed when teachers have the opportunity to reflect on their own practice, and use a process of inquiry into their own sites to learn more about effective teaching.
- Improved practice results from practitioners reflecting critically on their educational practices.

The critical inquiry orientation to teacher education was favoured primarily by the Namibian policy makers, because it supports the post-independence goals and philosophy of education. It emphasises the role of schools in promoting democratic values and reducing social inequalities, and therefore aims at enabling prospective teachers to become aware of the social context of schools and of the social consequences of their actions as teachers. This reflects an awareness of the importance of teachers' questions in the making of pedagogical theory. In this paradigm it is necessary for student teachers to view their questions and the challenges they come up against as avenues and opportunities leading to new insights and understandings. Critical inquiry recognises that practice takes place in certain contexts, and that the teacher as researcher must make these contexts clear and respond to them in appropriate ways.

The situation at Namibian independence was that 36 % of the nation's 13 000 teachers had no professional training (UNESCO/UNDP Study, 1989). The Ministry placed in-service teacher education at the top of its priority list because of the large proportion of unqualified and under-qualified teachers. In-service teacher training for both unqualified and under-qualified teachers is regarded as one of the key strategies to ensure equitable access to education and training and to redress the past injustices. The Ministry of Education and Culture introduced the Basic Education Teacher Diploma In-Service programme (BETD INSET) in 1994.

The BETD INSET programme follows an adapted Broad Curriculum for the BETD Pre-Service programme. The BETD INSET programme is a distance learning programme which targets unqualified and under-qualified teachers in Basic Education. The in-service teacher education programmes prior to Namibian independence were perceived to be too theoretical and distant from teachers' concerns, needs and the classrooms. The education policy document, *Towards Education For All* (1993) emphasises the fact that 'teacher in-service education programmes are more effective when they are closely linked to classroom practice' (MEC, 1993: 78). A shift in pedagogical approaches was required in order to link the programme to the experiences of the serving teachers and to assist them in

transforming their pedagogical practices to be consistent with the national educational goals. The BETD INSET programme also adopted the reflective approach to teaching and learning, because it acknowledges teachers' existing knowledge and understanding as a basis for teaching and learning. The term used in the BETD INSET Programme is Practice-based inquiry (PBI), because the BETD INSET programme targets practising teachers.

Practice-based inquiry is an approach to teaching and learning that encourages practising teachers, in groups or as individuals, to engage in a range of practical activities. PBI is thus regarded as a tool for mediating between theory and practice. This approach provides practising teachers with the skills to reflect critically on their own practice, while they engage with the programme materials.

.As from 1996, the BETD curricula (both pre-service and in-service modes) have been continuously revised to respond to emerging issues and challenges such as: environmental education, human rights and democracy, population education, HIV and AIDS, technology usage and integration, as well as international trends in teacher education. The teacher education curricula will also be reviewed once the process of the school curriculum revision has been completed.

Conclusion

Namibia has made headway in the attainment of its goals of access, equity, quality, democracy and lifelong learning, but much still needs to be done to ensure that the principles of EFA are realized and the needs of diverse learners are met. In this regard Namibia needs the support and assistance of development partners and multi-lateral agencies, not only through funding, but also through sharing of innovations and experiences.

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