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Principles and general objectives of education

The *Namibia Vision 2030* for education and training provides for a strong general education base in science and technology, flexible delivery of a flexible curriculum, combined with new teaching methodologies. Such a system requires people with flexible enquiring minds and critical thinking skills, capable of adapting to new situations and demands and continuously learning from own initiative. The Vision 2030 ensures that all young men and women in Namibia are given opportunities for development through education and training, and in this way motivate them to take up entrepreneurial opportunities ensure that they and are well equipped with appropriate skills, abilities and attitudes. Children remain disciplined and have an inalienable right to survival, development, protection and participation in the development of society. The young people of Namibia are educated, skilled, motivated, confident, assiduous, responsible and healthy, and are thus empowered as well as given ample opportunity to play an active role in shaping a better society, which will be their inheritance and their duty to sustain and manage in the future. Public education, covering every area of life and living, is an integral part of the national system of continuing education, and which is free, open and accessible to all. (Republic of Namibia, 2004).

Vision 2030 sees Namibia as developing from a literate society to a knowledge-based society, a society where knowledge is constantly being acquired and renewed, and used for innovation to improve the quality of life. A knowledge-based society requires people who are healthy, well-educated, skilled, pro-active, and with a broad range of abilities. This needs a high level of human resource development, and basic education is the foundation for human resource development for the society of the future. Through basic education, learners develop the competencies, attitudes and values needed for full participation in society by learning to use, acquire, construct, evaluate and transform knowledge. Learning to learn is at the core of this process, and in a knowledge-based society, this continues as lifelong learning.

Vision 2030 envisages the future society of Namibia as a caring, healthy, democratic, productive, environmentally sustainable, and information society (*'a prosperous and industrialized Namibia, developed by her human resources, enjoying peace, harmony and political stability'*). Taking into account the main features of that society, the aims of the curriculum are:

- To foster the highest moral and ethical values of reliability, co-operation, democracy, tolerance, mutual understanding, and service to others; to develop the learner's social responsibility towards other individuals, family life, the community and the nation as a whole; to develop and enhance respect for, and understanding and tolerance of, other peoples, religions, beliefs, cultures and ways of life; and to promote equality of opportunity for males and females, enabling both genders to participate equally and fully in all spheres of society and all fields of employment.



- To develop attitudes, practices, knowledge and activities which promote physical and mental health; to support and stimulate learners through childhood and youth; to promote the optimal development of the individual learner's potential, including those with special learning needs; and to foster the highest moral, ethical and spiritual values such as integrity, responsibility, equality and reverence for life.
- To promote moral development, awareness of one's own beliefs and opinions, and respect for others; to promote democratic principles and practices at school level in the educational system; to promote human rights, unity, liberty, justice and democracy; to extend national unity to promote regional, African and international understanding, co-operation and peace; to enable the learners to contribute to the development of culture in Namibia; and to promote wider inter-cultural understanding.
- To develop knowledge, understanding and values, creativity and practical skills, as a solid foundation for academic or vocational training, and for a creative, meaningful and productive adult life; to encourage perseverance, reliability, accountability, and respect for the value and dignity of work; to enable the learners to think scientifically, solve problems, and reflect on and apply knowledge, skills, values and attitudes; and to develop self-reliance and entrepreneurship in preparation for the world of work and self-employment.
- To provide the scientific knowledge and skills, and attitudes and values needed to ensure that the environment is respected and sustained; and to develop the ability to make environmentally wise choices in terms of family development, as well as in economic activities.
- To develop information literacy: skills in seeking, evaluating, using and producing information and information sources appropriately. The sources include traditional and local knowledge, libraries and ICTs. (Ministry of Education. NIED, 2010).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The drafting of a new Education Bill commenced around the mid-1990s, but was tabled in Parliament only in September 2000. The **Education Act No. 16** was finally promulgated in December 2001. The primary objectives of the 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; and establish the Teaching Service Committee. The Education Development Fund has been established to cater to the needs of socio-economic disadvantaged children in schools and tertiary institutions, in addition to subsidising educational institutions having a majority of the targeted group.

The **Constitution** of the Republic of Namibia, adopted in February 1990, states that: all persons shall have the right to education; primary education shall be compulsory and the State shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia, by establishing and maintaining State schools



at which primary education will be provided free of charge; children shall not be allowed to leave school until they have completed their primary education or have attained the age of 16 years, whichever is the sooner.

The University of Namibia was established by the **Act No.18** of 1992, which also provides for the administration and control of its affairs. The Polytechnic of Namibia was established by the **Act No. 33** of 1994, resulting from merging Technikon Namibia and the College for Out-of School Training (COST). The Act provides for the gradual phasing out of vocational training courses and the granting of degrees by the Polytechnic.

The **Namibia Qualifications Authority Act No. 29** of 1996 provides for the establishment of this a statutory body.

The **Teachers' Education Colleges Act No. 25** of 2003 regulates the education and training of teachers, and provides for: the establishment, functions and composition of the Advisory Council on Teachers' Education and Training; the establishment, closure and governance of teachers' education colleges; the establishment and administration of Teachers' Education and Training Funds; the appointment of committees to investigate and monitor teachers' education colleges. It repeals the National Education Act No. 30 of 1980 in so far as it applies to teachers' education colleges.

The **Higher Education Act No. 26** of 2003 regulates higher education, provides for the establishment of a National Council for Higher Education, provides for the registration of private higher education institutions, and for funding of public higher education institutions.

The **National Disability Council Act No. 26** of 2004 establishes the Council and provides for the functions, powers and composition of the Council. Among other functions, the Council (set up in 2008) has to monitor the implementation of the National Policy on Disability. Each ministry/office/agency would have to account to the Council on progress made with regard to addressing disability rights and issues, in addition to working towards an inclusive society at all levels.

The **Vocational Education and Training Act No. 1** of 2008 provides for the establishment of the Namibia Training Authority and the National Training Fund.

The **National Youth Council Act No. 3** of 2009 provides for: the establishment of the National Youth Council and the Youth Development Fund; the management and administration of the Council and the Fund; the establishment of youth forums; and the registration of youth organizations and associations as affiliates to the Council.

The Constitution states that formal basic education is free and compulsory as from the beginning of the school year when the child reaches the age of 7 until the last school day of the year when the child reaches the age of 16, or when they complete primary education, if before then. Under the Education Act of 2001, free basic education is extended to grade 12, but is not compulsory beyond the limits set in the Constitution. The regulations of the Education Act state that learners who turn 6



before or on 31 December should be admitted to school the following year. In cases of overage enrolment, permission must be obtained from the Regional Director of Education if a learner is aged 10 or more before 31 January in the year when they are to start. Free education in the context of basic education means that no fees are charged for attendance, tuition, or textbooks. In grades 10 and 12 a registration fee for the examination is required. Parents are expected to provide materials for the learner such as pens, pencils and notebooks, and to contribute to the school development fund.

Administration and management of the education system

The education system is under the overall responsibility of the **Ministry of Education** (formerly the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture). The current organizational structure of the Ministry comprises four main departments: Schools and Formal Education; Policy and Administration; Lifelong Learning; and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology.

The Department of Schools and Formal Education comprises three directorates: **National Examinations and Assessment**, Programme and Quality Assurance, and the National Institute for Educational Development. The **National Institute for Educational Development** (NIED) was established in 1990 with the task of ensuring that education in Namibia is developed and improved in accordance with the latest developments in education and the needs of the people. The NIED is responsible for designing, developing and evaluating curricula for schools and teacher education, introducing approaches to teaching and learning, coordinating the development of instructional materials, conducting educational research, distributing teaching and learning resources and coordinating the development of pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes. The NIED comprises two divisions: curriculum research and development, and professional and resource development.

Higher education was under the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology established in 1995. Postsecondary and tertiary education and training are now coordinated by the **Directorate of Higher Education**, under the Department of Tertiary Education, Science and Technology in the Ministry of Education. The Directorate also administers teacher education and training colleges and coordinates with the main higher education institutions, particularly the **University of Namibia** (UNAM) and the Polytechnic of Namibia. The UNAM was established in 1992, and offers programmes in a wide range of fields. The **Polytechnic of Namibia**, established in 1994 by merging the Technikon Namibia and the College for Out-of School Training, offers a variety of career-oriented programmes in several technical and technological fields.

The **Namibia Qualifications Authority** (NQA), established in late 1996, is responsible for quality assurance, the accreditation process, the evaluation of qualifications, and standard setting procedures. NQA is now a directorate of the Ministry of Education, under the Department of Lifelong Learning which also included the directorates of adult education and vocational education and training. The NQA is committed to the promotion of quality education and training in Namibia through the development and management of a comprehensive and flexible National

Qualifications Framework (NQF). Quality is also promoted by the NQA through the accreditation of education and training providers in Namibia and their courses. The NQA has the following main obligations: to set up and administer a national qualifications framework; set the occupational standards for any occupation, job, post or positions in any career structure; set the curriculum standards for achieving the occupational standards; promote the development of, or analyze, benchmarks of acceptable performance norms for any occupation, job or position; accredit persons, institutions and organizations providing education and courses of instruction or training; evaluate and recognize competencies learnt outside formal education.

The **Directorate of Vocational Education and Training**, under the Department of Lifelong Learning in the Ministry of Education, is responsible for the Vocational Training Centers and the Community Skills Development Centers.

The **Namibia Training Authority (NTA)**, together with the National Training Fund, was established by the Vocational Education and Training Act of 2008 to regulate the provision of vocational education and training and to provide for: the funding of vocational education and training; the imposition of a vocational education and training levy; and the appointment of inspectors and designation of quality system auditors. The NTA contributes to the establishment of an effective and sustainable system of skills formation. Moreover, the NTA promotes access, equity and quality in vocational education and training. Subject to the policies and procedures determined by the Namibia Qualifications Authority, the NTA also: develops occupational standards, curriculum, standards and qualifications; accredits education and training providers and programmes; registers assessors, conducts assessments, including the recognition of prior learning and conducts quality audits; issues awards and certificates; and negotiates articulation arrangements between vocational education and training programmes and other education and training programmes.

The **Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL)**, a parastatal body created in 1997, offers continuing education learning opportunities for adults and out-of-school youth.

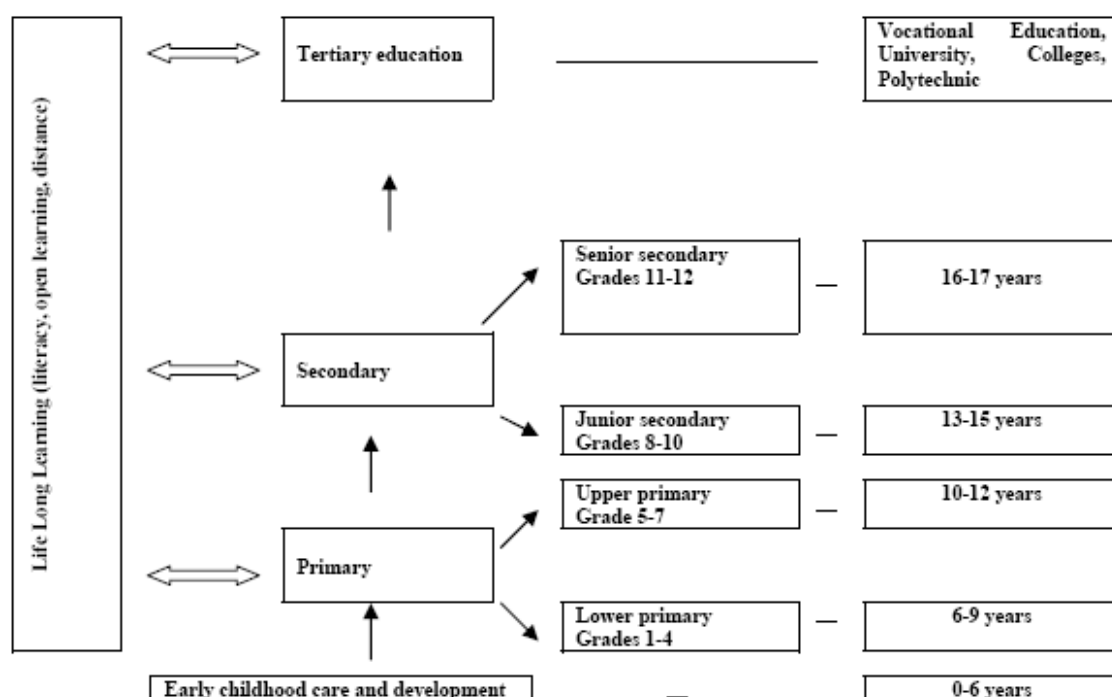
The Constitution provides for the establishment of a system of regional and local government throughout the country. Article 102(1) provides for the structures of regional and local government stating that: “For purpose of regional and local government, Namibia shall be divided into regional and local units, which shall consist of such regions and local authorities as may be determined and defined by Act of Parliament.” There are 13 regions, with the respective Regional Councils and Governors. The decentralization process is coordinated by the **Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development**.

Originally there were seven educational regions, which at the end of 2002 were further subdivided into 13 regions (reflecting the current political/administrative setting), headed by **Regional Directors of Education**. The Ministry of Education has retained overall responsibility over of the education system, while the Regional Education Offices have the task of implementing educational programmes working closely with schools and communities in their respective regions.

The **Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare** (formerly the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare) is responsible for early childhood development, targeting children in the age group 0-4 years, while the pre-primary school year (children aged 5/6 years) is part of basic education, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Agricultural colleges are under the responsibility of the **Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry**.

Structure and organization of the education system

Namibia: structure of the education system



Pre-school education

Early childhood development (ECD), care and education is for children aged 0-6 years. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare is responsible for home-based care programmes and also for ECD care centres, which provide services for groups of 20-25 children aged 2-4 years. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the pre-primary school year, which caters children aged 5/6 years and is considered as the first phase of basic education.

Primary education

Primary education lasts seven years, divided into lower primary (grades 1-4, second phase of basic education) and upper primary (grades 5-7, third phase of basic education). Under ideal conditions, a learner begins grade 1 at the age of 6. Learners will be monitored nationally in grade 5, using nationally standardized assessments. With the implementation of the new curriculum for basic education (2010), the grade 7 examinations will be phased out.



Secondary education

Secondary education comprises two cycles: junior secondary (grades 8-10, fourth phase of basic education) and senior secondary (grades 11 and 12, fifth phase of basic education). At the end of grade 10, which is the end of formal basic education, students sit an external examination in nine subjects for the Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC). At the end of grade 12, students sit the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate examination in six subjects. All subjects are available at the Ordinary level of the examination (NSSCO), and most subjects are available at the Higher level (NSSCH). The NSSC is awarded either as a subject certificate, or as a group certificate recognized by the NQA. Most universities and higher education institutions accept subject certificates. In the subject certificate, each subject that is graded in the examination is entered on the certificate, and supplementary subjects can be freely combined with fields of study. Vocational education and training centres offer a variety of courses at the junior secondary level. Skills development opportunities are also offered to out-of-school youths at various centres such as vocational training and community skills development centres.

Higher education

Tertiary and higher education is offered at teacher education colleges, agricultural colleges, the University of Namibia (UNAM), and the Polytechnic of Namibia. Teacher education colleges offer a three-year programme leading to the Basic Education Teaching Diploma, the qualification required for grades 1-10 teachers. The Polytechnic offers a range of programmes in several fields leading to national certificates (one-year programme), higher certificates (two-year), and diplomas (three-year programme); programmes leading to a bachelor's degree normally last three to four (honours) years, four and a half years in the case of engineering. At the postgraduate level the Polytechnic offers master's degree programmes lasting 18 months to two years. At the undergraduate level, the UNAM offers one-year certificate and diploma programmes lasting two to three years; the duration of bachelor's degree programmes is normally four years on a full-time basis. At the postgraduate level, programmes leading to an advanced or specialized diploma last one year, and a two-year postgraduate diploma in education is also offered. Master's degree programmes normally take two years to complete, and the duration of doctoral degree programmes is a minimum of three years on a full-time basis.

On average, the duration of the school year at the primary and secondary levels does not exceed 200 working days (196 days in 2002 and 2003). The school year, which starts mid-January and ends at the beginning of December, is divided into three terms (trimesters) as follows: January-April, May-August, and September-early December. Not including time spent on revisions and examinations, it is estimated that a maximum of 37 weeks per year are devoted to instruction. The academic year is divided into two semesters, normally February-June and July-December.

The educational process

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. The curriculum was structured in four phases: lower primary (grades 1-4); upper primary (grades 5-7); junior secondary (grades 8-10) and completing the basic education programme (grades 1-10); and senior secondary (grades 11 and 12). The first curriculum reform cycle started in 1991. The full-cycle curriculum implementation for grades 1 to 12 was completed at the end of 1999.

The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) in at that time the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture developed the curricula and the teaching programmes for the school system. The Institute established and managed the national Curriculum Panels and Committees, which submit 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 are referred back with directives or for further research. During 1996, the Panels/Committees and Working Groups which were established at the end of 1995 became fully functional. They were able to draw up fourteen new primary syllabi, revise 28 junior secondary syllabi, develop and translate lower primary syllabi into all local languages and develop five new senior secondary syllabi in African languages. In addition, they evaluated and recommended teaching and learning materials, and where necessary, developed appropriate new materials, as well as updating the textbook catalogue.

In 1998, new Curriculum Panels/Committees for the next three-year phase were established. All panel and committee members attended a course on the development and evaluation of textbooks and educational materials. Twenty-one subject syllabi were developed and approved by the CCC and the Examination Board.

In 2000, the Ministry decided 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. 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 analyze the recommendations made by the Ministry's Efficiency Programme Report (1996) and by the Presidential Commission (1999). Some of these recommendations suggested streamlining and rationalization of the curriculum, while others suggested the inclusion of new subjects or new elements in the existing subjects. However, the curriculum review went beyond the recommendations of the above reports and examined the basic education and senior secondary curricula in terms of design, relevance, efficiency, language issues, assessment, consistency and coherence.



In 2001, the NIED started a review of the full school curriculum. One of the issues to be addressed was the possible rationalization of the many optional subjects at junior and senior secondary level. 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.

The new National Curriculum for Basic Education, effective from 2010, builds on the experience and achievements of the first cycle of Namibian curricula and syllabuses that were introduced in the 1990s. It replaces the *Pilot Curriculum Guide for Formal Basic Education* (1996) as well as the *Pilot Curriculum Guide for Formal Senior Secondary Education* (1998). It also responds to recent changes in society and to emerging challenges such as globalization and HIV and AIDS. The goal, aims, competencies, core skills and key learning areas have been identified in relation to *Namibia Vision 2030* and are presented as a curriculum for the future.

Within this framework, the curriculum is conceived as the official policy for teaching, learning, and assessment and gives direction to planning, organizing and implementing teaching and learning. The purpose of the National Curriculum for Basic Education document (2010) is to provide a coherent and concise framework in order to ensure that there is consistency in the delivery of the curriculum in schools and classrooms throughout the country. It describes the goal, aims and rationale of the curriculum, the principles of teaching, learning and assessment, language policy, and curriculum management at school level. It makes provision for all learners to follow key learning areas, and outlines the end-of-phase competencies which they should achieve, as well as the attitudes and values to be promoted throughout the curriculum. It outlines the structure of each phase, what electives and subject combinations are available, and overall time allocation. It sets in place effective assessment procedures, ensuring that assessment is closely integrated in the teaching/learning process. The curriculum is a framework for devising syllabuses, learning materials and textbooks to be used in the various subjects and areas of learning, from which teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans can be developed, so that the goal and aims will be put into practice in a consistent manner.

Preparation for a knowledge-based society requires a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning. This means that the point of departure is always what the learners already know and can do, then acquiring new knowledge through ways of working which are relevant and meaningful for them, and learning how to apply their knowledge creatively and innovatively. An integral part of this approach is the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a tool to enhance teaching and learning. The curriculum and syllabuses describe the competencies which they should attain, so that teachers know exactly what to assess in order to be sure that the learners are progressing and achieving. Teaching emphasizes the varied processes and learning experiences needed for the creation of knowledge, rather than relying predominantly on the transmission of knowledge by the teacher.

The teacher must be able to identify the needs of the learners, the nature of the learning to be done, and the means to shape learning experiences accordingly. Teaching strategies must therefore be varied but flexible within well-structured sequences of lessons: learner-centred education does not mean that the teacher no



longer has responsibility for seeing that learning takes place. It means that the teacher has to take on a wider repertoire of classroom roles. These include being a manager and organizer of learning, a counsellor, and a coach, as well as being an instructor. Consequently, a variety of techniques will be used, such as direct questioning, eliciting, explaining, demonstrating, challenging the learners' ideas, checking for understanding, helping and supporting, providing for active practice, and problem solving.

The teacher's roles are complemented by the way work is organized in the classroom. Work in groups, in pairs, individually or as a whole class must be organized as appropriate to the task in hand and the needs of the learners. Wherever possible, co-operative and collaborative learning should be encouraged and in such cases, tasks must be designed so that pair or group work is needed to complete it, otherwise the learners will not see any relevance in carrying out tasks together. As the learners develop personal, social and communication skills they can gradually be given increasing responsibility to participate in planning and evaluating their work, under the teacher's guidance. Textbooks and other learning resources can be used in a variety of ways.

The direction of the teaching-learning process must always be to develop higher-order thinking skills. Newer understanding of children's problem-solving strategies shows that children acquire information, develop knowledge and understanding, and analyze, synthesize and evaluate in a cyclic process, in their own way and at their own level. The teacher can help develop learners' thinking by engaging the learners in problem-solving activities where increasingly broader knowledge is applied to ever more complex problems and situations. Former narrow concepts of intelligence have been replaced with the realization that we have multiple intelligences (linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, emotional, aesthetic...). The most effective learning, problem-solving and creativity occur when both halves of the brain are activated and multiple intelligences are brought to bear on a problem. A uniform teaching approach will not be effective for all learners, since each person has their own individual profile of intelligences, and an individual profile of learning styles which can change over time.

Basic education also prepares for the society envisaged in Namibia Vision 2030 by being inclusive. Learners with special educational and other individual needs will be included in mainstream schools and their needs will be given particular attention through differentiation of methods and materials as needed. Learners who are so severely impaired that they cannot benefit from attending inclusive mainstream classes and schools, will be provided for according to their needs in special units, classes or schools until such time that they can join the mainstream. The curriculum, teaching methods and materials will be adapted to learners with special educational needs.

The new basic education curriculum identifies learning in terms of core skills and key learning areas. A core, or generic, skill is developed gradually through all learning areas. The core skills are included in the basic competencies assessed in all subjects. Core skills identified in the Namibian context can be grouped into seven areas: learning to learn, personal skills, social skills, cognitive skills, communication skills, numeracy skills, and ICT skills. In the subject syllabuses, the core skills are



broken down into more detailed basic competencies which are to be assessed. For example, in the case of learning to learn the basic competencies are: setting goals, solving problems, evaluating and reflecting on completed processes; working effectively, independently and in groups; increasingly taking responsibility for their own learning and work.

A key learning area is a field of knowledge and skills which is part of the foundation needed to function well in a knowledge-based society. The key learning areas in the basic education curriculum are: language; mathematics; natural sciences; social sciences; technology; commerce; arts; and physical education. Some of the essential learning for the development of Namibian society does not resort under one key learning area alone. Therefore, five themes which are essential learning are organized across the curriculum. These are: HIV and AIDS education; health and wellness education; human rights and democracy education; ICTs; and environmental learning. These are placed as topics or subtopics in appropriate carrier subjects with specific competencies to be attained within the framework of the subjects and grades concerned.

The goal and aims of basic education, and the core skills, key learning areas, and cross-curricular issues apply to all phases. The different levels to be attained in each of the key learning areas by the end of each phase are formulated in terms of *phase competencies*. A competence comprises the cognitive, affective and/or practical skills which a learner is to demonstrate as a result of the teaching-learning process, and which will be assessed. The statements of phase competencies are the standards of the curriculum. The phase competencies are in turn broken down into more detailed statements of basic competencies at the level of the subject syllabus. In this way the teacher knows exactly what is expected that the learners understand and/or can do, which is to be assessed. By building up their competence step by step, learners will become aware of their own progression, and the process will strengthen learning to learn. The competencies are the core skills which are developed across the curriculum. They are very specific at the level of the basic competencies but emerge more holistically at the level of phase competencies.

Although the intended learning is described in the form of subject area syllabuses, flexible ways of organizing learning should be adopted. Some topics and activities do not lend themselves to a pre-set sequence and may be characterized as incidental and taken up as and when relevant. A great deal of the teaching and learning in the pre-primary and lower primary phases may be organized by thematic webs, where different subjects are integrated in one theme. In grades 1-4 there will still be some subject-specific knowledge and skills that can only be taught by concentrating on them separately, and as steps towards wider competencies. As learners progress through the other phases, subject boundaries become more apparent. However, if subject boundaries are kept strong, it may result in compartmentalized learning experiences where knowledge, skills, attitudes and values learned in one subject are not related to those learned in other subjects. It may also give rise to partial or incomplete understanding of important principles and issues in reality. Thematic and cross-curricular approaches can strengthen the learner's knowledge and awareness of issues, and the complexity and interrelatedness of the problems surrounding them.



In accordance with the Constitution, the language policy aims to preserve and revitalize the cultural heritage of the national languages of Namibia and to promote English as the official language and its main means of communication with the world at large. Learning through the medium of the mother tongue, especially in the pre-primary and lower primary phases, is crucial for concept formation as well as attaining literacy and numeracy. The medium of learning in pre-primary and grades 1-3 is therefore the mother tongue of the learner. English has a special role as the official language and the medium of instruction from grade 4 upwards. Teachers must be aware of where the learners have limited English language skills and must provide opportunities for the learners to exercise them. Since English is a second language for the majority of learners, subject teachers must take time to ensure that learners understand the vocabulary, technical terms and jargon of the subject, not as abstract terms to be learnt by rote, but to be able to use them correctly and meaningfully in context. Where schools have multi-language classes, every effort should be made to group learners for mother tongue teaching according to their language. This includes multi-grade grouping if necessary. This has implications for timetabling, where language lessons will have to be in the same blocks of time so that learners can regroup themselves. It also has implications for employment of teachers with qualifications as a language teacher, or ensuring that teachers who do not have a qualification can be upgraded in mother tongue teaching through continuous professional development.

Gender issues should be taken up explicitly in all subjects, and learners should be encouraged to examine stereotype gender roles and behaviours and how they have arisen and been perpetuated, and to find positive role models in terms of gender equity. In teaching different subjects, the positive contributions that women have made and can make in areas of life where there has previously been male domination, and the value of men's participation in areas where there has previously been female domination, should be emphasized.

The demands made on personal and social skills and learning to learn mean that learners must develop life skills and have guidance and counselling. The large number of orphans and vulnerable children, the emotional and social impact of HIV and AIDS on children and young people, and the increasing pressures on children and young people in a developing and more complex society, amplifies the need for professional life skills teachers. Every school should have at least one teacher with training in and/or experience of life skills, guidance and counselling. Where this is not possible, a designated teacher should be given responsibility in the interim and go through in-service professional development in life skills, guidance and counselling. In addition to the teaching of life skills as a subject, the school must make time and space available for direct one-to-one or small-group counselling. (Ministry of Education. NIED, 2010).

Pre-primary education

As mentioned, early childhood development (ECD), care and education is for children aged 0-6 years. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare is responsible for home-based care programmes and ECD care centres, the latter providing services for groups of 20-25 children aged 2-4 years. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the pre-primary school year, which caters children aged 5/6 years and is considered as the first phase of basic education.

The National Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy was adopted by Cabinet in February 1996. It addressed the establishment of early childhood programmes in relation to national development, and defined the respective roles of the government, NGOs, parents and the local communities in the provision of support for early childhood development. The policy has been reviewed in 2005, a review that was carried out through a long process of consultations at the national, regional and community levels among a broad range of relevant stakeholders. As a result of this process, a comprehensive draft document has been completed.

The responsibility for pre-primary education 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 (recently changed to Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare), initially pre-primary education and early childhood development catering for the less than 6 years age group were assigned to this new Ministry, with the Ministry of Education being responsible for curriculum content. The pre-primary school year is now under the Ministry of Education.

The focus of the Integrated ECD programme (IECD) is to increase the capacity of individuals, communities and all stakeholders involved in the delivery of ECD services. ECD care centres provide children safe and quality care, improved nutrition, stimulating learning environment, establish school-going habits and school readiness under the care and guidance of ECD caregivers. The objectives of the Parental and Community Education Programme are to: strengthen parents and community self-confidence, skills and knowledge related to IECD care and education; motivate parents and communities to take part in ECD and other child-related development projects for the advancement of their children and community.

According to the Curriculum for Basic Education of 2010, pre-primary education is the first phase of formal basic education. The pre-primary and lower primary phases lay the foundation for all further learning. In the pre-primary phase, learners develop communication, motor and social skills, and concept formation, ready to start formal education. The purpose of the pre-primary phase is to lay a solid foundation for learning throughout the formal education system. It is only the start of developing essential literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and of establishing self-confidence and self-worth through personal and social development. Learning through free and structured play, children acquire the ability to accept each other and co-operate in groups. They further develop listening, speaking and visual communication skills, pre-mathematical concepts, a sense of themselves and their environment, health



and hygiene routines, creativity and motor skills, as well as social and emotional skills. No formal reading, writing and mathematics should be taught in this phase. The medium of learning should be the mother tongue of the learner.

In terms of phase competencies, on completion of pre-primary education learners are expected to:

- Listen for information and respond appropriately. They read signs and words from their immediate environment and communicate effectively and confidently in their mother tongue (or where mother tongue is not possible, in their locally most spoken language).
- Orally express their understanding of number concepts and mathematical symbols. They recognize and describe patterns, relationships and shapes, and solve simple problems in everyday contexts.
- Be aware of the importance of their basic health and nutrition. They react positively towards the natural environment and interact positively in the social environment. Learners have a basic understanding of their own beliefs, respect that of others, and share common positive values.
- Demonstrate personal and interpersonal skills through free participation in creative activities, they express themselves through art forms and appreciate how others express themselves.
- Participate to the best of their ability in a variety of physical activities that promote movement and motor development.

The key learning areas in the pre-primary phase are: mother tongue/first languages, preparatory mathematics, environmental learning, religious and moral education, arts, and physical education. Timetabling should be very flexible and learning areas should be taught in an integrated way. Learners will spend 4 hours per day at school and for schools with computer laboratories, an extra period of 30 minutes may be added to one of the days.

All assessment is observational and aimed to identify if a child has special needs and how to mobilize resources to meet them. Children will normally be ready to commence with formal teaching and learning in grade 1 after completion of the school readiness programme in the pre-primary school year.

ECD establishments are operated by the local communities and NGOs. There are both formal and non-formal ECD centres, and non-formal home-based care programmes. A 12-week training programme for ECD caregivers has been developed. Pre-primary education has been integrated with formal education through a piloting phase at 130 centres/units and this number is to be expanded on annual basis. The Ministry of Education reports a total enrolment of 1,158 children at the existing 130 pilot pre-primary units in 2007, and a total enrolment of 2,441 children in 2008. (MOE, 2008). The 2001 Population and Housing Census showed that 32% of children between 3 and 6 years of age were enrolled in some form of ECD programme.



Primary education (basic education)

Primary education is part of basic education and lasts seven years. Lower primary, or the second phase of basic education, covers grades 1-4; upper primary, or the third phase of basic education, covers grades 5-7.

According to the Curriculum for Basic Education of 2010, in grades 1-4 pupils learn to read and write in two languages; they learn basic mathematics; they learn about the community and nature around them and how to look after their health; and they develop their creative and expressive abilities. Teaching and learning are through the medium of the mother tongue or predominant local language, with a transition to English medium in grade 4. Pupils are also exposed to computer technology where they gain a first appreciation of information and communication technologies as a tool for learning, recognition of their functions and uses in their lives, and basic understanding of how a computer works and how to use it in learning processes.

In the upper primary phase, learners build on this foundation, develop irreversible literacy and numeracy, and develop learning skills and basic knowledge in natural sciences, social sciences, technology, arts, and physical education. Teaching is through the medium of English, and the mother tongue/predominant local language continues as a subject through to the end of formal basic education (e.g. grade 10). Technology skills at this level require a fundamental understanding of software applications and basic navigation skills.

The lower primary phase continues to lay the foundation for education and lifelong learning. Social and emotional skills are strengthened in order to promote the growth and development of each learner as an individual and as a member of the school and society. All learners take the following subjects: mother tongue/predominant local language, English, mathematics, environmental studies, religious and moral education, arts and physical education. The focus is primarily on four areas: literacy, numeracy, broad knowledge of the immediate environment of the learner, and personal health. Environmental studies and religious and moral education provide broader knowledge from which, together with the learners' own experience and previous knowledge, the substance of literacy and numeracy is drawn. They further provide the learner with life skills in understanding the world around them. The themes and topics of environmental studies provide content areas for the integration of the whole curriculum. HIV and AIDS education starts in grade 1, since the learners are still in the "Window of Hope" age range prior to sexual relationships, the generation which can be well educated and well prepared to counter the AIDS pandemic.

Broader knowledge is also ensured through arts and physical education. Arts at this level are important not only for the opportunity to engage learners' natural ways of learning and creativity, but also to start enriching their means of communication by developing literacies other than reading and writing. They should be able to interpret and express their ideas and feelings about themselves and the world around them. Physical education strengthens self-awareness, a positive attitude to one's body and co-operation and healthy competition, all of which feeds into other learning and



developmental processes. Arts and physical education both build on local culture, games and sports respectively, and bring a wider knowledge of these to the learners. ICTs literacy is part of the broader knowledge, and at this stage consists of an appreciation of ICTs as a tool for learning, through various educational games and software.

The upper primary level continues on a broad base, consolidates the foundation laid at lower primary, and develops it further. The medium of learning (except in the national language subject) is English, only exceptionally supported by use of the mother tongue/predominant local language. The division into subject disciplines emerges more strongly in this phase. All pupils take English, mother tongue/predominant local language, mathematics, natural science and health education, social studies, religious and moral education, life skills, basic information science, arts, and physical education. In addition, learners take one of either design and technology, elementary agriculture, or home ecology. Entrepreneurial skills are integrated in each of these. HIV and AIDS education is intensified in this phase, as learners are better able to understand the facts, issues and attitudes.

In terms of phase competencies, on completion of lower primary education learners are expected to:

- Express themselves well orally, read appropriate texts, and write reasonably correctly for their everyday purposes, in their mother tongue (or where mother tongue is not possible, in their locally most spoken language).
- Understand, speak, read and write English as a second language well enough within a limited range to continue learning through the medium of English in the next phase.
- Express, orally and in writing, their understanding of number concepts and mathematical symbols.
- Solve simple problems in everyday contexts by adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing, estimating and measuring, within the required range.
- Look after their basic health and nutrition, interact positively in the social environment, and react responsibly towards the natural environment.
- Have a basic understanding of their own beliefs, are tolerant of others', and share common positive values.
- Participate freely in ICTs-related activities and use educational games, software and multimedia appropriate to their purpose.
- Participate freely in creative activities, express themselves through art forms, and appreciate what others communicate through the arts.
- Participate to the best of their ability in a variety of games, sports, and physical activities.

In terms of phase competencies, on completion of upper primary education learners are expected to:

- Show competence in listening with understanding for information and enjoyment to texts appropriate to their level in their first language;



speaking fluently and confidently according to situation and audience; reading with understanding children's literature and texts about everyday issues; sustained factual and imaginative writing up to one page, using mostly correct spelling and grammar.

- Listen for information and enjoyment to texts appropriate for non-mother tongue speakers, express ideas, opinions and feelings adequately, read and understand easy children's literature and texts about everyday issues, and write short factual and imaginative texts in which language errors do not confuse meaning. They use English adequately for official purposes.
- Have an understanding of the concept of rational numbers and carry out the basic operations. Solve everyday problems involving number, measurement, and spatial relationships. Collect, interpret and present simple data.
- Use simple scientific models, methods and skills to make scientific sense of the natural environment; and of themselves biologically, psychologically and socially. They relate the implications of scientific understanding to their personal and social health and the sustainable use of all natural resources for future generations.
- Explain main developments from selected episodes of Namibian and world history, and main outlines of Namibian and African geography. They describe development of society and its impact on the environment. They explain beliefs other than their own in a non-judgemental way. They identify their own personal traits, manage time to study effectively, and demonstrate positive social values and skills in interactions with others.
- Show creativity in investigating and exploring product ideas and designing a product. They choose appropriate materials, correctly use basic hand tools and equipment, and make and evaluate their product.
- Demonstrate understanding and correct use of software applications; conduct basic navigation.
- Identify a demand, work out cost and sale prices for a product which they have developed in design and technology, home ecology or elementary agriculture, and sell it in the school or community.
- Explore and investigate ideas and art media freely, using creative activities; communicate adequately for their purpose through chosen art forms; and appreciate and interpret sensitively what others communicate through the arts.
- Have developed cooperative activity and game skills, monitor their own progress and achievements, and explain why continued physical activity is important for health and wellness.

The weekly lesson timetables for lower and upper primary based on the 1996 curriculum are presented below:

Lower primary education: weekly lesson timetable

Area of learning/subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade			
	I	II	III	IV
<u>Linguistic and literary:</u>				
English language	4	6	6	7
Another language	7	9	6	6
Handwriting	3	3	2	1
Basic information science	–	–	–	1
<u>Mathematical:</u>				
Mathematics	7	8	8	7
<u>Natural, scientific, social & economic:</u>				
Environmental studies (natural science; health nutrition; environmental awareness; civics; history; geography, economics in Grades II–III)	3	3	5	5
Social studies (civics; history; geography, economics)	–	–	–	4
<u>Aesthetic:</u>				
Arts (music; dance; drama; art)	3	3	3	2
<u>Spiritual and ethical:</u>				
Religious education, Assembly	2	2	2	2
<u>Physical:</u>				
Physical education and health awareness	2	2	2	2
<u>Technological:</u>				
Craft and technology	–	–	2	2
Total weekly periods	31	36	36	39

Source: MBEC-NIED, 1996. Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes. The main cross-curricular themes which are integrated throughout the curriculum in all phases are population education, health education, and environmental awareness. Co-curricular activities include: school sport; cultural activities; involvement of community; activities promoting the ethos of the school; educational tours; other activities.

Upper primary education: weekly lesson timetable

Area of learning/subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade		
	V	VI	VII
<u>Linguistic and literary:</u>			
English language	6	6	6
Another language	6	6	6
Basic information science	1	1	1
Mathematical:			
Mathematics	8	8	8
<u>Natural, scientific:</u>			
Natural science and health education (health education and environmental awareness)	5	5	5
Social and economic:			
Social studies (civics; history, geography, economics; guidance in Grade VII)	5	5	5
<u>Aesthetic:</u>			
Arts (music; dance; drama; art)	4	4	4
Spiritual and ethical:			
Religious education, Assembly	2	2	2
<u>Physical:</u>			
Physical education and health awareness	2	2	2
Technological:			
Options. One of: craft and technology, elementary agriculture, home ecology (needlework; clothing and home science)	3	3	3
Total weekly periods (minimum)	39(+)	39(+)	39(+)

Source: Ibid. (*) The actual total is forty-two periods instead of thirty-nine. If we do not include time spent on revisions and examinations, it is estimated that a maximum of thirty-seven weeks per year are devoted to instruction.

The weekly lesson timetable for lower and upper primary in line with the new basic education curriculum effective from 2010 is as follows:

Namibia. Lower and upper primary education: weekly lesson timetable

Key learning area/subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade		
	Lower		Upper
	1-2	3-4	5-7
<i>Languages:</i>			
First language	10	9	–
Second language	5	9	–
English language	–	–	7
Another language	–	–	6
<i>Mathematics</i>	8	9	7
<i>Natural sciences:</i>			
Natural science and health education	–	–	5
<i>Social sciences:</i>			
Environmental studies	3	5	–
Religious and moral education	2	2	1
Social studies	–	–	5
Life skills	–	–	1
<i>Technology:</i>			
Basic information science	–	–	1
Design & technology or Home ecology or Elementary agriculture (*)	–	–	3
<i>Arts:</i>			
Arts (music; dance; drama; art) (**)	2	3	2
<i>Physical education</i>	2	2	1
Total weekly periods	32	39	39

Source: Ministry of Education-NIED, 2010. The timetable is based on a five-day week and each teaching period lasts 40 minutes. The main cross-curricular issues which are integrated throughout the curriculum in all phases without a specific time allocation are: HIV and AIDS education; health and wellness education; human rights and democracy education; ICTs; and environmental learning. Co-curricular activities should be organized to support particularly important areas of learning (e.g. HIV and AIDS clubs, science clubs, environmental groups, debating societies, school newspaper, school website, etc.) or to supplement areas of learning with little curriculum time (e.g. in the case of arts, drama groups, music groups, choirs, dance groups, art groups; and sports and games).

(*) Learners choose one of three options in grades 5-7, which include a module on entrepreneurial skills. (**) 'Arts' in lower primary includes technology in craft work.

Junior secondary education is the fourth phase of basic education and covers grades 8-10, completing formal basic education (grades 1-10). The junior secondary phase continues with the same learning areas as upper primary, consolidates achievements and extends them to a level where the learners are prepared for young



adulthood and training, employment, or continued formal education. At this level, learners choose two pre-vocational subjects. Those who meet the entry requirements may continue in formal senior secondary education, which provides some specialization and depth in one area. Entry to the senior secondary phase in the formal system is decided on the number of points to be achieved, calculated on the basis of final grades from the junior secondary phase.

This phase provides learners with the opportunity to explore a wider range of subjects to enable them to make informed subject choices for future career opportunities. It is more challenging and a greater body of knowledge is mobilized to develop a higher level of understanding and skills. The curriculum becomes more diversified as learning areas are broken up into more separate subject disciplines, and a degree of choice is introduced. The medium of learning (except in the mother tongue/predominant local language subject) continues to be English. All learners continue to take English and the mother tongue/predominant local language and mathematics. Natural sciences are separated into life science and physical science, and the social sciences into geography, history, life skills, and religious and moral education. In addition arts in culture, physical education, and basic information science are offered. At this stage, learners' ICTs skills are consolidated in order to enable them to learn independently and collaboratively, and to do research. The element of choice is introduced in the pre-vocational area, where learners choose any combination of two electives, depending on their interest and aptitude, and what is available at the school.

In terms of phase competencies, on completion of junior secondary education learners are expected to:

- Show competence in listening critically with understanding for information and enjoyment to appropriate texts in the first language; speaking confidently and meaningfully according to situation and audience; reading youth literature and other texts with understanding and appreciation; sustained factual and imaginative writing up to two pages, using correct spelling and grammar.
- Listen with understanding for information, interact effectively in two-way communication, read and understand youth literature and other texts and write factual and imaginative texts of up to two pages in which errors do not confuse meaning in the second language. They can use English adequately for official purposes.
- Learners understand short, clear, everyday oral and written texts, make themselves understood reasonably correctly in basic everyday situations, read and respond to simplified texts, and write short texts where formal language errors do not confuse meaning in the foreign language.
- Use real numbers to estimate, approximate, and calculate to relevant degrees of accuracy. Solve problems using a range of methods, including algebra, ratio, rate and proportion, and graphic representations. Use the properties of geometric shapes to construct, transform, calculate and solve problems. Solve simple problems using trigonometry.
- Use methods and skills to increase variables in existing scientific models in order for models to reflect real-life situations. They communicate their observations and conclusions using scientific and mathematical language



and theories. They realize the value of the natural environment and factors affecting the environment. Learners have the skills and knowledge to maintain a safe and healthy lifestyle.

- Know how to act effectively and responsibly in a democratic society, and towards the environment, by understanding biophysical dimensions of the world, and political, social, and economic development. They make decisions about the risks and challenges that need to be addressed. Learners express and show positive personal and social values and respect diversity and freedom of beliefs. They understand the importance of personal health, contraception, family life, and planning personal finance. They explain the importance of subject choice for further studies.
- Show creativity in more advanced processes of investigating and exploring product ideas, and choosing selectively from a range of designs and/or materials. They correctly use appropriate tools and electrical equipment, and make and evaluate a well-finished product.
- Proficiently and legally use a computer and the most usual application packages, do basic programming, ensure computer hygiene, and explain the components and processes involved in computer information technology.
- Use lower-level clerical, secretarial, managerial, bookkeeping skills, in direct employment in smaller businesses, or opportunity-seeking skills in self-employment as a micro-medium enterprise.
- Make considered decisions about how to explore and investigate ideas using creative activities combining intuition and reason; explain their choices of materials, media and art forms to communicate ideas and feelings; and clearly communicate their response to and interpretation of other's art works.
- Evaluate their ability to contribute to teamwork in games and sports, and their individual motivation and aptitude for, and effort in, different game and sports activities. They explain what physical activities are optimal for health and wellness in different phases of life, and why.

The weekly lesson timetable for junior secondary education based on the 1996 curriculum is presented below:

Junior secondary education: weekly lesson timetable

Area of learning/subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade		
	VIII	IX	X
<u>Linguistic and literary:</u>			
English language	6	6	6
Another language	6	6	6
Basic information science	1	1	1
<u>Mathematical:</u>			
Mathematics	5	5	5
<u>Natural, scientific:</u>			
Life science	4	4	4
Physical science	4	4	4
<u>Social and economic:</u>			
Geography	3	3	3
History	3	3	3
<u>Aesthetic:</u>			
Arts-in-Culture	1	1	1
<u>Spiritual and ethical:</u>			
Religious and moral education	1	1	1
Life skills	1	1	1
<u>Physical:</u>			
Physical education	1	1	1
<u>Technological:</u>			
Pre-vocational option I or II	4	4	4
Total weekly periods	40	40	40

Source: Ibid. If we do not include time spent on revisions and examinations, it is estimated that a maximum of thirty-seven weeks per year are devoted to instruction.

The weekly lesson timetable for junior secondary education in line with the new basic education curriculum effective from 2010 is as follows:

Namibia. Junior secondary education: weekly lesson timetable

Key learning area/subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade		
	8	9	10
<i>Languages:</i>			
English language	5	5	5
Another language	4	4	4
<i>Mathematics</i>			
	5	5	5
<i>Natural sciences:</i>			
Life science	4	4	4
Physical science	4	4	4
<i>Social sciences:</i>			
Geography	3	3	3
History	3	3	3
Life skills	1	1	1
Religious and moral education	1	1	1
<i>Technology:</i>			
Basic information science	1	1	1
Pre-vocational subject 1 (*)	4	4	4
Pre-vocational subject 2 (*)	4	4	4
<i>Arts:</i>			
Arts in culture	1	1	1
<i>Physical education</i>			
	1	1	1
Total weekly periods	41	41	41

Source: Ministry of Education-NIED, 2010. The timetable is based on a five-day week and each teaching period lasts 40 minutes. The main cross-curricular issues which are integrated throughout the curriculum in all phases without a specific time allocation are: HIV and AIDS education; health and wellness education; human rights and democracy education; ICTs; and environmental learning. Co-curricular activities should be organized to support particularly important areas of learning (e.g. HIV and AIDS clubs, science clubs, environmental groups, debating societies, school newspaper, school website, etc.) or to supplement areas of learning with little curriculum time (e.g. in the case of arts, drama groups, music groups, choirs, dance groups, art groups; and sports and games).

(*) Learners choose two of the three following options: design & technology; home ecology; elementary agriculture. Other options available starting from grade 8 include: home economics, needlework and clothing, computer studies (technology learning area); entrepreneurship, accounting, keyboard and word processing (commerce learning area); visual arts and integrated performing arts (arts learning area); agriculture (natural sciences learning area); French or German as foreign languages.

In order to capture the full range and levels of competence, a variety of formal and informal continuous assessment situations is needed to give a complete picture of the learner's progress and achievements in all subjects. Continuous assessment must be clear, simple and manageable, and explicitly anchored in learner-centred principles



and practice. Teachers must elicit reliable and valid information of the learner's performance in the basic competencies. The information gathered about the learners' progress and achievements should be used to give feedback to the learners about their strong and weak points, where they are doing well, and why, and where they need to try more, how, and why. The parents should be regularly informed about the progress of their child in all subjects, be encouraged to reward achievements, and given suggestions as to how they can support their learning activities.

The two modes of assessment used are formative continuous assessment and summative assessment. Formative continuous assessment is any assessment made during the school year in order to improve learning and to help shape and direct the teaching-learning process. Summative assessment is an assessment made at the end of the school year based on the accumulation of the progress and achievements of the learner throughout the year in a given subject, together with any end-of-year tests or examinations. The result of summative assessment is a single end-of-year promotion grade.

Only informal continuous assessment is used in grades 1-4, with summative grades at the end of each term. All informal continuous assessment is criterion-referenced. Continuous assessment is used throughout upper primary (grades 5-7), and there are end-of-year examinations. Learner achievement in selected subject areas will be monitored nationally in grade 5 using nationally standardized assessments. An external examination for the Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) is held at the end of grade 10 in nine subjects: English, mother tongue/predominant local language, mathematics, geography, history, life science, physical science, and two electives.

When grades are awarded in continuous assessment, it is essential that they reflect the learner's actual level of achievement in the basic competencies, and are not related to how well other learners are achieving or to the idea that a fixed percentage of the learners must always be awarded a Grade A, B, C, etc. (norm-referencing). In criterion-referenced assessment, each letter grade must have a descriptor for what the learner must demonstrate in order to be awarded the grade. Grade descriptors must be developed for each subject for each year. It is important that teachers in each department/section work together to have a shared understanding of what the grade descriptors mean, and how to apply them in continuous assessment, so that grades are awarded correctly and consistently across subjects.

The learner's summative achievement in the basic competencies in each subject is shown in letter grades A-E, where A is the highest and E the lowest grade at the lower and upper primary level. The relation between the grades awarded and the basic competencies is as follows: *Grade A (5 points)*: achieved basic competencies exceptionally well. The learner is outstanding in all areas of competency; *Grade B (4 points)*: the learner is highly proficient in most areas of competency, e.g. demonstrating rapid mastery of some competencies, or being able to apply competencies to unknown situations or contexts, or demonstrating new insight.; *Grade C (3 points)*: achieved basic competencies. The learner has mastered the competencies satisfactorily in known situations and contexts (the large majority of learners should reach at least this level); *Grade D (2 points)*: achieved the minimum number of basic competencies to be considered competent. The learner may not have achieved all the competencies, or may sometimes need help, but has sufficient



competency to go on to the next grade; *Grade E (1 point)*: not achieved the majority of basic competencies. The learner has not been able to reach a minimum level of competency, even with extensive help from the teacher, and is in need of compensatory teaching. The following criteria should be used to convert percentage marks to a letter grade: A: 80%+); B: 65-79%; C: 45-64%; D: 30-44%; E: 0-29%.

In the junior secondary phase, grades A-G and U (ungraded) apply as follows: A (80%+): achieved basic competencies exceptionally well; B (70-79%): achieved basic competencies very well; C (60-69%): achieved basic competencies well; D (50-59%): achieved basic competencies satisfactorily; E (40-49%): achieved a sufficient number of basic competencies to exceed the minimum competency level; F (30-39%): achieved the basic competencies needed to be considered competent, the learner needs compensatory teaching; G (20-29%): achieved the minimum number of basic competencies worthy of a grade, the learner needs compensatory teaching; U (0-19%): did not achieve the minimum level of competence, the learner needs compensatory teaching.

No fewer than five informal less structured assessments and no more than six informal more structured assessments (two per term) should be done in grades 1-4. These assessments must be carefully planned and conducted according to the criterion-based descriptors on the 5-point grading scale. No percentage marks will be used for assessment in the Lower Primary phase. At the end of each trimester the average grade for the less and the more structured assessments will be calculated. The summative assessment grade for each term will be the average of these two, and the promotion grade for the end of the year will be the summative grades of the third trimester.

At least six formal continuous assessments per term should be selected, graded and recorded in grades 5-7. Not more than two assessments per term are to be topic tests. These continuous assessments must be carefully planned and marked according to a marking scheme, marking criteria or memorandum. The criteria used to assess activities other than tests should be given to the learner before the assessment activity. Evidence of the work produced by good, average and low-achieving candidates, as well as the written assignment and marking scheme, has to be kept at school until the end of the next year. Not more than 40% of the summative grade may be based on tests. Internal end-of-year examinations will be given in the upper primary examination subjects, as specified in the subject syllabuses. The purpose of these examinations is to focus on how well learners can demonstrate their thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills related to the areas of the syllabus which are most essential for continuing in the next grade. Preparing for and conducting these examinations should not take up more than two weeks altogether right at the end of the year. The purpose of the examination is to assess how far each learner can demonstrate their achievement in reaching the competencies. A promotion grade will be awarded at the end of each year based on the average of the summative grade from continuous assessment and the grade obtained in the examination. Learner achievement in selected subject areas will be monitored nationally in grade 5. The grade 7 examination will be phased out.

At the junior secondary level, in grades 8 and 9 there will be internal end-of-year examinations in examination subjects. Continuous assessment may count either



35% or 50% of the summative grade. The weighting of continuous assessment and examination is specified in each subject syllabus. There will be an external examination in all examination subjects at the end of grade 10. The purpose of the examination is to assess how far each learner can demonstrate their achievement in reaching the competencies as a preparation for everyday life and for further studies or training, and to what extent the system as a whole is enabling learners to achieve optimally. Standardized national achievement tests in selected subjects will be administered in grade 8, to continue monitoring to what extent the system as a whole is enabling learners to achieve optimally.

Only in cases where the class teacher (grades 1-4) or teaching team (grades 5-9) in consultation with the principal and head of department is absolutely convinced that a learner would definitely not benefit from progressing to the next grade, should a learner repeat a grade. A promotion committee of the school should discuss borderline cases in grades 1-9. Grade 10 can only be repeated through formal education if a learner is under the age of 17, if there are exceptional reasons such as illness or caregiver responsibilities, or as circumstances dictate. In such cases, permission to repeat grade 10 in formal education can be given by the Regional Director. Alternatively, grade 10 can be repeated through non-formal education. (Ministry of Education-NIED, 2010).

Enrolment has grown substantially since 1990, at a rate of growth that has exceeded the population growth rate. The percentage of learners at school has increased and pupils remain longer at school than previously.

Repetition rates vary substantially, being highest in the northern regions. On average they remain high (17% in grades 1-10 in 2007), particularly in grade 1 (21.9%), grade 4 (15.9%), grade 5 (25.7%), and grade 7 (18.5%). At the junior secondary level, in 2007 the repetition rate was 24.2% and 19.4% in grades 8 and 9, respectively. In 2007, drop-out rates were particularly high in grade 1 (1.9%), grade 5 (4%), grade 7 (5%), and at the junior secondary level (6.7% and 7.2% in grades 8 and 9, respectively).

The Ministry of Education reports a total enrolment of 409,508 pupils in grades 1-7 in 2007. There were 1,048 primary schools, 428 combined schools, and nine special schools. The physical structures of most of the schools especially in the northern parts of the country are dilapidated. The net primary school enrolment ratio was estimated at 92.3% in 2006 and the survival rate to grade 5 at 94%, and to grade 8 at 81%. Survival rates tend to be higher for girls than for boys. (MOE, 2008). HIV and AIDS has a significant impact on the education sector, and has taken its toll both on teachers and pupils. There are about 121,000 orphans enrolled in school, accounting for 21.2% of total learners. These learners may face greater challenges in general, and in particular concerning the financial demands of schooling. (National Planning Commission, 2008).



Secondary education

Senior secondary is the fifth phase of basic education and covers grades 11 and 12. At the end of grade 12, students sit the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate examination in six subjects. All subjects are available at the Ordinary level of the examination (NSSCO), and most subjects are available at the Higher level (NSSCH). The NSSC is awarded either as a subject certificate, or as a group certificate recognized by the National Qualifications Authority. Most universities and higher education institutions accept subject certificates. In the subject certificate, each subject that is graded in the examination is entered on the certificate, and supplementary subjects can be freely combined with fields of study.

The main purpose of the senior secondary phase is to prepare learners for adult life, tertiary studies or direct entry to employment. Much greater demands are made on the learners in terms of the level of cognitive, personal and social development, both in terms of academic achievement, taking greater responsibility for their own learning, and consolidating good work ethics and practices. Entry to the senior secondary phase in the formal system is decided on the number of points to be achieved, calculated on the basis of final grades from the junior secondary phase.

In terms of phase competencies, on completion of senior secondary education learners are expected to:

- Show competence in listening critically with understanding for a variety of purposes to appropriate texts; speaking confidently and meaningfully in different contexts using sophisticated vocabulary in the first language; reading critically and appreciatively an extensive variety of texts and adult literature; writing factual and other types of texts using appropriate style and grammatical structures.
- Listen with understanding for a variety of purposes to appropriate texts in the second language, speak fluently and confidently in a wide range of situations, read critically a variety of texts and write functional and imaginative texts without serious language errors. They use English competently for official purposes.
- Understand everyday authentic oral and written texts in the foreign language; appropriately express ideas, feelings and opinions in conversational situations and in written narrative and descriptive texts, using mostly correct language, and where formal errors do not detract from their meaning.
- Use mathematical language and representation as a means of solving problems relevant to everyday life and to their further education and future careers.
- Use methods and skills to develop simple scientific models on the basis of existing and new information. They communicate their investigations, analyses and conclusions using scientific and mathematical language and theories. They apply and generalize scientific knowledge to everyday situations. They understand the value and vulnerability of the natural environment, actions affecting the environment negatively, and how these can be countered.



- Understand the interrelationships of resources, production, society and the environment, and of human action, governance and change. They conduct critical analyses of social and environmental issues, and evaluate interpretations. They apply social science skills to contemporary events and situations at local, national and global levels. They know how to contribute actively to the sustainable development and growth of a knowledge-based, equitable, democratic society. They show motivation and assertive behaviour, make responsible choices and research study and career options.
- Show creativity in complex processes of investigating and exploring product ideas, and choosing with discernment from a wide range of designs and/or materials. They correctly use appropriate specialized tools and equipment, and make and evaluate a high-quality product.
- Make appropriate selections from a range of hardware and software to solve information problems and systematically try out and evaluate ICT solutions. They communicate effectively through and about ICTs, and explain the practical and social effects of ICTs.
- Use intermediate-level office, secretarial, managerial or accounting skills in direct employment in larger business enterprises, or in self-employment as a micro-large enterprise.
- Research, experiment, innovate and communicate clearly in 2- and 3-dimensional art, analyze and resolve design problems, explain intuitive and imaginative responses using critical and analytical skills, show critical awareness of environments and cultures and demonstrate mature personal vision and commitment.
- Evaluate their fitness, strength and endurance. They demonstrate basic instruction or refereeing in selected games or sports. They draw up a plan with a rationale and targets for their own health-related physical activities for the different phases of their lives.

The medium of learning (except in the national language subject) continues to be English. All learners take life skills, physical education, and at least six subjects for the NSCC examination. One of these must be English. As from 2012 mathematics will also be a compulsory subject. Learners specialize by choosing one of the options in a field of study, and one or two supplementary subjects from those offered by the school to make up a programme of six examination subjects. A field of study consists of three inter-related mutually supportive subjects. The choice of option within a field of study should be guided by which subjects they achieved good grades in at the JSC examination. In addition, learners take two supplementary subjects if they follow a one-language curriculum and one supplementary subject if they follow a two-language curriculum. Supplementary subjects should be chosen on the basis of their interest and aptitude. As far as is practically possible, the mother tongue/predominant local language should be taken. The combination of fields of study and supplementary subjects will give greater depth or greater breadth, depending on whether or not the supplementary subject is related to those in the field of study. However, in cases where there is an overlapping of content certain combinations of supplementary subjects might be excluded owing to examination requirements. Learners may only take a foreign language if they start it at grade 8. The fields of study and supplementary subjects are shown below:

Namibia. Senior secondary education: fields of study

Natural sciences and mathematics	NSM1	Biology*; Physical science*; Mathematics*
	NSM2	Biology*; Mathematics*; Geography*
	NSM3	Physical science*; Mathematics*; Computer studies*
	NSM4	Agriculture; Biology*; Mathematics*
	NSM5	Physical science*; Mathematics*, Geography*
Social sciences	SS1	Development studies; Geography*; History*
	SS2	Economics*; Geography*; History*
Technology	T1	Design and technology*; Mathematics*; Physical science*
	T2	Home economics; Biology*; Development studies
	T3	Fashion and fabrics; Business studies*; Development studies
	T4	Mathematics*; Computer studies*; Design and technology*
Commerce	C1	Accounting*; Business studies*; Mathematics*
	C2	Accounting*; Mathematics*; Computer studies*
	C3	Accounting*; Economics*; Mathematics*

Source: Ministry of Education-NIED, 2010. (*) Available both for the Ordinary and the Higher levels of the examination.

Namibia. Senior secondary education: supplementary subjects

Key learning area	Subjects
Language	French foreign language*
	German foreign language*
Mathematics	Mathematics*
	Agriculture
Natural Sciences	Biology*
	Physical science*
	Development studies
Social Sciences	Geography*
	History*
	Accounting*
	Business studies*
Commerce	Office administration and keyboard applications
	Economics*
	Computer studies*
	Design and technology*
Technology	Fashion and fabrics
	Home economics
Arts	Art and design*

Source: Ministry of Education-NIED, 2010. (*) Available both for the Ordinary and the Higher levels of the examination.



Typical weekly lesson timetables for senior secondary education in line with the new basic education curriculum effective from 2010 are shown below (timetabling can be as flexible as possible, provided that the total time allocation is adhered to):

Namibia. Senior secondary education: typical weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in grades 11-12	
	Two-language curriculum	One-language curriculum
English	8	8
Another language	6	–
Field of study	18	18
Supplementary subject	6	–
Two supplementary subjects	–	12
Life skills	2	2
Physical education	1	1
Total weekly periods	41	41

Source: Ministry of Education-NIED, 2010. The timetable is based on a five-day week and each teaching period lasts 40 minutes. Schools with computer laboratories will offer two additional weekly periods of ICT literacy, for a total of 43 periods per week. Starting from 2012, six weekly periods of mathematics will be compulsory and two periods of ICT literacy should be included in the timetable. In the case of two-language curriculum, a total of 18 weekly periods will be allocated to three other subjects; in the case of one-language curriculum, a total of 24 periods per week will be allocated to four other subjects.

Results from grade 10 will determine whether a learner should start studying a subject at the Ordinary or Higher level. Continuous assessment results during grades 11 and 12 will indicate if a learner should be entered for the examination at the Ordinary instead of the Higher level, and in the case of mathematics and second languages, at the core or extended ordinary level. In some subjects, course work is compulsory and part of the final grade; in others it is optional and can be used as part of the final grade; and in some subjects it is not available. Where it is not possible to conduct required course work as part of the examination, an alternative paper will be given in the examination. A formal school-based examination must be given at the end of Grade 11, and will be internally assessed. The purpose of this examination is to review essential areas and skills in what has been learnt during the year, and for learners to become familiar with the examination format and procedures for the NSSC. It must again be a learning experience in how to use time in an examination, and how to interpret and answer questions, so that learners become confident in the examination situation. A mock examination will be written in August of the grade 12 year to further prepare for the external examination, and to give preliminary information for applications for work, bursaries or further studies.

Learners whose attendance, application to school work during the year, and grade 11 examination results are satisfactory, progress into the second year of the senior secondary programme. However, learners who show unacceptable patterns of behaviour (including unacceptable absenteeism), and/or lack of commitment to studies and limited progress, may be refused readmission to formal senior secondary education by the Permanent Secretary.



The NSSC is awarded either as a subject certificate, or as a group certificate recognized by the Namibia Qualifications Authority. In order to be awarded a group certificate, the learner must achieve specified minimum grades in given combinations of at least six examination subjects. The subjects on the curriculum are divided into five groups for this purpose only. One subject must be English first or second language at Ordinary or Higher level from groups 1 or 2, and all learners must take another language. One of the languages must be on a first language level. At least two of the groups 3, 4 and 5 must be represented by one or more subjects. A scale of A-G is used for the Ordinary level, and 1-4 for the Higher level, with Ungraded (U) being used at both levels, where the A and the 1 respectively are the highest levels.

Vocational training centres offer technical subjects at the junior secondary level. To enrol, learners need not have completed primary school if they have some work experience. The centres mainly provide training in building, metal- and wood-working, motor mechanics, electrician work, and fitting and turning. Additional opportunities for further training are also available through the private sector. There has been a satisfactory increase in enrolment at vocational education and training centres with a total of 4,741 students in 2007; the admission for 2008 reached a total of 5,733 students. Most of vocational training centres offer Levels 1-3 certificate courses.

The Ministry of Education reports a total enrolment of 158,378 learners and 176 secondary schools in 2007, of whom 124,448 at the junior secondary and 33,714 at the senior secondary level. The gross enrolment ratio was estimated at 32%. The school leaving rates from junior secondary education to senior secondary (grade 11) remains a major concern though there has been a decrease from 46.6% in 2004 to 38.2% in 2007. (MOE, 2008).

Assessing learning achievement nation-wide

In 1995, Namibia participated in the research project of the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ). Data available from this survey indicate the percentage of grade 6 learners who reached a minimum and a desirable level of mastery in English reading. A group of English teachers and advisory teachers from several education regions had determined minimum and desired test outcomes prior to the survey. The outcomes of the SACMEQ survey indicated that the level of English reading comprehension in Namibia was far below the level subject specialists considered to be the minimum learners should achieve to progress to grade 7. The survey also highlighted great disparities in achievement between regions and within those regions where the mean achievement was relatively high (MBEC, 1999).

The SACMEQ study of the quality of education in Namibia in 2000 showed that the general competence levels of learners and teachers in Namibia are low compared to other southern and eastern African countries. In Namibia there were large differences between rural and urban areas, with learners living in large towns tending to perform better. Of major concern is the low competency in mathematics demonstrated by teachers in Caprivi, Kavango, Ohangwena, Oshikoto, Oshana and Omusati regions. About two thirds of all primary schools are found in these regions,



and thus about 65% of grade 6 learners were taught by teachers with low competency in mathematics. (National Planning Commission, 2008).

At the junior secondary level, in 2007 the percentage of grade 10 learners achieving D or better was 36.8% in mathematics, 43% in English, and 44.1% in science. For grade 12 (senior secondary), the percentages were 35.3%, 31% and 38.8% respectively. (MOE, 2008).

As regards the overall results of the NSSC Ordinary level examinations of November 2009, 73.4% of learners achieved D or better (national average, all subjects). In the case of the 2009 JSC examinations, 46.1% of learners achieved D or better.

Teaching staff

Four colleges of education offer three-year courses leading to a Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD). The BETD is a unified general preparation for all basic education teachers (lower and upper primary and junior secondary education), combining a common core foundation for all, with opportunities for specialization in relation to phases of schooling and subject areas. The minimum requirement for the BETD is an acceptable level of maturity, and a grade 12 with NSSC passes or the equivalent. Teacher education is shared between the University of Namibia (UNAM) and the four colleges which are governed by the Ministry of Education. The UNAM trains teachers for the senior secondary level (undergraduate degree programmes).

In 1995, 71.6% of all teachers had professional training in teaching. The proportion of teachers who were professionally qualified varied from region to region. For example, 92% of the teachers in Khomas region were qualified, whereas only 40% of those in Okavango were qualified.

The Ministry of Education reports that in 2007 the total number of teachers was 20,333, of whom 894 without teacher training. In terms of qualifications, 15,568 teachers had more than two years of tertiary-level education, 3,285 had grade 12 or one to two years of tertiary education, and 1,480 had less than grade 12. It is estimated that 71% of primary school teachers and 90.3% of secondary school teachers were qualified. The overall learner to teacher ratio was 28:1.

A survey conducted in 2008 revealed that the provision of basic services, sanitary facilities, teacher housing, lack of transport between points (towns, villages, etc) are but of the few concerns which present a challenge in deploying qualified teachers to underserved/rural areas.

The Ministry of Education offers in-service teacher training opportunities in various disciplines, including training on policy matters. A plan to enhance teachers' proficiency in English is available to teachers while capacity building for school principals on leadership management is ongoing. In-service training workshops in mathematics and science are also offered. (MOE, 2008).



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Web resources

Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment: <http://www.dnea.gov.na/> [In English. Last checked: August 2010.]

Ministry of Education: <http://www.mec.gov.na/> [In English. Last checked: August 2010. Temporarily down.]

Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare: <http://www.mgecw.gov.na/> [In English. Last checked: August 2010.]

Namibia Qualifications Authority: <http://www.namqa.org/> [In English. Last checked: August 2010.]

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Polytechnic of Namibia: <http://www.polytechnic.edu.na/> [In English. Last checked: August 2010.]

University of Namibia: <http://www.unam.na/> [In English. Last checked: August 2010.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>