NATIONAL REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN NAMIBIA

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

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

Namibia

John Mutorwa
Minister of Basic Education, Sport and Culture

Creating Learning Societies

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

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

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

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

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

Geography of Namibia

Location:
Southern Africa, bordering the South Atlantic Ocean, between Angola and South Africa

Geographic coordinates:
22 00 S, 17 00 E

Area:
total: 825,418 sq km
water: 0 sq km
land: 825,418 sq km

Area - comparative:
slightly more than half the size of Alaska

Land boundaries:
total: 3,936 km
border countries: Angola 1,376 km, Botswana 1,360 km, South Africa 967 km, Zambia 233 km

Coastline:
1,572 km

Maritime claims:
contiguous zone: 24 NM
exclusive economic zone: 200 NM
territorial sea: 12 NM

Climate:
desert; hot, dry; rainfall sparse and erratic

Terrain:
mostly high plateau; Namib Desert along coast; Kalahari Desert in east

Elevation extremes:
lowest point: Atlantic Ocean 0 m
highest point: Konigstein 2,606 m

Natural resources:
diamonds, copper, uranium, gold, lead, tin, lithium, cadmium, zinc, salt, vanadium, natural gas, hydropower, fish

*note*: suspected deposits of oil, coal, and iron ore

Land use:
*arable land*: 0.99%
*permanent crops*: 0%
*other*: 99.01% (1998 est.)

Irrigated land:
70 sq km (1998 est.)

Natural hazards:
prolonged periods of drought

Environment - current issues:
very limited natural fresh water resources; desertification; increased wildlife population; increased establishment of conservancy areas

Environment - international agreements:
*party to*: Antarctic-Marine Living Resources, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Ozone Layer Protection, Wetlands

Geography - note:
first country in the world to incorporate the protection of the environment into its constitution; some 14% of the land is protected, including virtually the entire Namib Desert coastal strip

## Population of Namibia

Population:
1,954,033

*note*: estimates for this country explicitly take into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS; this can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality and death rates, lower population and growth rates, and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected (July 2004 est.)

Age structure:
0-14 years: 42.4% (male 419,700; female 409,156)
15-64 years: 54% (male 527,553; female 528,386)
65 years and over: 3.5% (male 30,427; female 38,811) (2004 est.)

Median age:
total: 18.3 years
male: 18 years
female: 18.6 years (2004 est.)

Population growth rate:
1.25% (2004 est.)

Birth rate:
33.51 births/1,000 population (2004 est.)
Death rate:
21.02 deaths/1,000 population (2004 est.)

Net migration rate:
0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2004 est.)

Infant mortality rate:
total: 69.58 deaths/1,000 live births
female: 66.43 deaths/1,000 live births (2004 est.)
male: 72.65 deaths/1,000 live births

Life expectancy at birth:
total population: 40.53 years
male: 42.36 years
female: 38.64 years (2004 est.)

Total fertility rate:
4.65 children born/woman (2004 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:
22.5% (2001 est.)

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:
230,000 (2001 est.)

HIV/AIDS - deaths:
13,000 (2001 est.)

Nationality:
noun: Namibian(s)
adjective: Namibian

Ethnic groups:
black 87.5%, white 6%, mixed 6.5%
note: about 50% of the population are Ovambos, 9% Hakavangos; other ethnic groups are: Herero 7%, Damara 7%, Nama 5%, Caprivian 4%, Bushmen 3%, Baster 2%, Tswana 0.5%

Religions:
Christian 80% to 90% (Lutheran 50% at least), indigenous beliefs 10% to 20%

European
Languages groups
English 7% (official), Afrikaans common language of most of the population and about 60% of the white population, while 32% are German speakers.

Literacy:
definition: age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 84%
male: 84.4%
female: 83.7% (2003 est.)

Government

Country name:
conventional long form: Republic of Namibia
conventional short form: Namibia
former: German Southwest Africa, South-West Africa

Government type: republic

Capital: Windhoek

Administrative divisions: 13 regions; Caprivi, Erongo, Hardap, Karas, Khomas, Kunene, Oshangwena, Okavango, Omaheke, Omusati, Oshana, Oshikoto, Otjozondjupa

Independence: 21 March 1990 (from South African mandate)


Constitution: ratified 9 February 1990; effective 12 March 1990

Legal system: based on Roman-Dutch law and 1990 constitution

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Executive branch:
chief of state: President Sam Shafishuna Nujoma (since 21 March 1990)
head of government: Prime Minister Theo-Ben GURIRAB (since 28 August 2002)
cabinet: Cabinet appointed by the president from among the members of the National Assembly

elections: president elected by popular vote for a five-year term; election last held 30 November-1 December 1999 (next to be held NA November 2004)
election results: Sam Shafishuna Nujoma elected president; percent of vote - Sam Shafishuna Nujoma 77%

Legislative branch:
bicameral legislature consists of the National Council (26 seats; two members are chosen from each regional council to serve six-year terms) and the National Assembly (72 seats; members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms)

elections: National Council - elections for regional councils, to determine members of the National Council, held 30 November-1 December 1998 (next to be held NA November 2004); National Assembly - last held 30 November-1 December 1999 (next to be held NA November 2004)
ote: the National Council is primarily an advisory body
election results: National Council - percent of vote by party - NA%; seats by party - SWAPO 21, DTA 4, UDF 1; National Assembly - percent of vote by party - SWAPO 76%, COD 10%, DTA 9%, UDF 3%, MAG 1%, other 1%; seats by party - SWAPO 55, COD 7, DTA 7, UDF 2, MAG 1

Judicial branch:
Supreme Court (judges appointed by the president on the recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission)
Political parties and leaders:
Congress of Democrats or COD [Ben Ulenga]; Democratic Turnhalle Alliance of Namibia or DTA [Katuutire Kaura, president]; Monitor Action Group or MAG [Kosie Pretorius]; South West Africa People's Organization or SWAPO [Sam Shafishuna Nujoma]; United Democratic Front or UDF [Justus Garoeb]

Economy

The economy is heavily dependent on the extraction and processing of minerals for export. Mining accounts for 20% of GDP. Rich alluvial diamond deposits make Namibia a primary source for gem-quality diamonds. Namibia is the fourth-largest exporter of non-fuel minerals in Africa, the world's fifth-largest producer of uranium, and the producer of large quantities of lead, zinc, tin, silver, and tungsten. The mining sector employs only about 3% of the population while about half of the population depends on subsistence agriculture for its livelihood. Namibia normally imports about 50% of its cereal requirements. In drought years food shortages are a major problem in rural areas. A high per capita GDP, relative to the region, hides the great inequality of income distribution. Nearly one-third of Namibians had annual incomes of less than $1,400 in constant 1994 dollars, according to a 1993 study. The Namibian economy is closely linked to South Africa with the Namibian dollar pegged to the South African rand. It is hoped that Privatization of several enterprises in coming years may stimulate long-run foreign investment. Mining of zinc, copper, and silver and increased fish production was a leading growth in 2003.

GDP:
purchasing power parity - $13.72 billion (2003 est.)
GDP - real growth rate:
3.3% (2003 est.)
GDP - per capita:
purchasing power parity - $7,100 (2003 est.)
GDP - composition by sector:
agriculture: 11%
industry: 26%
services: 63% (2002 est.)
Population below poverty line:
50% (2002 est.)
Household income or consumption by percentage share:
lowest 10%: NA%
highest 10%: NA%
Inflation rate (consumer prices):
8% (2003)
Labour force:
725,000 (2000)
Labour force - by occupation:
agriculture 47%, industry 20%, services 33% (1999 est.)

Unemployment rate:
35% (1998)

Budget:
revenues: $883 million
expenditures: $950 million, including capital expenditures of $NA (1998)

Industries:
meatpacking, fish processing, dairy products; mining (diamond, lead, zinc, tin, silver, tungsten, uranium, copper)

Industrial production growth rate:
NA%

Electricity - production:
26.95 million kWh (2001)

Electricity - production by source:
NA

Electricity - consumption:
603.1 million kWh (2001)

Electricity - exports:
0 kWh (2001)

Electricity - imports:
578 million kWh; note - electricity supplied by South Africa (2001)

Oil - production:
0 bbl/day (2001 est.)

Oil - consumption:
13,000 bbl/day (2001 est.)

Oil - proved reserves:
0 bbl (1 January 2002)

Natural gas - proved reserves:
31.15 billion cu m (1 January 2002)

Agriculture - products:
millet, sorghum, peanuts; livestock; fish

Exports:
$1.09 billion f.o.b. (2003 est.)

Exports - commodities:
diamonds, copper, gold, zinc, lead, uranium; cattle, processed fish, karakul skins

Exports - partners:
EU 79%, US 4% (2001)
Imports:
$1.371 billion f.o.b. (2003 est.)

Imports - commodities:
foodstuffs; petroleum products and fuel, machinery and equipment, chemicals

Imports - partners:
US 50%, EU 31% (2001)

Debt - external:
$664 million (2003 est.)

Economic aid - recipient:
ODA $160 million (2000 est.)

Currency:
Namibian dollar (NAD); South African rand (ZAR)

Currency code:
NAD; ZAR

Exchange rates:


GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Following independence, the Namibian government saw universal education reform as a principal means of investing in human capital to promote socioeconomic development. While emphasis on structural change, learner-centered education, and universality provided strong foundations for a democratic educational system, a difficult medium of instruction policy and insufficient attention to gender equity delayed a comprehensive transformation. Over the years following independence, Namibia has placed greater educator participation in implementing the pedagogical approach, altering the language-of-instruction policy, greater gender equity in resource allocation, and greater attention to sex and HIV and AIDS education.

Education and Training

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

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

• **Develop and implement Human Resource Development Plans**

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

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

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

• **Strengthen the teaching of mathematics, science and technology at all levels**

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

- **Integrate entrepreneurship-training into the education system**

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

- **Achieve ‘Education for All’ objectives**

Whereas 95% of the Namibian school-going age children are in schools, the concern is
still to reach the remaining 5% to ensure that no Namibian child is left behind or denied
the right to education. In this regard, efforts are being undertaken to reach all
marginalized children, including street and vulnerable children. This process will be
intensified in keeping with Vision 2030 to enable Namibia to reach and maintain 100%
enrolment in schools by 2030.

- **Create awareness of HIV/AIDS at all levels of the education system**

HIV and AIDS has become a national emergency in Namibia. The 2001 estimate of a
22.5% prevalence rate is of great concern, and the fact that there is a growing number of
orphaned children in schools, is of even greater concern for the education system at all
levels. Awareness creation has therefore become critical across society. Namibia realizes
that Vision 2030 cannot be achieved if more efforts and resources are not allocated to
address the HIV and AIDS pandemic. In this regard, the education sector has established
a Unit that is dedicated to initiating, coordinating and implementing strategies developed
to combat the spread of HIV and AIDS. The 2001 estimate for people living with HIV
and AIDS in Namibia was 230 000, while deaths associated with HIV and AIDS was at
13 000 per year. These figures are of great concern for a small population. This is the
reason why Vision 2030 has highlighted this issue and made it a requirement for all
sectors of society to contribute through programmes aimed at arresting the spread. The
education sector has developed a policy on HIV and AIDS which it is vigorously
implementing and will continue to modify as the situation changes.

**THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM IN NAMIBIA**

(1) **The education system at the beginning of the twenty-first century: Overview**

1.1 **Major problems and innovations introduced in the education system at the beginning
of the twenty-first century**

(a) **The legal framework of education**

**Current Status of National Education Policy in Namibia**

The Education Act of 2001 was promulgated in December 2001. The Education Act's
primary objective are:

To provide for the provision of accessible, equitable, qualitative and democratic national education service; to provide for the establishment of the National Advisory Council on Education, the National Examination, Assessment and Certification Board, Regional Education Forums, School Boards, the Education Development Fund; the establishment of schools and hostels; the establishment of the Teaching Service and the Teaching Service Committee; and provision for incidental matters.

Related Policy and Legislation of Importance to Education

National Gender Policy

It is worth noting that both NDP2 and EFA documents mention that gender equity is not a major issue in primary education in Namibia, due to the considerable efforts made since independence to ensure equal access. However, there are still barriers to girls studying subjects traditionally considered to be male dominated. Staffing ratios are still unbalanced with far fewer women in senior teaching and management positions, and a disproportionate number of women teachers at lower primary level. The National Gender Policy specifically states that ‘gender balance in education and training’ is an area of concern within the wider gender policy framework.

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

National Policy Options for Educationally Marginalized Children

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

HIV/AIDS Policy

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

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

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

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

(b) The structure of the school system

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

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

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

- **Pre-Primary Phase**

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

- **Primary Phase**

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

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

- **Combined Schools**

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

**The Organizational Management of the Education System**

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

**The department of Formal Education Programmes consists of the following Directorates:**

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

**The department of Culture, Arts and Lifelong Learning consists of the following Directorates:**

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

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

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

**Objectives and Principal Characteristics of Current and Forthcoming Reforms**

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

**Promotion Policy:** For efficiency reasons, as well as quality issues related to widespread repetition, the government established a semi-automatic promotion policy in 1996. Learners are permitted to repeat only once in each school phase, but not in Grade 10. There is automatic promotion from Grade 11 to Grade 12. As a result of this policy, repetition rates have fallen overall.

**Assessment and Examination:** The Continuous Assessment (CA) policy was introduced to provide criterion-based estimates of each learner's progress and level of achievement in relation to the minimum competencies specified in the curriculum and subject syllabi. The Grade 10 Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) was introduced in 1993 for promotion to the Senior Secondary phase. The International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and the Higher International General Certificate of Education (HIGCSE) examinations were adopted in 1994 through a partnership with the University of Cambridge. There is yet to be certification or standard assessment at the end of primary. For the purpose of monitoring quality, a semi-external examination was introduced at the end of Grade 7 in 2000.

**Inspectorate:** The Strategic Plan 2001-2006 calls for the establishment of the National Inspectorate to assure quality and review performance. Data available from national examination registers (Grades 7, 10 and 12) and other sources make it possible to identify schools that are performing exceptionally poorly or well with respect to certain criteria. The National Inspectorate is to be established in 2005 to diagnose why schools are not performing as expected and to execute quality assurance functions. National standards have been developed in 2004 to assist in ensuring quality of teaching and learning in schools.

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

1.2 Major achievements in education and lessons learned.

Programme elements in the formal education system in Namibia are manifested in the following goals articulation:

**(a) Access to education**

Implementation of the Education Policy on Access in Namibia has enabled the country to reap the benefits in the form of 95% enrolment rate of 6 to 16 year olds in the last few years. The net enrolment ratios for the 7-16 age group were 1999: 92.9%; 2001: 90.8%. However there is a serious concern about the access of San and OvaHimba children, children on
commercial and communal farms, street children and orphans, mainly due to the phenomenon of the HIV and AIDS pandemic and inaccessibility and availability of services and infrastructure to these communities. The Ministry has therefore introduced specific interventions to improve access, for example, the mobile school system for the OvaHimba children, satellite schools for the San communities in accordance with their nomadic life style and the National School Feeding Programme for those poor communities where parents cannot afford three meals a day. In addition, the Policy on Teenage Pregnancies provides for the readmission of girls to school after giving birth. Access of children with special needs to education lags behind the general increase in enrolment. Refugee children in Namibia also benefit from the national education budget through the provision of education to the Osire Refugee Camp.

(b) Equity in education

One of the major hurdles for achieving equity in the Namibian education system is the inequitable distribution of resources to the regions. This is a pre-independence legacy which will take a long time to rectify. During the implementation of NDP 1 efforts were made to equalize the distribution of educational expenditure per learner across regions. It was aimed at reducing repetition, focusing on schools in those regions that lag behind, and allocating funds for textbooks and other materials equitably. The introduction of new staffing norms in January 2002, which are to be phased in gradually, is also aimed at bringing about equity in the school system. It is planned to deliver advisory services in the small entry subjects, like technical subjects, arts and craft, foreign languages etc. across Education Regions in order to facilitate equity.

(c) Quality of Education

The quality of education is influenced by many factors, such as teacher qualification, effectiveness, professionalism, resource allocation, language proficiency and management. To tackle these problems the Ministry embarked upon a huge programme of provision of classrooms, laboratories and libraries. For the provision of classrooms, albeit with assistance from our Development Partners, there is still a long way to go to fill this backlog. More teachers are being trained to address the shortage of qualified teachers and to improve the competencies of serving teachers. The improvement of school management is being done through the establishment of School Boards and the continuous in-service training of school principals.

Since independence, education reform has been a major agenda of the education system. By 1999 the major part of the education reform process was completed. Curricula had been developed, together with new learner-centered teaching methods, continuous assessment procedures and semi-automatic promotion. New teaching materials are constantly being developed as curricular changes are being introduced by the National Institute for Educational Development.

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

(d) Policy Dialogue, Partnership and Participation by Civil Society in the Process of Educational Change

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

- Setting of National Standards and guidelines to ensure quality of education
- Putting in place a competency framework and National Standards for the Teaching Profession
- Effective utilization of teachers and improving teachers' conditions of service, especially accommodation in rural areas
- Mitigating the effect of HIV and AIDS in the education sector, and providing relief arrangements for the teachers who are terminally ill
- Empowering school boards in order to guide and run schools effectively, especially in the management of the school development fund
- Restructuring the inspectorate and advisory services in order to improve the quality of school supervision, teaching and learning and support to teachers
- Expanding the use of mobile schools in order to support access to education of the marginalized, the OvaHimba, San communities and other vulnerable children
- Strengthening the provision of education for children with special educational needs
- Provision of equitable resources to regions through the review of the funding formula in order to be in line with the decentralization policy
- Reduction of cost in the running of hostel services.

1.3 Main problems and challenges facing the education system at the beginning of the twenty first century

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

- Fourteen years after independence the system has been unable to meet the demand for skilled human resources, while the country continues to experience high rates of unemployment and underemployment.

- Current levels of expenditure on education may not be sustainable in the long run due to low economic growth and increasing government budget deficits. Even if the education sector receives the largest share of the government budget, over 80% of this goes to personnel costs and less than 20% is left for capacity building, educational materials and equipment and other running costs. It is hoped that the implementation of the new staffing norms will help in devising a more equitable formula for allocating resources according to education units.

- There is still a need to improve the conditions for teaching and learning, especially in the rural areas in order to improve the quality of educational outcomes, particularly in critical areas such as Mathematics, Science and English. This may partly be achieved by more in-service training and support to teachers to acquire relevant competencies for effective teaching.

- The MBESC is in the process of organizing and strengthening advisory service structures by establishing educator development and support (EDS) units in all Education Regions. This is to go hand in hand with developing continuous professional development (CPD)/INSET programmes for advisory teachers and TRC managers, as well as supporting their advanced studies for qualification upgrading purposes.
The implementation of the following policies, all essential for the successful implementation of EFA, will remain a challenge for Namibia if efforts are not coordinated to ensure that they are widely disseminated, known, appreciated and implemented:

- National Early Childhood Development Policy
- National Gender Policy
- School Health Policy
- Policy on Teenage Pregnancies
- HIV / AIDS Policy
- Policy on Disability
- Information for Self-reliance and Development:
  - A policy framework for Libraries and Allied Information Agencies for Namibia.

The envisaged establishment of the proposed National Inspectorate to monitor the provision of quality education for all according to set national standards and the localizing of the IGCSE examinations, are also major challenges that need to be tackled.

In addition, the intention is to provide for new models of learning and acquiring knowledge with the conviction that education can contribute substantially towards creating responsible citizens who are able to build their own lives and make their own living. A special challenge is to reach out to the educationally marginalized, the impoverished, and those living in the most remote areas of the country.

The population growth has been affected by the increasing HIV and AIDS infection, which has led to many deaths, particularly among the young productive age groups. This has resulted in a number of children becoming orphans. To date the HIV and AIDS orphans in Namibia are estimated to be around 70,000. (Report on the Global HIV and AIDS Epidemic, UNAIDS 2001) This is a challenge to the education sector in Namibia. In addition, the number of education sector workers, including teachers, who are lost due to HIV and AIDS, is creating an additional staffing challenge for the whole sector.

An influx of refugees in Namibia has resulted in a growing number of refugee children. The Government is faced with the challenge of providing quality education to these children and adults since they have fundamental rights just like any other citizen.

The Government, in conformity with the Salamanca Framework for Action (1994), makes provision for all children, irrespective of their special educational needs, to benefit from the same education through mainstream education. However, in Namibia, the reality is that children with severe learning difficulties receive education and training in a few special schools. There are still various barriers that exist with regard to the education of children with special needs and orphans and vulnerable children. Awareness to avoid negative attitudes and stereotypes needs to be reinforced, especially among teachers, peers and communities. The challenge is therefore to train teachers and personnel and to provide teaching and learning
facilities that can cater for the needs of children with special needs in mainstream school.

- Coupled with these challenges, Government is faced with the daunting task of decentralizing functions to regions, the high unemployment rate, particularly among the youth, and the inadequate financial resources available to address these issues.

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

Education and competence for life

Namibia is fully aware of the fact that access to education, at secondary school level is limited. This trend was brought about by the strong emphasis placed on primary education after independence. The Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture is now in the process of preparing for the expansion of secondary education to allow more young people access to further and higher levels of training as well as better job prospects.

The transition between Grades 10 and 11 has been observed to be a stumbling block at senior secondary school level. Namibian learners are tested at the end of Grade 10 on the Junior Certificate Examination (JSC) but only 50% of these learners can progress to Grade 11 on account of limited places available. The majority of those who are not being placed continue with their studies through the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL).

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

- Standardize the examination at Grade 7 to prepare learner entry to Grade 10.
- Increase intake and retention of learners at secondary school level to about 80%.
- Systematically review curricula to provide broad foundation skills for the world of work and further studies.
- Increase allocation of resources e.g. textbooks, and address regional disparities.
- Upgrade teacher qualification and pedagogic competence.
- Strengthen access to and use of modern information and communication technologies (ICT) and relevant services in order to participate in the global and technological world.
- Expand physical infrastructure and improve the learning environment.

TEACHER PREPARATION

Pre- and In-service teacher education reforms to serve the new challenges facing education.

The Context
In line with the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, education was reformed at independence, based on the four major goals of education, which are **access, equity, quality** and **democracy** that were to be realised through the educational principles of learner-centred education.

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

Teacher education reform in Namibia should therefore be understood from this departure point.

**Teacher Education Reform**

Teacher education was considered one of the most important areas of reform at Independence, because of teachers’ strategic role in the reform efforts. Within the new paradigm of education, teachers were seen to be ‘both agents and implementers of change’, and thus had to be adequately prepared for the task.

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

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

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

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

Within the new paradigm of education, teacher education, particularly pre-service teacher education, was seen as an initial step in an ongoing process of professional growth and development as a result of the rapidly increasing and changing state of knowledge, and the new and more complex demands which are made on the role and functions of the teacher, especially in a post-independent Namibia haunted by the legacies of the apartheid regime. Teacher education reform in Namibia has since independence been used as spearhead in the efforts to transform the Namibian society within its social ‘contract’ to contribute to a new and different society.

The Ministry of Education and Culture introduced the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) programme in 1993 at the four Colleges of Education, founded on the principles of learned-centred pedagogy. The goal of the BETD was to provide a national and common teacher preparation related to the needs of basic education, the educational community, and the nation at large. It strives to foster understanding and respect for cultural values and beliefs, “social responsibility,” “gender awareness and equity.” It also strives to instil an awareness of how to “develop a reflective attitude and creative, analytical and critical thinking; understanding of learning as an interactive, shared and productive process; and enabling the teacher to meet the needs and abilities of the individual learner” (MHEVTST & MBEC, 1998: 39). The BETD programme aims to produce teachers who can meet the demands and rise to the challenges of the post-independence basic education system. Students teachers are exposed to a variety of teaching and learning styles, strategies and techniques, which will equip them to become competent and professional teachers. The BETD programme strikes a balance between subject knowledge on the one hand and professional skills and insight on the other.

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

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

- Teachers should not be regarded as “technicians” who are required to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations uncritically.
- Teachers are active, independent learners and problem solvers rather than passive recipients of information.
- Teachers are assumed to have the required skills to critique the written knowledge.
- The process of understanding and improving one’s own teaching should start from reflection on one’s experience.
- The process of professional development is a dialectical one generating theory from practice and practice from theory.
- Knowledge for teaching is constructed when teachers have the opportunity to reflect on their own practice, and use a process of inquiry into their own sites to learn more about effective teaching.
- Improved practice results from practitioners reflecting critically on their educational practices.

The critical inquiry orientation to teacher education was favoured primarily by the Namibian policy makers, because it supports the post-independence goals and philosophy of education. It emphasises the role of schools in promoting democratic values and reducing social inequalities, and therefore aims at enabling prospective teachers to become aware of the social context of schools and of the social consequences of their actions as teachers. This reflects an awareness of the importance of teachers’ questions in the making of pedagogical theory. In this paradigm it is necessary for student teachers to view their questions and the challenges they come up against as avenues and opportunities leading to new insights and understandings. Critical inquiry recognises that practice takes place in certain contexts, and that the teacher as researcher must make these contexts clear and respond to them in appropriate ways.
The situation at Namibian independence was that 16% of the nation's 13,000 teachers had no professional training. The Ministry placed in-service teacher education at the top of its priority list because of the large proportion of unqualified and under-qualified teachers. In-service teacher training for both unqualified and under-qualified teachers is regarded as one of the key strategies to ensure equitable access to education and training and to redress the past unjust educational practices. The Ministry of Education and Culture introduced the Basic Education Teacher Diploma in-service programme (BETD INSET) in 1994.

The BETD INSET programme follows an adapted Broad Curriculum for the BETD Pre-service programme. The BETD INSET programme is a distance learning programme which targets unqualified and partly qualified teachers in Basic Education. The in-service teacher education programmes prior to Namibian independence were perceived to be too theoretical and distant from teachers’ concerns, needs and the classrooms. The education policy document, *Towards Education For All* (1993) emphasises the fact that 'teacher in-service education programmes are more effective when they are closely linked to classroom practice' (MEC, 1993: 78). A shift in pedagogical approaches was required in order to link the programme to the experiences of the serving teachers and to assist them in transforming their pedagogical practices to be consistent with the national educational goals. The BETD INSET programme also adopted the reflective approach to teaching and learning, because it acknowledges teachers’ existing knowledge and understanding as a basis for teaching and learning. The term used in the BETD INSET Programme is Practice-based inquiry (PBI), because the BETD INSET programme targets practising teachers.

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

Teacher education in Namibia, like in the rest of the world is continuously faced with challenges in education. As from 1996, the BETD curricula (both pre-service and in-service modes) have been continuously revised to respond to emerging issues and challenges such as: environmental education, human rights and democracy, population education, HIV and AIDS, technology usage and integration, as well as international trends in teacher education.

**REFERENCES**


