Basic Education in Namibia and Sida support

A review commissioned by the Swedish International Development Agency

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1. Introduction

Assistance to education from Sweden has been formulated in terms of 3-year programmes. We are now approaching the end of the second phase of support, due to end in December 1998. Sida, in starting to consider how the next and final programme should be organised and allocated, has requested a desk-study review of basic education in Namibia.

This review of basic education focuses on the current sector as a whole. The review starts by considering public demands for schooling and the government programmes put in place since independence in 1990. Six major goals for reform have been formulated - access, equity, democratic participation, quality, life-long learning and efficiency. For each of these, comments are offered on progress made during the past seven years and constraints to achieving these goals. The capacity of government to implement its policies is reviewed, as are the impacts of education programmes on children in previously neglected areas, and the financial sustainability of the education sector.

The report also offers comment on projects supported by Sida - the Teacher Education Reform Project, Pamwe, National Languages Competency Project, Enviroteach, Planning and Capacity Building, National Literacy Programme, and the Village Schools Project. These comments are italicised and placed in sections describing the sectors and goals that the projects support. Finally, drawing upon the overall assessment of basic education and projects that have benefited from Sida support, ideas are provided on areas Sida might consider supporting during the last years of its involvement in Namibian education.

The terms of reference provided for this report were necessarily broad, providing considerable freedom to reflect upon and to explore this fascinating field of human endeavour. I have aimed to provide a candid view of basic education, in particular of those areas that hold greatest interest to Sida. No report on such a broad and complex field can cover every angle, and will thus reflect the biases and pre-occupations of the author. Obviously, I hope that my comments will be useful, even those that draw attention to weaknesses in the system. Any factual mistakes and errors of interpretation are my responsibility. Similarly, the report is not intended to represent the views of Sida.

It is also my pleasure to acknowledge the many stimulating discussions I had while compiling information for this review with Hon. Nahas Angula, Fritz Dittmar, Gordon Elliot, Justin Ellis, Seth Imasiku, Canner Kalimba, Ulla Kann, Niklaus Lindstrom, Len le Roux, Mark Lynd, Dewald Nieuwoudt, Mary Seely, Hannu Shipena, Alexandra Silfverstolpe, Wes Snyder, Patti Swarts, Friedhelm Voigts, Viv Ward and Rob West.

2. Demands for schooling

By nature education enterprises are large, sluggish and cumbersome. They require years to move from one position, let alone from one paradigm to another. The education that exists today in Namibia is partly a product of circumstances that existed before independence in 1990 and partly a product of developments since 1990. This dualistic history is self-evident, but is worth reflecting upon because much of the current discussion on education implies that failures or successes stem from our "colonial past" or "independent renaissance", respectively. There is indeed much to regret and condemn about education before 1990, and a great deal has been written about that history. To summarise, 1990 saw Namibian education emerge from a system that was run by 11

different administrations based largely upon ethnic criteria. Resources were distributed in a highly inequitable fashion. For example, almost ten times more was spent on the average learner in schools run by the Administration by Whites than was spent per year on a learner in schools run by the Administration for Owambos. The curricula in use were foreign to the majority of people. In summary, little effort was made to build a nation of educated and productive citizens.

Independence in 1990 bestowed upon Namibian leaders a massive challenge to reform and invigorate basic education. Clearly, many people saw this as an opportunity for great progress to be made, for the establishment of the rights of people, for free access to relevant education, for equity and equal opportunities, for affirmative measures, and for life-long learning. Such aspirations were, and remain, noble. At the same time, new aspirations carry with them an effort to dispose of all that went before, and one particularly useful aspect of that history has been neglected: the high demand for schooling.

In all the commentaries about education before independence, there is almost unanimous agreement that "black" education was inferior, unproductive, and was often served upon the people for dubious reasons. Few, if any, of the commentaries have cared to point out that those "black" education systems were characterised by extremely high levels of demand for education. This was and is probably the most important characteristic of our education system. It is the high demand which feeds the suppliers: the schools, teachers, curriculum developers, education ministries, donor agencies, political leaders. The supply system would wither without this demand.

The most tangible and visible effect of the high demand is the fact that almost every single rural, black school in Namibia was started and first built by parents. In many cases, the first teachers at these schools were paid - often in kind - by parents. Our communities have continued this tradition. In 1991, there were about 1 234 registered schools. By 1997, that number had grown to 1 457, and almost all of these 223 new schools were started by private community initiative.

In many senses, we could say that all these schools - the majority of schools in Namibia - are private schools, started and built as a result of private initiative on private land. My point is not to argue that we should treat them as conventional private schools, but that we should recognise that our poorest rural schools share many of the best qualities to be found in urban, elite and well-endowed private schools. What are these qualities? They include the desire to have our children attend schools in our own communities, villages or towns. They include a commitment to invest heavily in education by providing substantial resources to physically build or pay for a school. They also include an element of status signalling, showing to all that we are proud to have our own school - be it in our village or city neighbourhood. And they include our desire as parents to maintain an interest in what happens in our schools.

The National Planning Commission published a study in 1994 on community perceptions of social services in Namibia. One clear message on education which emerged from that study is that rural Namibians are prepared to pay for education, but that they want a high quality service in return. Parents are reported as being adamant in their demands for good teachers, discipline, materials, and facilities.

The most important point here is that the majority of Namibians bring to the table a very strong demand for schooling, a demand that goes back many years. This demand is not a new fad, it is not a flash in the pan. Rather, it is something that the Namibian Government can depend upon, and indeed build upon. It is also something that developers, such as Sida, can work with. It is a sound investment base, one that will yield a good rate of return.

3. Government programmes

I started this review by discussing one aspect of how Namibians view schooling. Let us now turn to government programmes over the past seven years. Not surprisingly, independence in 1990 was followed by several early years of policy formulation, of bringing together fragmented administrations, of substantial interest by donors to help, of bringing new people in to manage education, and, most importantly, of creating new visions and enthusiasm. Much of the bureaucratic baggage, the mountains of red tape and regulations assembled over the decades were thrown aside. These were honeymoon years, and the vision generated was brought together in the book *Towards Education for All - a development brief for education, culture and training*.

In addition to all the activities needed to assemble a new administration and goals for education, early efforts at reform focused on:

- implementing new curricula for junior secondary grades
- introducing a new curriculum and programmes for teacher education
- introducing English as a new medium of instruction
- formulating better instructional programmes in mathematics, science and technology
- introducing a new curriculum and examination system for senior secondary grades
- developing a massive adult education programme.

Many of those new programmes were supported substantially by donor funding, often accompanied by teams of expatriate staff. Government funds voted to education had to be used largely to maintain the existing system and, in Justin Ellis's (Under Secretary for Adult and Continuing Education, Libraries, Arts and Culture) words, "Fitting old wine into new bottles was not easy."

New educational aims were also introduced at an early stage, ones intended to cut across all subjects and levels in basic education. Some of these were enunciated in the form of great goals - equity, access, democracy and quality. Others goals came later, those imploring the need for efficiency and life-long learning. We shall look at developments for each of these goals below. For curriculum purposes, the liberal paradigms of learner-centred education and continuous assessment were also introduced. There was a desire to move away from intimidating leadership in the classroom to conditions that stimulated the learning process. There was also the perceived need to depart from the narrow, do-or-die, constraints of conventional examinations.

The development of new curricula and syllabuses was accompanied by a drive to build - both literally and figuratively - the National Institute for Educational Development, now known as NIED. This was to be the Ministry's think-tank and centre of innovation, charged with curriculum development and revision, teacher development and language

development. NIED's setting on a new campus in Okahandja was intended both as a step in the direction of decentralisation as well as an attempt to separate the institution from routine, day-to-day administrative aspects of the Ministry. A plan to have NIED operate as an autonomous, parastatal organisation one day remains in place.

In summary, the Ministry has focused over the past seven years on policy formation and on innovation. Efforts made on implementation have largely been restricted to the introduction of new programmes. This, I strongly believe, has been at the expense of administering, improving and developing routine or on-going aspects of school management. Here is one tangible example. Much effort has been devoted to training our teachers, this being seen as an essential input and element of the reform process. But no effort has been made to deal with the substantial problem of absenteeism amongst teachers.

In 1995, His Excellency the President, created a new Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology. This new Ministry assumed responsibility for the University, Polytechnic and vocational colleges. It is only fair to record that most Ministry officials viewed this move with dismay, and that no one could understand the rationale behind it. Regardless of the real reasons for splitting the Ministry, one benefit has become apparent. This is focus that the new Ministry places on unemployment among youth. Namibia's economy cannot provide jobs for all who leave school, and most people who leave school are not equipped with the skills they need to enter the work force. All of this translates into a scenario of many jobless youths out on the figurative Namibian street. Such a group of unemployed young people - in fact, a very large group of potentially vociferous and angry young people - presents a socio-economic and political problem in any country.

In 1995 the National Planning Commission published Namibia's first Five-year Development Plan: 1995/1996 - 1999/2000. Chapter 22 of the Plan - called NDP1- deals with Education and Training, and sets out a number of targets which are to be met during or by the end of the Plan period. While the document is of obvious importance to agencies and organisations outside the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, the Ministry has not changed its programmes in any special way to achieve the targets set. In fact, the targets were set as a likely outcomes of processes or programmes established since independence. Some of the targets will be reached regardless of any action by the Ministry. For example, an increase to 1500 schools by the year 2000 will happen simply because so many new schools are started by rural communities. The following major targets were set for basic education in the Plan:

- Increase adult literacy to 80% by 2000
- Increase net enrolment of 6-15 year-olds to 94% by 2000
- Increase secondary enrolment by 40% by 2000
- Increase progression rates between primary and secondary school to 75% by 2000
- Maintain a progression rate of at least 45% between junior and secondary phases during NDP1
- Increase the number of schools to 1500 by 2000
- Reduce disparities in primary level learner:teacher ratios by 2000 so that the ratio in the worst region is no more than 50% higher that in best region
- Establish a Teaching Service Commission early in the Plan period

- Reduce inequalities in expenditure on primary education
- Consider options for cost recovery by 1997
- Introduce new Education Act early in the Plan period.

A number of construction projects which are to be implemented during NDP1 are also described. The Ministry has recently prepared a revised draft chapter on education and training for the mid-term review of NDP1.

4. The size of basic education

The Ministry has produced a comprehensive set of statistics on education, most recently and noticeably in the publication: *1996 Educational Statistics*. I will not repeat the main statistics, but will rather focus on some of the major trends over recent years.

Following independence, we saw a large growth in the education sector. Some 223 schools have been added since 1991, an increase of about 18%. Numbers of learners and teachers have also risen dramatically, by about 14% and 19% since 1991, respectively. Large numbers of classrooms, laboratories, sanitary facilities and other features have been added. However, this growth has not occurred evenly - some regions have seen much greater rates of growth, and enrolments in some grades have climbed much more than in others (Figures 1 and 2).

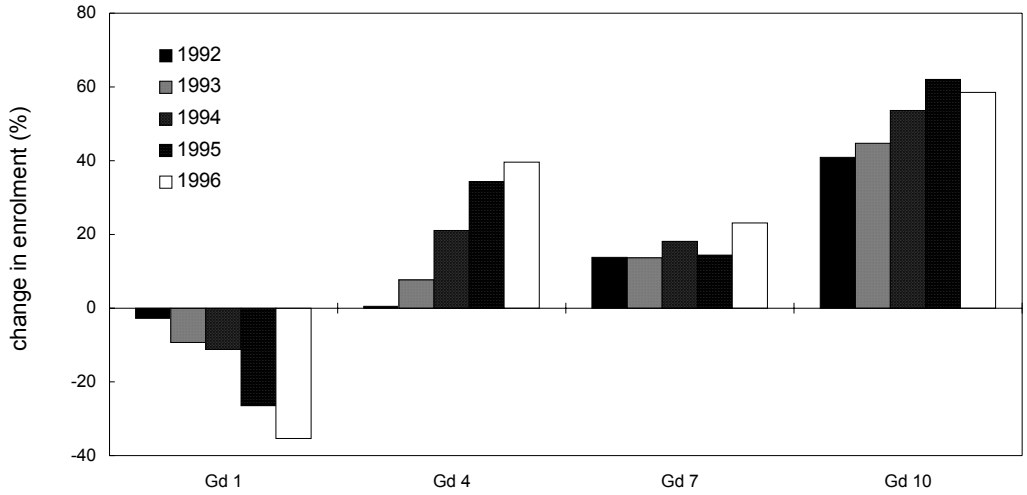

Figure 1. Percentage change in enrolments since 1991 in Grades 1, 4, 7 and 10

The first major feature is that there has been a massive growth in secondary enrolments. Numbers of senior secondary learners are about three times higher than they were in 1991, and Grade 10 enrolments have almost doubled over the same period. The second major feature is that there were massive enrolments in Grade 1 in the first few years following independence. That large injection of learners into the system was probably due to independence itself: the enthusiasm created for schooling, the clearing of a backlog of learners who were unable or unwilling to go to school during the war years, and the return

of children from exile. Since then learner numbers in Grade 1 have crashed. Over and above the fact that the backlog has been cleared, part of the crash has been due to increased promotion rates (with some regions having implemented the Ministry's policy of automatic promotion), lower repetition and lower rates of sporadic drop-out followed by re-entry to Grade 1. In 1991, Namibia enrolled a record number of 88 693 Grade 1's compared to 57 377 Grades 1's in 1996.

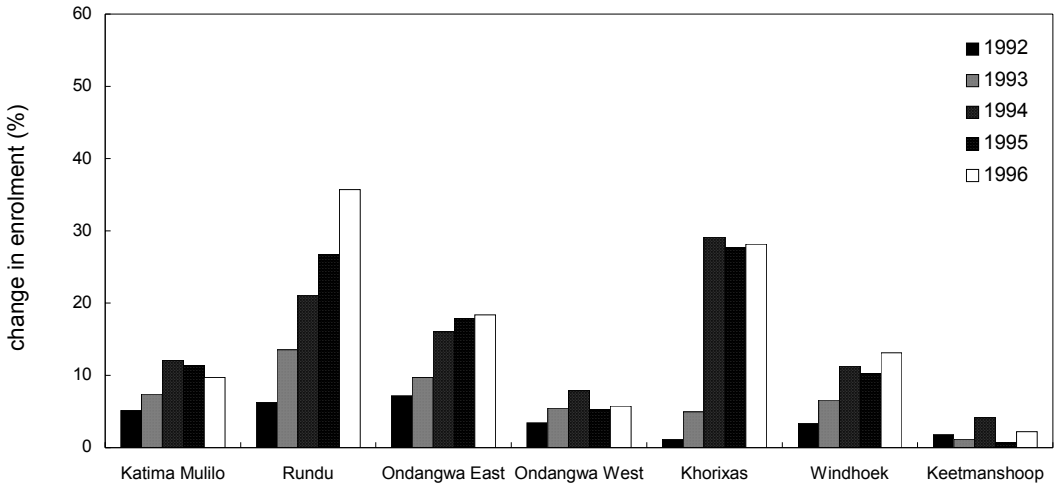

Figure 2. Percentage change in enrolments of all grades since 1991

The highest rates of growth (Figure 2) have been in the Rundu or Kavango Region, followed by Ondangwa East (Oshikoto and Ohangwena), Katima Mulilo or Caprivi, and in Windhoek (Otjozondjupa, Omaheke and Khomas). Much of the growth in Windhoek is attributable the high rate of migration to the city of Windhoek. Growth in the Khorixas Region (Kunene and Erongo) was largely due to the addition of Walvis Bay schools in 1994.

The third major feature is the wave or bulge of learners we can now see moving through the grades, especially Grades 4, 5, 6 and 7 (Figure 1). It is made up largely of the great numbers of learners we saw in Grade 1 in 1991 and 1992. The wave will move on to place dramatic pressures on the school system when that group of learners reaches the secondary phase.

A fourth feature of the system is that repetition rates have dropped significantly, for most grades to half or more of what they were (Figure 3). This means that learners now flow through the grades much more efficiently than before. Before 1994, 30% and more of lower primary learners were repeaters, in many ways blocking up the system by crowding classrooms and using resources that should have been available to other learners. These high repetition rates also caused a massive “overage” problem, with high proportions of learners much older than their class mates. For Grades 1, 2, 3, 10, 11 and 12, the reductions in repetition rate are due to policy changes which stipulated that repetition in these grades is no longer allowed, or only allowed to a minimal degree in special circumstances. That policy has been implemented clearly in Grades 11 and 12, but has not been implemented to the desired level in the other grades. For other grades, reductions in

repetition have not been due to deliberate policy changes, but are probably the result of new syllabuses, better teaching methods and materials, and perhaps better teachers.

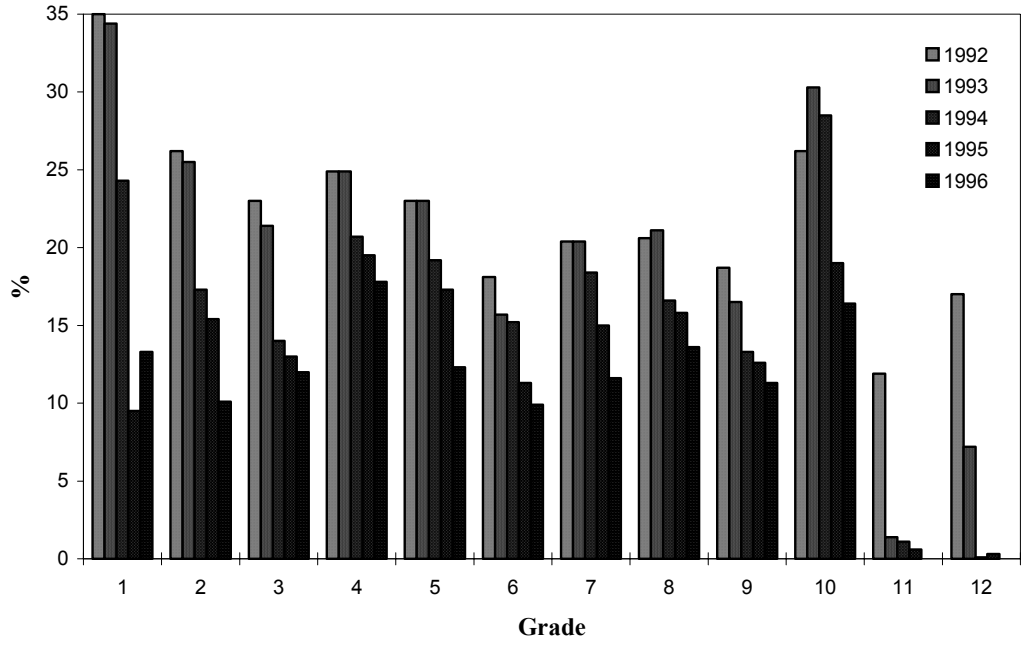

Figure 3. Percentage repetition rates in Grades 1-12 in 1992 to 1996

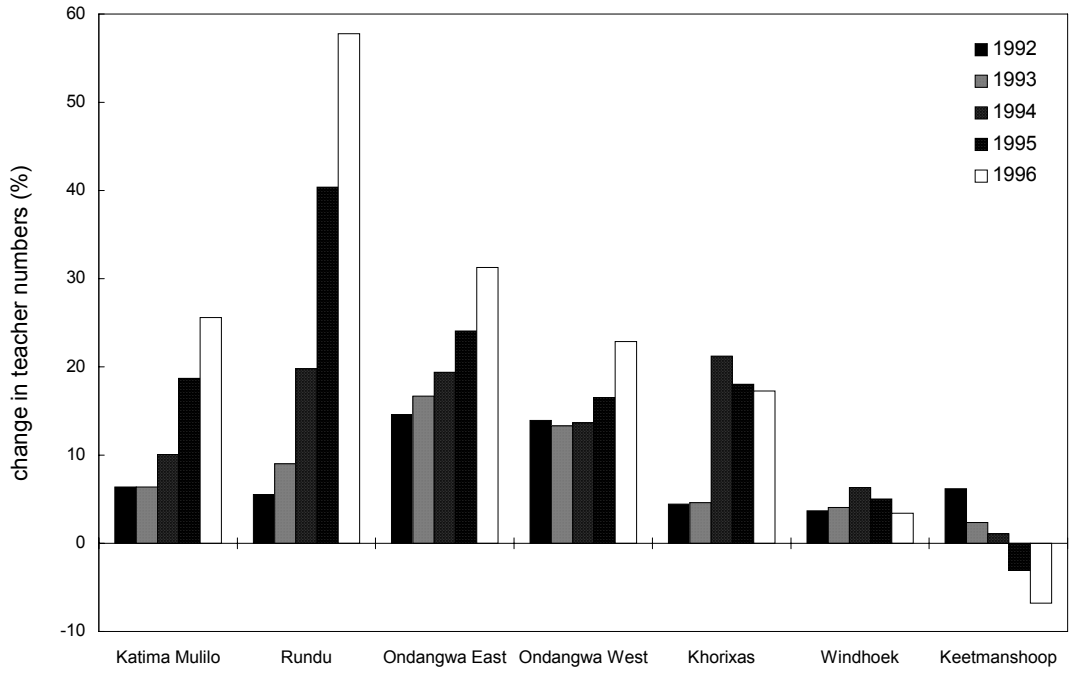

Figure 4. Percentage change in numbers of teachers since 1991

Growth rates of teachers and learners have been similar in some regions, but quite different in others (Figure 4). Keetmanshoop, Khorixas and Windhoek have seen increased learner:teacher ratios as enrolments have grown at a greater rate than the addition of more teachers. The northern, previously neglected regions have, by contrast, had learner:teacher ratios drop as teachers have been added at a greater rate than learners (Figure 5). This has helped reduce the disparities between the "disadvantaged north" and "privileged south". The trend is to be applauded, but caution is needed. In as much as Windhoek, Keetmanshoop and Khorixas have too many teachers, more teachers are also being recruited in Katima Mulilo and Rundu than are really needed.

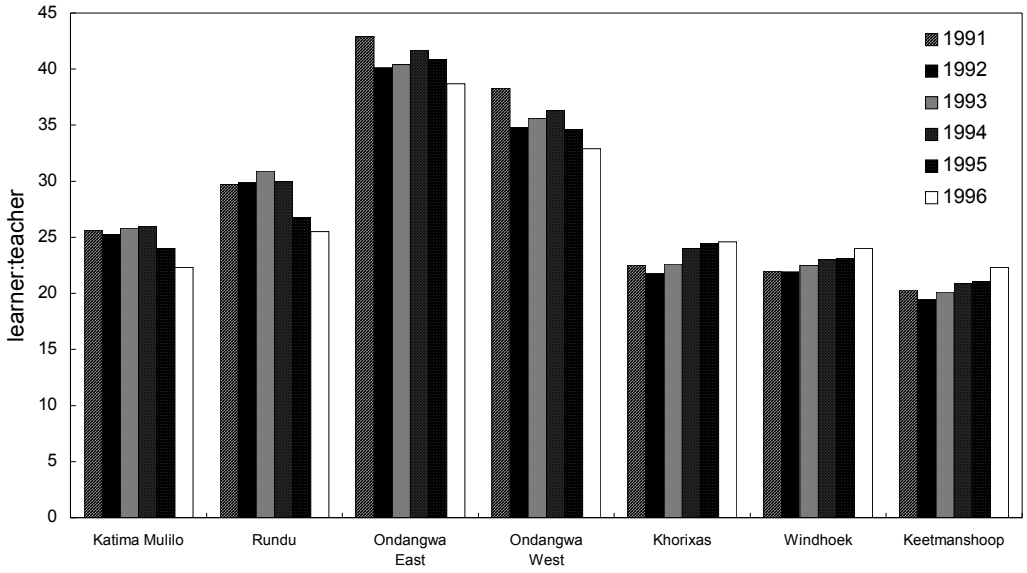

Figure 5. Learner:teacher ratios between 1991 and 1996

5. Access to basic education

We have seen that demands for schooling are strong in Namibia and that enrolments have increased substantially in recent years. All of this translates into high enrolment rates, indicating that access to schools is not a problem for the majority of children. An estimated 94% of 7-13 year-olds and 93% of 7-17 year-olds were at school in 1996, according to the Ministry's annual education statistics.

These figures are based on enrolments at schools compared with projected populations of relevant age-groups. Projections of these kinds do not take into account the migration of foreign learners into northern Namibia, and the estimates may thus be slightly inflated by one or two percentage points. However, these rates are in line with the targets set for the year 2000 in the five-year national Development Plan. They also show that Namibia is rather close to achieving universal primary education (UPE). Closing the remaining gap and getting to UPE will be very difficult, given the challenges of getting marginalised children into school.

Economic factors are amongst the most important constraints to getting children into school, especially in the poorest families where children may be required to stay at home to help support younger brothers and sisters, and to look after fields and cattle. In a recent study in the Rundu region, we encountered two interesting strategies to get around such problems. First, a number of learners now attend school on a two-days on, two-days off system, swapping places with their siblings. Second, some principals and teachers in remote and poor schools give up their time to offer classes in the afternoons to those learners who have to tend cattle in the mornings. That time is given for free!

In 1995, a survey of why learners drop out of school was conducted. The results of that study were never fully analysed, but summary results have been provided by the head of EMIS in the Ministry. A questionnaire was sent to all schools, and almost all schools completed and returned the form. A total of 43 009 learners were reported as having left school, of which 13 533 left to attend another school and 4 839 left because their parents moved away. Assuming that all those learners enrolled in other schools, we are left with a total of 24 637 true drop-outs. Of these, 19.1% left because of policy-related factors (such as age, failure, restricted entry to Grade 11, etc.), 14.8% left because of pregnancy (largely learners in Grades 5-9), 14.4% were reported as wanting to stay at home, 8.2% left because of sickness, hunger or death, 7.3% went off to work at home or elsewhere, and 4.0% left because of financial constraints. The remaining 32.5% dropped out of school for unknown or other, minor reasons. These results are not separated by gender. If we assume that half of all true drop-outs were females and that all those who left because of pregnancy were female, an estimated 29.6% of all female drop-outs left because they were pregnant.

The issue of marginalised children has received considerable attention. Much of that attention has been in the form of the many studies and reports produced in recent years, and the establishment of committees and task forces to consider the problem. Perhaps the best report was that compiled in 1995 by Bernd Lund (retired Norwegian Ambassador to Namibia). His report shows that marginalised children are to be found throughout the country, but the biggest identifiable groups consist of Bushman children, Ovahimba children, the children of farm workers in the Otjozondjupa and Omaheke regions, child labourers at cattle posts, and street children.

Less attention has been given to actually implementing strategies to get such children into school. Notable exceptions are the several schools started by ELCIN and the Village Schools Project in Bushmanland, as supported over the past four years by Sida and run by the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation.

VILLAGE SCHOOLS PROJECT
The five schools forming the Village Schools Project offer Grades 1-3 to about 130 learners. After completing Grade 3, learners should move on to the school at Tsumkwe. The project initially suffered from a lack of direction, but now seems to be on a good track, and the schools operate effectively. The Nyae Nyae Farmers' Co-operative plays a strong role in the project, and the schools are well-supported by the community. Three main goals were important to the community when the Project was established, and these goals seem to have been achieved:

- *having mother-tongue instruction for their children*
- *having them taught by their own teachers*
- *having some control over teaching in their own schools.*

There is one teacher-trainer who is responsible for supporting and training the teachers serving in the schools. The teachers have received good professional training but they have inadequate academic qualifications to become certified, paid government teachers. An attempt is now being made to train them to a level equivalent to a Grade 10 graduate having completed the Instructional Skills Certificate. There are also 11 trainee-teachers at Baraka - seven of whom seem to have good potential - but they may not be needed at current enrolment levels and learner:teacher ratios. The MBEC has supplied teaching materials, but the teacher trainer and teachers are paid using Sida support to the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation.

Current planning is that the five schools run by the Nyae Nyae Foundation would be registered and taken over by the Ministry with effect from January 1998. However, an evaluation for the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation by Len le Roux has indicated the need for one further year of support to allow for additional development, especially of teachers' skills and academic levels, and community support. That recommendation is supported by the Director of NIED. While the main formal constraint to the Ministry taking over the schools is the issue of how the teachers would fit into the government staffing structure, there is a more general concern about how the Ministry would handle the special and sensitive needs of these schools and learners. There is also a question about the organisation of the schools. Each one is too small to really operate as an independent school, and it would be advisable to group them as satellite schools. This could be done under the Tsumkwe school, which now has a competent female principal.

Whatever the final decision on the organisation and management of these schools, the Ministry should be urged to make whatever special arrangements are necessary for these disadvantaged learners. Here is a case for special affirmative action.

Issues concerning access discussed so far have largely dwelt upon constraints of a social or economic nature. Physical access to schooling is also a problem, especially in areas which are sparsely populated. I reported earlier that some 13 500 learners left to attend other schools in 1995. What we don't know is how many found places and stayed in other schools. Again, from studies in Rundu schools, we find that many learners have difficulty in continuing their schooling at schools which offer higher grades far from their homes. Even though they may find accommodation in a hostel or with relatives, family support is lacking and many learners return home after a few months. As a solution, a growing number of schools in remote areas are setting up their own hostels. These are traditional buildings built by members of the community, and local parents help feed and supervise the boarders.

A great effort has been made since 1990 to improve facilities, especially classrooms at primary schools in Ondangwa East and Ondangwa West, and more recently in the Rundu region. The main effect of this building activity has been to improve the quality of teaching conditions, rather than to extend access to learners unable to attend school. This is because most new classrooms have replaced community-built stick and mud structures. Just over 1 100 new permanent classrooms and almost 400 traditional stick and mud classrooms have been added since 1992. These new permanent classrooms represent an

increase of about 13% since 1992, whereas the number of traditional classrooms increased by about 15%. Much more will have to be done in the years ahead to house all learners in permanent classrooms. The Ministry has not been able command much of the central government's capital budget and has had to rely on considerable support from donor agencies, especially Sida. Efforts made in building permanent teaching facilities have two benefits: they provide an improved teaching environment, and they serve to reduce the huge inequities in the provision of classrooms. For example, there were no traditional structures used for teaching in the Windhoek Region in 1996, but 43% of all classrooms in the Katima Mulilo Region were traditional structures.

PAMWE PROJECT

Sida's Pamwe project has been an important contributor to the drive to improve teaching facilities and number of permanent classrooms. Since 1991, over 200 classrooms have been built. Most of these have been in Ondangwa East and Ondangwa West under the auspices of the Tulipamwe Project, but since 1996 buildings have also been erected in the Rundu region by the Nkarapamwe project. Over and above the useful provision of classrooms, the Project provides major benefits to the community by training five men and women in construction methods at each school, by involving and creating a sense of ownership in the community, and by showing that schools can be built much more economically than is usually the case.

One point that has been raised often is the usefulness of using the Pamwe approach, i.e. using locally trained labour at reduced costs, to maintain school buildings. At least some of those people who were trained as builders can be expected to remain in the community, and could be used for maintenance of both Pamwe buildings and other school buildings nearby. A major stumbling block, however, is the fact that it is not clear who is responsible for what kinds of maintenance. This stems from the bigger question of who actually owns the buildings. While it is always made clear that Pamwe buildings are being handed over to the community, no attempt is made for the community to take over legal and accountable ownership. Both the Ministry of Basic Education & Culture and Ministry of Works, Transport and Communication need to work out a policy on these matters, and to make it clear to everyone what bodies or organisations are responsible for what kinds of maintenance. In my view, all of these buildings are sited on communally owned land, and should legally be given to the school board. This should be certified in a signed contract which would also stipulate that the school board is responsible for maintenance.

Another point about which there has been considerable discussion is the need to "Namibianise" the Pamwe Project. Sida currently provides funds, while the project is run by the Africa Groups of Sweden. A study of this question was conducted in 1996 and recommended the formation of a Namibian trust to run the project. This was followed by a seminar February 1997 where the formation of a trust was discussed and planned. Such a trust would provide a legal framework and allow it to be the implementing agency for the Ministry, and would also provide an umbrella to be used for school building programmes funded by other development agencies. All the trustees should be Namibians or at least permanent residents. The goals of the trust would be to:

- *involve communities in the construction of new school buildings*
- *train community members in building skills*
- *support women in acquiring building skills*
- *focus on methods to improve sanitation at schools*
- *promote the development of standard plans and methods of construction*

- *fund all these activities, including payment to community members for construction work.*

In summary, the Pamwe Project appears to have been very successful, helping to provide a large number of new facilities while also training in people in very useful and practical building skills. I believe it would be more successful if the schools were legally owned by the community or school board. There is also a need to spend more time planning which schools are most in need of classrooms. Experience shows that school building projects are sometimes sited in inappropriate places or could be used to much better effect elsewhere.

Some final comments on two access issues: the first concerns the use of multi-grade teaching. This practice is used to varying degrees in different schools and regions, and no special effort has been made to promote or to train teachers in its use. As we all know, large areas of Namibia are very sparsely populated and the best way of assembling viable sizes of classes is to have multi-grade groups. From a curriculum point of view, there are both merits and disadvantages to this method of teaching, but from an access point of view, multi-grade teaching provides opportunities for schooling that otherwise may not exist - children simply would not get to school. Every effort should now be made to promote multi-grade groups. One tangible method would be to have roving teacher-trainers visit schools where the practice is used, helping and encouraging teachers to do a better job. Such an effort would do much for Namibia's marginalised people because many of the schools using multi-grade teaching serve remote and poor communities.

The second issue concerns the use of facilities for afternoon sessions. Again, the use of classrooms for second teaching sessions happens to varying degrees in different schools and regions. The practice is virtually unknown in Ondangwa East and Ondangwa West, but is used extensively in rural schools in the Rundu region (Table 1). Recent efforts at trimming Ministry costs have included the suggestion that principals should not be paid an allowance for being present during afternoon classes, but should rather have a deputy or head of department to supervise the second session. That suggestion would be fine for schools which have a large staff with second levels of management. But it will not work for small schools, those having only a principal and handful of teachers. I predict that double-session teaching in these small schools will have to cease if the system is implemented, and many of the learners who benefit will have to be sent home.

6. Equity and equal basic education

Equity has several facets in Namibia, and the most important facet chosen by any one person will reflect her or his social and political pre-occupations. For most Namibians, the division between black and white dominates discussions on equity. This is often referred to tangentially as the contrast between the north and south, or between communal and commercial areas. Among other people, especially women and various development agencies, gender issues are often seen to be most important. Among the unemployed, growing attention is being paid to the upwardly mobile group of civil servants and businessmen compared with those who remain jobless and hopeless. And for Bushman and Ovahimba people, their positions at the bottom of the social and political pecking order are particularly hurtful.

In education, as in most other social sectors, disparities between black and white schools continue to capture most attention. Two aspects are especially troubling. The first are the glaring and continued disparities between the "North" and the "South" (Table 1). The biggest remaining disparities are in the quality of classrooms and other teaching facilities; the provision of services such as water, electricity, sanitation, telephones, and teachers' housing; learner:teacher ratios; the availability of places in secondary grades; the use of afternoon classes; examination results; the qualifications of teachers; and unit spending per learner. Comparisons between the "North" and the "South" often ignore the fact that some northern regions are much better off than others and that some schools, even within the same communities, are much better supplied than others. Looking at the indicators statistically often shows that there is as much variation *within* regions as there is *between* regions.

Table 1. Regional comparisons of inputs to basic education in 1996.

	Katima Mulilo	Rundu	Ondangwa East	Ondangwa West	Khorixas	Windhoek	Keetmans-hoop
% traditional classrooms	42.8	23.7	33.6	32.4	3.1	0.0	0.0
% schools with libraries	10.7	7.6	7.2	7.8	43.0	63.1	58.7
% schools with water	67.9	34.9	34.1	48.4	46.7	99.3	99.1
% schools with telephones	17.9	11.8	6.9	6.4	70.1	93.6	98.2
% schools with teacher housing	37.9	5.5	4.3	4.6	56.1	61.7	75.2
Average learner: teacher ratio	22.3	25.5	38.7	32.9	24.6	24.0	22.3
% learners taught in the afternoon	8.4	17.8	0.8	0.7	6.8	11.3	2.8
% learners in secondary grades	29.0	14.5	16.3	23.0	27.8	25.7	24.6
% teachers with Grade 12 or more	61.2	37.0	60.1	56.9	73.4	83.1	75.3
% teachers with professional training	72.9	36.9	68.7	74.3	74.0	87.1	76.3
Expenditure per learner	$1,869	$1,446	$1,023	$1,197	$2,638	$2,467	$3,847

The second problem is the fact that some historically white schools have manipulated circumstances to suit white parents, teachers and learners. These are correctly seen as attempts to maintain the *status quo*, and fly in the face of reconciliation and integration. However, cases of other groups dominating schools at the expense of minorities are not seen in the same serious light.

From a management point of view, I believe that a great deal has been achieved in unifying basic education. The language policy has largely been adopted without much resistance, even though English is a difficult medium of instruction for many teachers. Likewise, no appreciable difficulties have been encountered with the introduction of a single system for pre-service teacher training. New curricula and examination systems have also been adopted widely and readily. Affirmative appointments have provided mixed results. Namibia is so short of competent, hard-working and qualified people that some appointments have been unfortunate, but few people employed in management posts in the previous administrations were suited or available to fill these positions.

The vexed problem of lower spending per learner in the northern regions is almost entirely due to differences in teachers' qualifications, with less qualified teachers in the North commanding lower salaries than those with better certificates in the South (Table 1). It seems hard to imagine how this problem can be resolved, because better qualified teachers - irrespective of colour - prefer to have jobs in urban areas. This exact pattern can be seen within regions, where well-qualified teachers are to be found at schools in Oshakati, Ongwediva, Ondangwa, Opuwo, Rundu and Katima Mulilo. Perhaps, the main problem is that the Ministry has little control or effect on where teachers choose to live and work. What is needed is a concerted effort to place teachers where they are really needed, both on a regional basis and at the most needy schools within regions. This can be done comparatively easily for teachers who hold bursaries and are thus beholden to the Ministry, but innovative mechanisms are needed to place other teachers. The provision of housing for teachers is an obvious solution, but is costly from the government's point of view. It is always interesting to note that many communities in Caprivi have long recognised this problem, and have gone ahead and built special houses for teachers. And these communities often contribute to the maintenance of those houses. This may be the reason why teachers in rural Caprivian schools are comparatively well-qualified.

One of the greatest problems for rural schools is that of communication. These schools seldom have any direct contact with regional office staff, and the flow of information between schools and the regional office is both slow and erratic. One simple solution would be to equip school principals with cellular telephones. These could be charged off car batteries where there is no regular power supply. The obvious drawbacks of expense and control over abuse are relatively minor compared with the advantages of having efficient and open lines of communication.

Turning now to gender concerns, it is well-known that girls and boys attend schools at similar overall rates. This is especially true at the primary level. In 1996, an estimated 96.4% of 7-13 year-old females and 91.8% of 7-13 year-old males were at school, but both figures may be slightly inflated as pointed out above. At the secondary level, girls leave school prematurely at higher rates than boys in some regions (Kunene, Kavango, Caprivi), and vice versa in others (Omusati, Oshana, Ohangwena and Oshikoto). Growth rates in enrolments over the past five years have been higher for boys than girls:

- Primary male learners 2.0% average annual growth
- Primary female learners 1.4% average annual growth
- Secondary male learners 6.6% average annual growth
- Secondary female learners 4.9% average annual growth

I am not aware of any explanation for this trend. While the trend holds for almost all grades, enrolments of Grade 12 girls have grown at a much higher rate than for boys. The problem of teenage pregnancies continues to be a substantial one, and is the most important single reason why teenage girls leave school.

Much effort has been made to ensure that curricula, syllabuses and text-books are sensitive to gender issues. However, fewer girls enrol for technical, vocational and science subjects than boys, and vocational training centres and agricultural colleges are thus dominated by boys. It is surely time to offer more subjects orientated to the interests of women at vocational centres. Surprisingly, there are also more male students enrolled in the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) programme, even though the majority of teachers are female. Literacy programmes are, however, heavily dominated by women.

The Ministry's management is dominated by men. This is the case, even at the level of schools: 70.5% of all teachers were women in 1996, but only 47% of deputy principals and heads of department were women, and only 29.4% of all principals were women. This is an area where the Ministry must be more sensitive to gender balance, especially since so many anecdotal reports indicate that women are more effective as principals and other educational managers.

Most of the programmes supported by Sida have either been sensitive to gender equality or are neutral. The only substantial gender bias is in the National Literacy Programme where women make up the majority of learners - 71.7% of all learners enrolled in November 1996 were female. Even though this problem has long been recognised, I am not aware of any substantial efforts made to redress this big imbalance. Gender imbalances among BETD students are not as great, 42.8% of all students being females.

7. Democratic participation

Of the major goals of reform established since independence, the aim of ensuring democratic participation in education has certainly received the least attention. For example, only one statement has been issued on how school boards should function, a statement hidden in a document that is no longer available or known. Little effort has been made to find out whether school boards exist and whether they function usefully or not. Regional education forums were established as points of contact between regional education staff and regional councillors, but only one short effort was made to inform councillors about their roles and responsibilities. No training programmes have been put in place for councillors, most of whom know little about schooling. Since councillors will assume greater and greater responsibilities for education, it is imperative that they be guided into making the best decisions.

There are perhaps several reasons why little has been done about involving stakeholders, communities and regional governments in education. First, many ministry staff do not perceive the involvement of other people as important, so these issues remain a low priority. Second, there has been little push from leadership, both within and outside the Ministry, to involve stakeholders to a greater extent in education. Third, many ministry people simply fear outside involvement and intervention. This was quite evident during a recent workshop on decentralisation, where most participants identified many more trivial disadvantages than advantages to the process. The only push from within the Ministry

towards decentralisation comes from the regional staff who often make strong demands for greater autonomy and delegated powers from head office. Finally, there is the fear that decentralisation will lead to continued disparities between regions.

Why should stakeholders be involved? Again, there are several reasons. First, the size of the system simply demands as wide a participation as possible: about one third of the country's population is at school and, being an expensive enterprise, it is paid for by the majority of citizens. Second, there is such a strong latent interest and demand for schooling that a captive and willing audience is there to help the Ministry manage education. Strong, local management through school boards and community interest would do much to solve major problems of indiscipline amongst staff and learners. Third, the Ministry will never have all the resources and capacity it needs to manage schooling, the best example of this being the tiny number of inspectors appointed to oversee schools. Fourth, the principal of democratic participation is enshrined in our constitution, and the Ministry has promised the participation of stakeholders.

An active programme needs to start as soon as possible to broaden, intensify and guide the involvement of other people in schooling:

- Formal and mutually supportive partnerships with organisations outside the Ministry should be developed. Unions representing teachers and senior learners and students are not enough.
- Parameters of co-operation with communities, including parent groups, local chiefs and headmen, local churches and other local centres of respect and authority need to be established. Principals and other managers need to work actively with these groups and people.
- By building upon the interests that communities have in their schools, school boards should be given greater responsibilities for their schools; for example, maintenance, discipline, being able to recruit and pay for additional teachers, being able to run private boarding arrangements, etc. However, the broad intentions of the Ministry, as indicated in the draft Education Act, are apparently to regulate and constrain the roles of school boards. For example, school boards will only be allowed to consider any case of misconduct, to ensure that it is investigated, and to *recommend* to the Permanent Secretary the appropriate measures to be taken (Section 21(k)). In similar vein, the Act states that Boards may not sell or exchange any moveable or immovable property without the recommendation of the regional director and permission of the Permanent Secretary (Section 28.11).
- Programmes and materials are needed on the running of school boards. In a survey conducted last year in Ondangwa West, I found that school boards met regularly and followed all the correct procedures, but rather little of any substance was discussed. A notable number of board members reported that no decisions were taken! All the boards were chaired by the Principal, and many members were not really able to contribute to discussions. Most parents thought that the Principal established the amounts to be paid to the school fund, while most principals thought that it was the parents who made that decision.
- Programmes to increase parental involvement need to work at reducing levels of intimidation that uneducated, rural people often feel for teachers and principals. Community members need to be instructed on

how they can influence matters at their schools, and the Ministry should provide them with as much power to do so as possible. We should recognise the fact that teachers and senior students have strong unions to represent their interests, but the great majority of learners have only their parents or guardians.

Programmes to enhance the functioning of school boards need to treat rural and urban communities differently. Rural people, lacking knowledge about school matters, often prefer to leave the running of schools to school management, teachers and the government. Also, in the absence of a tradition or vision of their schools being centres of excellence, rural communities may want to leave it to the "authorities" to do what ever the "authorities" deem correct. In urban areas, on the other hand, there is the danger of parent groups being too pushy to suit their own vested interests. Such parents often work for exclusivity rather than in the public interest. Perhaps Namibia should look at developments in South Africa where the new government is promoting many active programmes to involve parents in the governance of schools.

It seems quite clear the central government intends to have much of basic education run on a regional basis. Rather than being concerned about this move, the Ministry should immediately seize the opportunity to work out clear parameters for decentralisation, establishing exactly who is going to do what. Regional councillors need to be encouraged to see their schools develop for their own political interests, with good councillors reaping political rewards for their efforts in making their schools work well. Regional development plans for education should be drawn up, circulated widely and given to Governors and Councillors to help them in their tasks. It would be wholly unfair to expect them to do a good job in the absence of information and proposals contained in plans of this kind. The Ministry must certainly be responsible for checking on and keeping disparities between regions to a minimum. Fortunately, it has an effective information base and method of collecting information for these purposes.

Finally, should the Ministry decide to embark on the process of decentralisation, a good place to start would be to decentralise itself as much as possible, from head office to regional offices, and from regional offices to district and inspectorate offices, etc.

8. The quality of basic education

Many of the inputs which were expected to improve the quality of education have been increased, and the increases have usually been greatest in areas previously neglected. Many of these trends are revealed clearly in the publication *1996 Educational Statistics*:

- Teachers are better qualified, with 64% having completed Grade 12 or higher levels of academic training in 1996 compared with 51% in 1992; proportions of teachers with professional training increased from 66% in 1992 to almost 72% in 1996 (in the Rundu Region, however, proportions of teachers with professional training have dropped consistently each year).
- While there has been little change in the learner:teacher ratio on a national basis, the supply of teachers has improved in the northern regions. For example, the learner: teacher ratio in Ondangwa East was 42.9 in 1991 but had dropped to 38.7 in 1996.

- More permanent classrooms are available, a greater proportion of schools have sanitary facilities, and a higher percentage of schools have a water supply than before. For example, in 1992 only 42.5% of schools had toilets for learners while, in 1996, 55.8% had toilet facilities. By contrast, there has been little change in the provision of electricity and telephones.

In addition, there are many improved inputs that are not as readily quantified:

- A great deal has been done on curriculum reform, including the implementation of new curricula for most junior secondary and lower primary grades, the revision of syllabuses for upper primary subjects, the introduction of a new curriculum and examination system for senior secondary grades, and the provision of better instructional materials and methods for mathematics, science and technology. The whole programme to revise and improve curricula has been the responsibility of NIED, and that institution has been built up from scratch. Many new textbooks have been produced in Namibia to support new syllabuses.
- A large adult basic education and literacy programme has been introduced and will be discussed below.
- Teacher education before independence was fragmented and, in the view of many people, largely inferior. The introduction of the new and unified three-year Basic Education Teacher Diploma, the rebuilding of colleges of education, and the production of a curriculum for the BETD which seeks to provide high levels of professional competence are all important developments which should produce better quality instruction in our schools.
- In-service teacher training has also received substantial attention in the form of hundreds of workshops to train teachers in teaching methods for various subjects, a new in-service BETD programme and, most recently, in the form the of the Instructional Skills Certificate. A variety of correspondence training courses are also used by teachers, including courses offered by the University of Namibia.

All these items are inputs to the system, and the Ministry can be justifiably proud of having improved these to the extent that it has. Of course, many of the inputs need to be improved even further, especially in neglected rural areas. The major point about the whole reform effort over the last seven years is that it has focused almost entirely on inputs, adopting the pervasive assumption that the system has been lacking good inputs and that better inputs will produce improved outputs. Little attention has been paid to the processes that go on between the inputs and the outputs, and little attention has been paid to ensuring that desirable results are obtained.

Much less information is therefore available on the quality of learning, the degree to which people leave school with a sound level of education, ready to take on and make a contribution to Namibian society. The evidence that there is suggests that that there is much room for improvement. Examination results for the Junior Secondary Certificate and the IGCSE/HIGCSE examinations show that the majority of learners do not achieve good results. Results from the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) studies in primary grades also indicate that learners are not learning as much as they should be.

One of the most interesting, and depressing results from these studies and examinations is that learners in the Katima Mulilo Region consistently do worst of all learners in Namibia, and often in English. This is so surprising because that region offers learners much higher quality inputs than other northern, neglected regions. Katima Mulilo's teachers are much better qualified, more schools have teachers' housing, there are few access problems because there are so many schools, English is almost a *lingua franca*, parents have had higher levels of schooling than parents in other communal areas, and the region has a very large number of secondary schools. Perhaps the conventional inputs on which we spend our money are not enough, or are not working? Whatever the answer to that question, conditions in Katima Mulilo need to be studied - not only to improve results, but also to help shed light on what factors cause such poor results in spite of relatively good inputs. In fact, one set of data has already been collected to help answer the question. These are the data assembled during the SACMEQ study. The main purpose of the study was to identify factors that explain why some learners do better than others, but the one report on the study does not cover that topic. Analyses to address that issue should be done as a matter of urgency, and the results should be made available as widely as possible.

The Ministry has seen the improvement of teachers' qualifications as a priority, especially the need to replace "unqualified" with qualified teachers. A great deal of effort has thus been made to improve qualifications of teachers. In going forward, however, it would be useful to pause and consider how much of the effort is being made to improve qualifications and how much effort is made to improve teaching practice. The problem with "unqualified" teachers may have less to with the idea that they are poor teachers, and more to do with the fact that they get lower salaries, enjoy less job security, lack prestige, and their abundance and distribution looks bad. There is NO evidence in Namibia that unqualified teachers are poorer practitioners than qualified ones. In some cases they may even be better!

Ernest House, in a paper on appraising educational reform, draws attention to a danger in replacing unqualified teachers. This is that we may be throwing away a pool of valuable assets that have been accumulated as a result of experience, experience in knowing how to deal with circumstances in classrooms, and in knowing how classroom teaching relates to the outside world. In our case, the value of teachers has been measured entirely in terms of their qualifications and certifications, implying no value to the specific assets or experience of unqualified teachers.

Because there is such a rush to replace unqualified with qualified teachers, or to provide qualifications to untrained teachers, there is a risk that "certification" will become the predominant aim of teacher training programmes. Certificates may therefore become more important than having good teaching practice. For teachers, certificates are certainly and logically the most important commodity because they provide better salaries, security and status, but do these qualifications provide the same *degree* of benefit to learners?

Conditions in the northern, rural areas have often been compared with those in the southern commercial and urban areas. The main differences are now well known. There is another difference, however, that strikes me as being perhaps even more important. This is the difference in how much time learners actually spend being taught or learning. There are two components to the time spent being taught: the first concerns whether the learner or teacher is actually in the class - little learning, if any, will take place if either is missing.

The second concerns the way in which time is spent when both teachers and learners are present in class. The realities of rural classrooms are such that again little learning may take place for much of the time. The pace at which instruction is delivered is often painfully slow, minutes upon minutes are spent handing out or collecting books and pencils, etc., writing on the chalkboard happens slowly, seating arrangements take a long time to resolve, a dust devil blows through the classroom, the teacher attends to a sick or naughty child, etc.

A colleague recently visited about 190 rural schools in northern Namibia as part of a micro-planning study. All her visits to the schools were unannounced. At 96 of those schools she recorded whether the principal was present or not, and at 19 (20%) of the schools they were absent. I also asked her to keep a mental record of how much time was spent in the actual teaching of learners. Her overall assessment was that learning goes on for no more than about 50% of the time that it should. This was a subjective assessment, but perhaps a reasonable one. Patti Swarts (Director of NIED) confirms the same feeling about the considerable amount of time of a school day that is not spent learning. The recent SACMEQ study found that each Grade 6 learner was absent from school for an average of 1.6 days in July 1996 - there were 21 school days in that month. For each region, learners were absent for the following average numbers of days and percentages of the month:

Katima Mulilo	1.1 days	5% of the month
Rundu	2.5 days	12% of the month
Ondangwa East	2.5 days	12% of the month
Ondangwa West	1.9 days	9% of the month
Khorixas	0.6 days	3% of the month
Windhoek	0.7 days	3% of the month
Keetmanshoop	0.6 days	3% of the month.

These are average figures which tell us nothing about how absenteeism varies in relation to agricultural seasons. They also tell us nothing about teacher absenteeism, when learners are present but remain idle while the teacher is away. But what these figures do suggest is that the syllabuses we design to be covered in a year may actually require much more than a year to complete because of the loss of learning time. If there is any truth in this assertion, the policy of automatic promotion may be putting many learners at a severe disadvantage. Automatic promotion will move them on to learn new lessons without having had the chance to cover more basic material.

One general comment about the whole curriculum reform process is that too many new things are being done too quickly. This is from the point of view of schools, teachers and other people implementing new syllabuses, etc. Repeatedly, one encounters cases of people being rushed, of new materials not being available on time, of people being confused about what is current and what isn't, of workshop upon workshop being held to train people in some new aspect of this and that, and of new policies being introduced in the absence of instructions or guidelines on how they are to be implemented. NIED has a small staff, the number of advisory teachers is tiny, teachers and principals often battle to keep up with their routine responsibilities, and our ability to publish and distribute new books is often limited. These rushed circumstances and their consequences are encountered in schools, at teachers' colleges and at NAMCOL.

TEACHER EDUCATION REFORM PROJECT (TERP)
Sida has supported three programmes which should contribute to an improvement in the quality of education. The first is the Teacher Education Reform Project (TERP), where Sida support funds a variety of activities designed to develop and support the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) curriculum, the training of teacher educators and teaching of students.

TERP and BETD are almost synonymous, the project going back many years and having played a central role throughout the development of the teaching diploma. The main aim of the support has been to get the BETD programme going as a unified, modern, liberal and high quality training opportunity for Namibians wishing to be teachers. Most emphasis has been on pre-service training of students in the four colleges of education: Ongwediva, Rundu, Windhoek and Katima Mulilo. TERP's activities have therefore been diverse, but supporting all the steps and components needed to develop the BETD, the colleges, the curriculum, new syllabuses, and the lecturing staff. A new in-service BETD course has also been developed, with some 2 000 students now enrolled for the four-year course.

Enormous steps have been taken in the development of the BETD. The four training colleges were, in the words of one commentator, nothing more than "glorified secondary schools". Massive organisational changes had to be made, and substantial professional development programmes were implemented both for existing staff and the many new teacher educators that had to be appointed. TERP has played a key role in the whole development of the curriculum which was largely assembled from scratch to serve our particular needs. After developing the curriculum, a great deal of work had to be done in writing syllabuses and materials to go with the courses. Much emphasis has been placed on stimulating the flow of information and ideas within and between colleges, and between them and NIED.

The first group of BETD graduates emerged from the colleges at the end of 1995, and the third group of graduates will take their positions in schools early in 1998. My impression is that the BETD programme and the four colleges are now firmly on track. The broad curriculum is about to be accepted in a final form, and most of the syllabuses are close to being finalised. More needs to be done to build greater capacity and to produce more teaching materials. TERP has obviously contributed much to that development work, but what is perhaps needed now is more on-going maintenance and the filling of small gaps where they arise. The paradigm of the programme also needs to move more from reform to implementation. Teacher educators must be continually challenged into doing the best possible job.

ENVIROTEACH PROJECT
The first Enviroteach Project, which ended in 1995, focused on the development of materials for secondary schools. The current project now targets the BETD programme and students. A variety of books have been produced on environmental education, many workshops on environmental education have been held, presentations have been given to various groups, and newsletters on the Project's activities have been prepared. The Project is part of a wider effort to promote environmental health and sustainable development in Namibia, and Enviroteach is closely linked to that effort.

Since the BETD curriculum includes environmental education, the project was originally intended for environmental education to be built into syllabuses as they were developed. This, however, has not happened. Syllabus development is a demanding task and only one person at NIED can assist teacher educators in the colleges with writing and revising new syllabuses. Some of this delay is perhaps also due to a fear of moving too rapidly on to completely new ground.

However, what has worked well is that several Enviroteach books have been found to provide useful illustrative material for the teaching of a number of subjects in colleges. These uses are coincidental, since the books were not designed to support the teaching of those subjects. Since these uses were "discovered" by college staff and students there is a degree of ownership, with the books being appreciated much more than if they had been simply imposed on the colleges. In addition, some of the Enviroteach books have been used as supplementary material in the teaching of school subjects, especially where suitable text books for those subjects were not available.

Enviroteach will now help spread the idea of these uses between colleges. In addition, teacher educators who use Enviroteach books are likely to incorporate environmental education concepts into the syllabuses they are writing. Once written into the syllabus, these concepts are likely to remain there, helping to sustain environmental education in BETD courses.

Links between Enviroteach and the colleges are to be through NIED. The person responsible for syllabus development in the colleges has helped introduce the Enviroteach project and staff to the colleges, and they now work directly with the colleges. That direct working relationship seems to be very effective, not least because college staff have themselves discovered the uses of Enviroteach materials and now contact and request assistance from the Enviroteach project directly.

NAMIBIAN LANGUAGES COMPETENCY PROJECT
This project is run by the Centre for External Studies at the University of Namibia (UNAM) in collaboration with the Ministry. Its overall goal is to promote the teaching and use of indigenous Namibian languages, and now aims to achieve this mainly by training students in five languages: Oshiwambo, Silozi, Rukwangali, Otjiherero and Khoekhoegowab. The hope is that graduates of the programme will pass on their skills as teacher educators, advisory teachers, senior teachers and subject specialists. The training culminates in the award of a Diploma in Education: African Languages, after two years of part-time enrolment at UNAM.

Sida support has been used to establish the curriculum, develop course materials, and run tutorial workshops. There are 71 first- and 29 second-year students now enrolled for the Diploma. Sida support is due to end in December 1997, after which the programme will be funded and supported entirely by UNAM.

9. Life-long learning

The goals discussed so far - access, equity, democracy, and quality - were all established early on as the major goals of education reform. Two other major goals have been added in recent years - life-long learning and efficiency.

In short, life-long learning seeks to promote a culture of continued learning, not for purposes of certification, but to equip all our citizens with the knowledge they require to be effective members of society. Since society is continually changing, there is a need to keep abreast of those changes through continuous learning. Namibia also inherited a large population of adults who never attended school, and others who emerged from school poorly equipped for life in an open market economy. Life-long learning thus also attempts to make up for what these adults missed as children.

A whole range of programmes have been established to promote adult and continued education. Organisational developments have seen the creation of a Department of Adult and Continuing Education, and more recently the establishment of the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) and Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology (MHEVTST).

The National Literacy Programme in Namibia (NLPN) has been the largest mass-action adult education programme in Namibia, reaching large numbers of people throughout the country. Enrolments in November 1996 (the last intake) amounted to some 41 000 adults. Many of these people had enrolled for earlier stages of the programme in previous years, so it is not possible to estimate the total number of individuals that have enrolled over the years. By the end of 1997, an estimated total of 38 000 learners will have passed Stage 1 and should therefore be functionally literate. It has been estimated that another 47 000 learners should pass Stage 1 by the year 2000 for the goal of 80% literacy to be achieved.

In the National Planning Commission's 1994 report on attitudes to social services, the substantial increase in literacy programmes was reported by many communities as the most important change in the provision of education. One of the strengths of the NLPN is that it provides a broad education in literacy, one that is functional in nature by giving people the ability to read and write letters, to control money, to help with their children's homework, and to communicate in English.

The Ministry's Adult Skills Development Programme has not achieved the same degree of prominence as the NLPN. Its main aim is to equip people with hardly any education with skills to operate effectively in a modern Namibian economy. Eighty-two people have been trained who, in turn, have employed 177 other people in their enterprises.

The NLPN aims at giving people basic literacy skills and now provides three years of education in Stage 1, 2 and 3. Given the success of the NLPN, there is now a perceived demand to extend the curriculum to higher levels equivalent to upper primary grades into what would be known as the Adult Upper Primary Education Programme (AUPE). The Ministry is also in the process of establishing Community Learning and Development Centres which would use home languages to target people who have not had much, if any, schooling.

NAMCOL was established in 1994 as a correspondence and face-to-face course for school leavers who are unable to enrol in formal school classes. Grade 10 and 12 and IGCSE certificates are offered at the college, and almost 11 000 learners enrolled for NAMCOL courses last year. The College is scheduled to become a parastatal organisation in 1998. Considerable difficulties have been encountered in getting learning materials to students.

The Ministry of Higher Education (MHEVTST) is in the process of establishing Community Skills Development programme in five pilot centres. The programme is to be run by a foundation. The centres will provide training in employment skills and also in basic life skills, such as hygiene.

Clearly, a variety of programmes are in place or are in the process of being established to provide adult education. I am somewhat concerned about whether all these efforts are sufficiently co-ordinated, and whether there will be sufficient demand for so many different kinds of programmes. For example, low male enrolments in the NLPN suggest that there is a limited demand for literacy training amongst men, and whether there will be sufficient demand for upper primary classes remains to be seen. It might also be preferable to offer upper primary education in conjunction with skills training at Community Learning and Development Centres. The Ministry hopes that these centres can use staff and expertise from centres run by the MHEVTST, which will provide instruction in English to people having completed Grade 10 at least.

A further concern is the cost of all these programmes. Literacy programmes are provided free while NAMCOL students are charged, even though the full costs of NAMCOL courses are subsidised by the Ministry. Careful thought should be given to cost structures before new courses are introduced. Those that are really in the interests of the country, for example ones likely to generate new employment opportunities, major improvements in health, etc., should be given for free. But learners should have to pay for those which are largely in their own interests. It is not easy to make such distinctions, but it may be easier to establish a costing structure earlier, rather than having to face financial difficulties when donor support is depleted or Ministry funds are inadequate.

Sida's support of the NLPN appears to have been a great success and, as in the case of TERP, the support has been central to the whole development of the literacy programme. The achievements of the programme described above thus also reflect much of the contribution made by Sida's support. Substantial funds have been provided for the programme, most of which were used for salary payments, especially those of District Literacy Officers and Literacy Promoters. The Ministry is gradually taking over these recurrent costs, so that all salaries will be to the Ministry's account by the year 1999. Every effort should be made to keep to that schedule.

A comprehensive evaluation of NLPN was published in 1996 in the book Free to Speak Up*. The evaluation indicated that much had been achieved, especially in providing a curriculum and learning opportunities that gave people new abilities to function in modern society. The programme's main strength is that it has focused on functional literacy, rather than simply on reading and writing.*

The most important recommendation made by the evaluation was the need for repeated commitment to the NLPN from all levels, ranging from the highest political leadership, to the Ministry's head and regional offices, to local literacy committees and literacy promoters. The NLPN clearly needs substantial efforts at mobilisation for it to continue being a success. The evaluation also recommended that a number of relatively minor issues be improved upon, but it is not clear from recent reports to what degree these have been followed up. The question one is left with at the end of this book is: What next after NLPN? It is clear that several initiatives are on the cards, but a good deal of thought needs to be given to evaluate the viability and value of these initiatives.

10. Efficiency

Efficiency as a goal in basic education has become an issue only in the last three or four years. Several analyses have concluded that the system is inefficient in many respects, that it consumes too large a portion of the government's recurrent budget, that current expenditure rates are not sustainable, and that the quality of inputs to the system will decline. In addition, the cabinet and the Prime Minister instructed all ministries to produce efficiency programs, largely as a result of the report and recommendations of the Wages and Salary Commission (WASCOM). The WASCOM report suggested two main changes to the civil service: first to improve salaries so that competent staff could be recruited and kept, and second to create a much smaller and more efficient civil service. The first part has been largely been achieved through substantial increases to salaries last year. But no attempt has been made to implement the second part, and the government has yet to determine if and when it should be implemented. The only effect of WASCOM has thus been to increase government spending.

The Ministry's main direct contribution to improving efficiency was the appointment of a task force in 1996 to investigate and recommend ways and means of reducing costs and improving productivity. Ideas on improving efficiency were discussed at two senior-level workshops and a very large number of recommendations were compiled in a report addressed to the Permanent Secretary, the Deputy Minister and the Minister. The report is comprehensive, detailed and possibly a little overwhelming. To be acted upon will require the Ministry to muster both the will and resources to improve efficiency. A series of workshops was also held in 1997 at regional offices to report on the need for efficiency in the Ministry.

Being so comprehensive, the report by the task force addresses a very large number of causes of inefficiency. However, the most serious concerns really amount to the following:

- very high salaries paid to teachers in relation to Namibia’s economy
- learners spending more time than they should in school as a result of high repetition rates
- substantial expenditures on hostels
- negligible cost recovery
- over staffing of schools and hostels
- low levels of achievement and learning.

One major improvement to efficiency has been achieved over the past few years as a result of the substantial improvement in learner flow rates, especially in the lower primary grades. Promotion rates in these grades have increased substantially, repetition rates have been reduced (Figure 3) and drop-out rates have declined. Prior to these changes, lower primary grades were characterised by massive repetition rates, with learners repeating over and over again, and dropping out and re-entering the system at intervals. Perhaps this situation is best illustrated by the fact that the number of learners in Grade 1 in 1991 was over double the number of 6 year-olds in the whole country. Namibian schools thus provided more than double the number of Grade 1 places really needed. Completion rates

in 1994 were such that a total of almost 22 years of schooling had to be invested for every learner that passed Grade 12.

From discussions with Ministry staff, improving efficiency is essentially a management issue and responsibility, and that means management at all levels. In some respects, staff expect the lead to come from the most senior management outside the Ministry: from Cabinet, the Prime Minister, the Public Service Commission and the Ministry of Finance. The hope is that these bodies will provide clear and consequential leadership in showing that government "means business", and in providing policy guidelines on how thorny questions - such as redundancies - are to be tackled. It is indeed hard to expect lower management to improve efficiency in the absence of a strong mandate from above.

Within the Ministry, there is a need to develop good management at all levels. People need to be trained in management skills, an aspect that has been neglected to some degree. However, improved management is only part of the solution. The other is for clear levels of delegated control and authority so that accountability is coupled to authority. The whole issue of delegation in the Ministry remains messy, causing much confusion and resulting in responsibilities being conveniently avoided.

Since a very large part of the Ministry's budget is spent on salaries, reducing costs to any real degree will only be possible if staff numbers are reduced. The nasty implication of that suggestion is that some people will have to be made redundant. However, attrition rates, especially among teachers on whom the bulk of the salary bill is spent, are substantial. Numbers of staff could easily be trimmed if teachers were moved to places where genuine vacancies arise or additional staff are required. This is an uncomfortable solution given the Ministry's tradition of not transferring staff, but it is a much better solution than many others.

PLANNING AND CAPACITY-BUILDING
For purposes of this report, Sida's support for planning and capacity-building fits best within the area of efficiency, but these activities are intended to ripple throughout the basic education sector.

The computerised human resources management system (CHRMS) has been designed to improve the Ministry's management of its personnel records. The system has been several years in the making, and was conceived, designed and constructed by expatriate personnel. This is the first such system in government service and the Ministry can be proud of having taken this lead. With such a large staff, the automation of its records serves a justifiable need.

However, implementation has been dogged by personnel problems. Appropriate Ministry people to maintain and run the system have been difficult to find, recruit and keep, a problem that will persist in the future. The best solution would lie in contracting out the specialised tasks needed to maintain this highly sophisticated system. The system also needs to have fixed sets of information on staffing norms and the Ministry's staff structure, but both features are now in a state of flux.

Support provided for planning and capacity-building has largely been aimed at head office staff. Most support has been for training, workshops, computer equipment, and the production of publications. In addition, Sida provided two long-term advisors to the Directorate of Planning and Development for a number of years. One person was

responsible for general capacity-building and the provision of advice in planning, while the other provided advisory services on school construction issues. Training programmes have been funded in Namibia and elsewhere in the world, especially those at the International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP) in Paris.

Planning has become a popular concept and a marketable commodity for education in developing countries. Large companies now roam the globe, soliciting contracts to provide educational planning services, to develop information systems for management, to provide policy analysis services, and to model the future of the education sector. What is good about these enterprises is that they ask the right questions and bring special tools to help answer them. But what is bad is that they target the wrong level of the education sector. Implicit in all of this work is the assumption that planning happens at head office, and everyone outside head office is there to implement those plans. Where planning is really needed, and where it can be implemented is at the local level, where it is possible to look at each school: its needs, its history, and its relationships to other schools in the vicinity. Unfortunately, planners in our regional offices are also few in number, and most of their work is concerned with school construction, often as glorified building inspectors. There is thus little planning - in the true sense of the word - in our regional offices.

The focus of Sida support to head office has been based partly on the assumption that good planning and decision-making at head office will have the best effects elsewhere. For the future, I suggest that efforts to increase capacity and planning strengths at the regional level be redoubled.

11. Implementation and institutional capacity

Ernest House's paper about appraising educational reform draws attention to several assumptions often made by people who design or plan educational reform. One of these is the assumption of "unbounded rationality". This means that reformists often assume, at least implicitly, that there is no limit to the number of new directives that teachers, inspectors, directors, principals and learners can embrace and implement. By way of a concrete example: Anything I (as a Ministry official) write in a circular, signed by the Permanent Secretary and sent to all schools, can and will be implemented!

Namibia has introduced a host of noble reforms, and much has been done to improve the level of inputs to the sector by introducing more teachers, better qualified teachers, new curricula, new books, better classrooms, new managers, and more amenities. But very little has been done to improve the process of education to ensure that teaching goes on, that management is effective, that managers are accountable, that schools are inspected, that teachers are advised, and that learners learn what they are supposed to. The effect of this is that the Ministry has put most of its resources and energy into inputs, and little capacity has been left to attend to the other parts of the equation:

INPUTS => PROCESS OF EDUCATION => OUTPUTS

The focus given to reform, development, innovation and improved inputs has been at the expense of implementation. Upon learning that the Ministry was reviewing its staffing structure, I hoped that the number of posts for inspectors would be increased substantially, perhaps to double, triple or more the number of posts in the northern regions. I am told

that this has not been proposed by the Ministry. Likewise, numbers of advisory teachers have not been increased to any real extent. These people, the inspectors and advisory teachers, form the ONLY link between the managers, policy-makers, and planners of education and the implementers in schools. The sentiment is often expressed that we cannot afford more inspectors or advisory teachers. Yet, it is clear that considerable savings would accrue to the sector if these services were performed effectively: schools would not be employing more teachers than they need, schools would not be offering subjects that can't support or justify, new schools would not be established in places where they shouldn't be, and principals would not order books they didn't need. Almost all the recommendations made by the task force investigating the 1995 IGCSE/HIGCSE results referred to problems associated with ineffective implementation.

Not only are inspectors and advisory teachers few in number, but they are often so swamped by clerical and administrative tasks that the few visits made to schools are often to deliver materials. The following extract from a regional office report last year describes both the situation and annoyance felt by regional office staff: "Constant disruption of Inspectorate annual programme by unexpected requests from Head Office to distribute materials to schools".

The SACMEQ survey asked each school how many times an inspector or advisory teacher had visited their school over the last three years. The national average was two visits in three years! Each Namibian school therefore sees an inspector or advisory teacher less than once each year. Regional averages varied between less than one visit to nearly three visits in three years. These figures refer to visits. When it comes to full inspections, the average number of years since the last full inspection was 2.6 years, with regional averages as follows:

Katima Mulilo	2.7 years
Rundu	1.3 years
Ondangwa East	2.3 years
Ondangwa West	2.2 years
Khorixas	3.7 years
Windhoek	3.2 years
Keetmanshoop	3.7 years

These are average figures, so some schools will have had full inspections quite recently. But that also means that some schools were last inspected many, many years ago. In fact, we all know of schools that have never seen an inspector.

A final point about inspectors, a point never put in print but made in almost any discussion on the topic: many inspectors simply do not take their jobs seriously. We all know this, but are afraid to say so and to do anything about it.

In summary, there is an urgent need to improve inspection and advisory services. To my mind this is the critical flaw or weakness in the whole schooling sector. I argued that there is a need to increase the number of inspectors and advisory teachers. This in itself would not be enough. What is also required is a properly considered strategy to develop inspectorate and advisory services, to ensure that schools operate as they should, and that learning goes on as it should. That strategy should include the recognition that some schools are more in need of these services than others; the services should be provided affirmatively.

Other aspects that deserve attention have been discussed previously:

- the need to promote and strengthen school boards and community management of schools
- the need to delegate authority so that responsibility accompanies accountability
- the need to involve regional councillors and government in education
- the possible need to slow down or plan more carefully the introduction of new syllabuses and materials
- the need to strengthen capacity in regional education offices.

12. Impacts on children in previously neglected areas

The majority of children in Namibia live in areas that were previously neglected, and many of the Ministry's reform programmes have correctly identified those areas as ones that are in need of improved basic education. Most of the most important changes and inputs in those areas have been discussed above, but the following list summarises them:

- building of new classrooms and other physical facilities
- allocation of more teachers and the lowering of learner:teacher ratios
- provision of teachers with better qualifications, especially teachers that themselves have completed Grade 12
- large number of in-service programmes and workshops for teachers
- the construction and development of Teacher Resource Centres
- provision of curricula and syllabus materials that are locally relevant to children living in those areas
- the introduction of new, improved curricula and syllabuses designed to provide learners with a better education
- the development of an elaborate and detailed information system which has provided much useful information on needs, trends and problems in neglected areas
- the provision of many new places for secondary phase learners, especially in senior secondary grades
- the provision of materials in mother-tongue languages
- the recognition of educationally marginalised children and some attempts to improve their status and school attendance
- providing better teaching methods in mathematics, science and technology
- while the literacy programme is aimed at adults, it is certain to have improved the demand for schooling by increasing parents' interest in the schooling of their children
- efforts made to improve rates of promotion, and to reduce repetition and drop-out
- the reconstruction of teachers' colleges, and the development of a new and relevant teacher education curriculum and diploma
- a large focus on teenage pregnancy to reduce its incidence.

These have been efforts made by directly by the Ministry and its partners during these seven years of reform. Many of these activities and the new political climate have produced a high degree of enthusiasm for education which will have led to communities starting and building many new schools. That enthusiasm will, likewise, have led to parents more often demanding that their children enrol and actually remain at school rather than dropping out.

The reform efforts listed above have largely been targeted at those regions with the most children. Ondangwa East and Ondangwa West have thus justifiably benefited more than other regions. In recent years, more attention has been paid to the Rundu region, for example with Pamwe and USAID Basic Education Support project activities starting there, and the implementation of the GTZ Basic Education Project. The one region with large numbers of schools and learners that has not received the same degree of support is Katima Mulilo. Perhaps this is because so many inputs in that region look good on paper.

In summary, many new programmes have been targeted at children in neglected areas, and many resources have been placed there. More children are receiving an education, and a higher level of education than previously. I am also certain that more resources are needed, but am less certain about what kind of resources. Before investing too much more, therefore, it would be prudent to check the outcomes of schools in neglected areas and to work out what resources are having the greatest impact. Again, analysis of the SACMEQ data would help us see what makes the greatest difference.

13. Financial sustainability of the education sector

The drive towards efficiency in the Ministry has arisen both because of perceived wastage and because a growing number of people have come to realise that the system is not financially sustainable. For the third year in a row, the Ministry will incur a deficit in its annual budget.

A computer model of the sector, allowing users to contemplate the consequences of different policies and growth scenarios, has been used extensively to explore the future costs of education to Namibia. Current spending on education by government uses about 27% of the national recurrent budget. That slice of the cake should climb to 40% by the end of the next decade as a result of growing enrolments.

Appropriating a budget of that size from the Ministry of Finance will only be possible if spending on other government programmes is reduced substantially - an unlikely possibility! The only alternative, if spending rates are maintained at 25-30% of the recurrent budget, is for per capita spending on learners to drop. A reduction by about a third of current spending per learner will be required if enrolments grow as expected.

This scenario is based on the assumption that the education sector continues to behave as it did in 1996, the most recent year for which a complete set of information is available. It thus assumes no major changes in policies and does not include the many improvements which are needed and which will cost more money. For example, if all teachers are qualified to the level the Ministry intends by the year 2006, about 46% of the national recurrent budget will be needed to pay the education bill.

One prospect is simply to leave matters as they are and allow those reductions to happen. Of course, some learners will suffer more than others. Much of the projected increase in recurrent spending will be needed for the huge numbers of secondary learners that are anticipated. Because secondary education is usually seen to be more important than primary schooling, per capita reductions in spending will be greater for primary than for secondary learners.

Another prospect is for the Ministry to seriously start improving efficiency and cutting costs. The Ministry's task force on efficiency has recommended a whole range of measures, but implementing these will be a substantial challenge. One proposal is that new staffing norms be implemented for schools, so that numbers of teachers, management positions and support staff are clearly determined according to enrolments. Proposed norms drafted by the Directorate of Planning and Development are now being discussed at various levels and the teachers' trade union. If adopted and implemented, the new norms will have an impact on spending levels. However, these will be less than expected because many positions that become obsolete in some schools will be needed to make up shortages in others. It will also probably take a good deal of time before the measures are approved and will take even longer for them to be implemented.

Namibia's Constitution stipulates that education will be provided free of charge to any learner until he or she reaches the age of 16 or completes primary school, whichever happens first. The aspirations embodied in that provision have been extended throughout the school system so that schooling is essentially free. The Ministry has also not seriously considered any measures to charge fees for secondary schooling, and almost all hostel costs are paid by the Ministry. Given the problems of financial sustainability, the sooner some costs start being charged to learners and their parents the better. Persuading people to pay these costs will be difficult, of course, but ways of recovering some costs will have to be found. Many schools have started collecting fees using in-kind payments, such as mahangu, to get around the common plea that people cannot afford payments. Charging some fees may also induce people to attach greater value to education. Loans could be provided to learners in senior secondary grades, to be repaid at a later time.

A disturbing aspect to the problem of sustainability is how little people appear to be concerned with the prospects of the system being overspent. There is an optimism that resources are unlimited or will be found somewhere, or that the government will always be able to borrow money.

Perhaps the issue of financial sustainability will only be taken seriously once the majority of Ministry officials and stakeholders have a real “feel” for the problem, a “feel” that would only develop after the issue has been widely and repeatedly debated in public. The computer simulation model described above was designed to stimulate exactly that kind of discussion. It was hoped that the need to explore different, more sustainable policies would develop from that dialogue. However, the model was only used for this purpose within the Ministry and only to a limited extent, and there never has been any widespread public debate on the future financing of education.

14. Recommendations for Sida activities in the future

This review has shown that basic education in Namibia, as an activity, has strengths and weaknesses. The Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, as an organisation, also has strong points and others that are weaker. While it may be logical for future Sida support to target weaker areas, those that can be developed by building upon the more solid components of the sector are likely to produce the best improvements for Namibian children and society.

There are two major strengths that should be fostered and exploited. The first is the substantial latent interest and demand for education shown by almost all Namibians. In many ways, two of Sida's existing programmes - Pamwe and the National Literacy Programme have - owe their success to that demand and interest. In going forward, the Ministry and Sida need to develop partnerships with the wider community of Namibians that value education so highly. The Ministry cannot run education alone, and Sida should not help the Ministry try to do so! Likewise, in seeking areas where its support will be most effective Sida should consult a broader audience than the Ministry's head office.

The second major strength consists of the noble and useful goals established for basic education. These were goals established for purposes of reform, to provide guiding lights for the development of new programmes. They have served that purpose well, but now we can use those same goals to steer implementation. In a sense, the Ministry has been too consumed by reform and development, and has paid too little attention to seeing that the job of education gets done properly. We thus need to use those goals to focus our energies on implementation, accountability, processes and outputs.

This review has not attempted to evaluate the merits of continued Sida support to existing projects. Decisions on that should be made after the projects have been evaluated. A number of ideas on additional work that must be done were mentioned previously in this report. Here I offer a number of thoughts on possible areas of support and investigation within the contexts of the two strengths just described.

While Sida has indeed contributed much to planning in the past, it remains true that almost no micro-planning takes place at the level of the school. Many problems, especially those real problems faced by real learners, are simply the result of a lack of micro-planning; for example, too many teachers in one school but too few in another, limited opportunities for progression through the grades, a lack of classrooms, the inappropriate allocation of classrooms, inadequate water supplies, etc. The cluster system recently developed in the Rundu educational region provides a useful framework for this kind of planning to be done, and it would logical to extend the framework to other regions. These clusters allow the needs of individual schools to be planned within the context of a network of local or neighbourhood schools.

The Ministry has an excellent statistical base, and this achievement is partly the result of a broad tradition and willingness to collect and record information. It would now be useful to start using that tradition and information to improve accountability and responsibility. Some of the information now available could be used for that purpose, and new sets of information could be collected to indicate how different management needs are being met. For example, information could be collected on whether books ordered by schools are delivered, whether teachers are at work, and whether schools are inspected, etc. A project

to investigate ways of improving accountability through the use of information and other methods would be of value.

The major focus of the Pamwe project has been to construct new classrooms. I recommend that many more resources now be put into the renovation of school buildings by the Pamwe project. Many schools are in desperate need of renovation, and the training and use of community members to do renovation work would also help develop a culture of "maintenance". Buildings renovated by the Pamwe project should then also become the legal responsibility of school boards in the same way as was suggested for new buildings.

The only major organisations outside the Ministry with a strong interest in basic education are the unions that represent teachers and senior students. These unions have valuable roles to play, but primarily represent the interests of their members. I believe the time is right for the creation of a non-governmental foundation to become involved in education. Such a foundation would:

- be a centre for information on education
- conduct research on education
- develop policy proposals and analyse existing policy
- contribute to both micro and macro-planning
- provide a link between the Ministry and stakeholder groups throughout the country
- stimulate public discussion and interest on education.
- provide external assessments of the basic education system.

In some senses, these functions are now the responsibility of the Ministry, but many of these needs are not being met. Given staffing and financial constraints, it is also difficult to imagine when they might be met by the Ministry in the future. The foundation would also involve itself in issues that the Ministry is unable to take up, such as developing a public dialogue on financial sustainability. Such a foundation should be financially self-supporting, but I recommend that Sida considers stimulating its initial establishment. Existing foundations, such as the Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU) and Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN), provide good models of what should be developed.

A project to develop materials and in-service training programmes for multi-grade teaching to lower primary grades would be of value. Many teachers valiantly attempt to teach two or more grades together, and do so without any specific guidance. It should be a simple matter to develop guidelines and materials for multi-grade teaching from the existing lower primary curriculum. These should be distributed to appropriate schools and a trainer should visit those schools to provide face-to-face support and instruction on multi-grade teaching. A project to do this would also put multi-grade teaching "on the map", thus encouraging others to use the method to reach children in sparsely populated areas. Since most of the marginalised children in Namibia live in such areas, the programme would contribute to their education.

Finally, there is an urgent need for an overall programme to develop community participation and strengthen implementation. The overall goal of such a programme would be to provide information widely and to stimulate discussion on what has to be done in our schools. It would include aspects on how communities should be supporting and managing

their schools, about the roles of school boards, about the functions of principals and teachers, about who is accountable for what, about when these things should happen, and about what goes into a school and what should come out, and about what our children should be learning. The radio services in Namibia would provide an excellent medium to disseminate that information. It would be comparatively simple to compile radio broadcasts to cover any number of topics which would improve levels of knowledge and participation. The programmes would be translated into local languages and would be certain to reach a huge audience, especially that very audience that needs to know more about education and to participate more in the management of education.

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