



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

THE LANGUAGE POLICY FOR SCHOOLS



1992 — 1996 AND BEYOND

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British Overseas Development Administration

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

FOREWORD

In November 1991, the Ministry's Language Policy for Schools was first published. It was the result of a lengthy consultative process. The Policy embodies the twin goals of establishing English as the official medium of education and promoting the equal development of the main Namibian languages. As we move towards achieving these goals, ideally all learners should become proficient in at least two languages: their Home Language or Mother Tongue, and English. Thus, there can be an appropriate balance between consolidation of the learners' own culture and background, and acquisition of a language offering wider communication and opportunity. No-one should feel that their own Home Language is threatened in any way, or that its use should be curtailed. Indeed, we look to the encouragement of a multilingual rather than a monolingual society, but one in which the use of the official language contributes to unity in diversity.

The Language Policy is intended to be flexible and progressive. It will be continuously evaluated at all levels of implementation. The Ministry will note and act upon reported problems specific to regions, districts and individual schools. Already, major programmes are underway to retrain and upgrade teachers. New textbooks are being written and others adapted. The National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) is producing new syllabuses, and spot materials to help teachers in the meantime. NIED staff are now working from within the Ministry headquarters, but during 1994 they will move to the new buildings in Okahandja. The professional support to Language Policy implementation from NIED will be enhanced by staff in Regional Offices.

Since the Language Policy for Schools was first published, there have been a number of misunderstandings and even misinterpretations. Much of this has been due to communication problems. This booklet is intended to make the Policy clear, and to explain some of its details more fully. It will be widely distributed. The design and contents are simple – Part 1 describes the background to the Policy; Part 2, the Policy itself, edited to allow for changes since 1991; and Part 3, the implementation process. It is anticipated that a review document will be produced for 1996. It should be noted that the term 'learners' has been used throughout for reasons of consistency, and refers to children in all or any stages of the formal school educational system.



Nahas Angula
Minister of Education and Culture

JUNE 1993

PART 1

BACKGROUND TO THE POLICY

Language policy formulation is a difficult task. One of the complicating factors is the need for national consensus. In order to achieve this, the Ministry of Education and Culture has formulated the Language Policy only after making efforts to find out the views of the different language groups on the subject.

These efforts began soon after Independence in March 1990. They first took the form of a number of guideline statements in several official documents.

In *Education and Transition*, July 1990, and *Change with Continuity*, November 1990, broad directives for language choices were given. These were choices for language as a medium of instruction in schools, and languages as subjects in schools. The documents pointed out that schools would have very important tasks where language policy was concerned. The establishment of English as the official language would take place in the classroom. All teachers and learners would therefore have major roles to play in this task. Another task was for all learners ideally to become proficient in at least one Namibian language, especially their home language. Teachers, learners, the administration, and the community needed to support this objective.

In July 1991 the process of consultation and consensus-building for language policy began. The Ministry produced and sent out the document *Provisional Language Policy for Schools – Draft for Discussion*. This booklet went to all regions of Namibia. It gave some guidelines and background information about language choices, suggestions for possible policies, and invited all readers concerned

with education to fill in and return the questionnaire enclosed.

By November 1991 the responses to this draft document had been processed, and they provided a basis for a provisional language policy. It was decided next to invite representatives from all regional education offices to Windhoek for consultation.

After round-table discussions, the Ministry finalised the Language Policy and issued it as Annex 1 to the official document *Education and Culture in Namibia: The Way Forward to 1996* on 28 November 1991.

Formulating the Policy

All the views expressed by language interest groups were taken into careful consideration by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Broad criteria and key factors for policy development were also taken into consideration. These criteria and factors included:

- The equality of all national languages regardless of the number of speakers or the level of development of a particular language.
- The cost of implementing the policy.
- The fact that language is a means of transmitting culture, and cultural identity.
- The fact that for pedagogical reasons it is ideal for learners to study through their own language particularly in the early years of schooling when basic skills of reading, writing, and concept formation are acquired.
- The need for learners to be proficient enough in English, the

official language, at the end of the 7 year primary school cycle either to gain access to further education or to be effective participants in society.

- The expectation that a language policy should enhance the development of unity in society.

Goals of the Policy

Some of the above items are broad goals. These lead to specific goals which are that:

- The 7 year primary education cycle should enable learners to acquire reasonable competence in English, the official language, and be prepared for English medium instruction throughout the secondary cycle.
- Education should promote the language and cultural identity of learners through the use of Home Language medium at least in Grades 1–3, and the teaching of Home Language throughout formal education, provided the necessary resources are available.
- Ideally, schools should offer at least two languages as subjects.
- Beyond the primary cycle (Grades 1–7), the medium of instruction for all schools shall be English, the official language.

PART 2 THE LANGUAGE POLICY FOR 1992

1. 1992 was a year of initial preparation for the phasing-in of English as a main medium of instruction in Grades 4–7. The preparation took into consideration the two main needs of teacher up-grading and the supply of materials to schools. The phasing-in of English medium in these Grades begins in 1993.
2. This uniform phasing-in policy on the sequence of subjects to be taught through English (see Fig 1a) takes into account the movement of people between different regions in Namibia as well as facilitating teacher upgrading and materials production.
3. English is to be a compulsory subject, starting from Grade 1, and continuing throughout the school system. Ideally, all learners should study two languages as subjects from Grade 1 onwards, one of which must be English. Schools should make arrangements to accommodate such a two-language curriculum in which options presently available are offered to learners.
4. These options are:
 - Afrikaans
 - English
 - German
 - Khoekhoegowab (Nama/Damara)
 - Oshikwanyama
 - Oshindonga
 - Otjiherero
 - Rugciriku

Rukwangali
Setswana
Silozi
Thimbukushu and
Ju/'hoan.

5. All these languages will have the same weighting for promotional purposes.
6. In 1992 in the secondary phase both Grades 8 and 9 were taught through the medium of English.

The Language Policy for 1993–1996 and Beyond

Lower Primary Grades 1–3

The situation for 1992 will continue.

Upper Primary Grades 4–7

From 1993 to 1996 the phasing-in of English as the main medium of instruction will be effected in the following way in each of Grades 4 to 7 for promotional subjects other than languages (see Fig 1a).

For 1993 Mathematics will be taught through the medium of English.

From 1994 Mathematics and Science will be taught through the medium of English.

From 1995 Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies will be taught through the medium of English.

From 1996 onwards Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, the



major promotional subjects, will continue to be taught through the medium of English.

All other subjects in these grades from 1993 to 1996 may, with permission from the Regional Office, be taught in a language other than English.

Notes on the Policy for Primary Grades:

1. The above are minimum requirements for the terminal objective of phasing-in English as a medium of instruction. Schools which are already using English as a main medium of instruction will continue to do so.
2. Nothing in this policy will prevent a primary school from teaching a foreign language.
3. History and Geography have been combined under the heading: Social Studies. English medium teaching of this subject will commence in 1995.

Secondary Grades 8–12

The phasing-in of English as medium of instruction which started with Grade 8 in January 1991 will continue to be implemented until 1995. From 1995 all secondary grades will be taught through the medium of English. Thus, in 1992, as stated above, both Grades 8 and 9 were taught through the medium of English; in 1993 Grades 8, 9 and 10 will be taught through the medium of English; in 1994 Grades 8, 9, 10 and 11; and in 1995 all Grades.

It should be noted that the phasing-in of English medium throughout the secondary cycle is taking place at the same time as the introduction of a new curriculum and syllabuses leading to the International



FIG 1a: IMPLEMENTATION OF ENGLISH MEDIUM GRADES 1-7

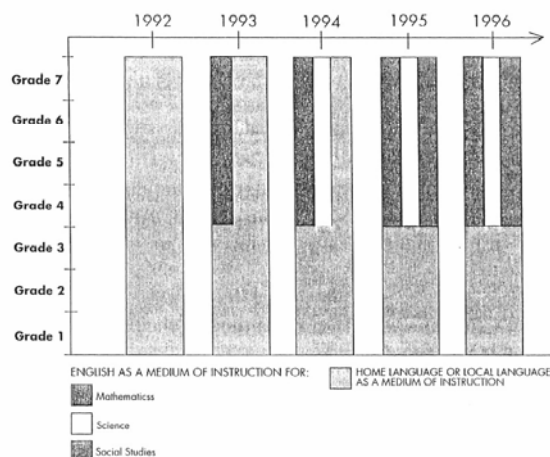
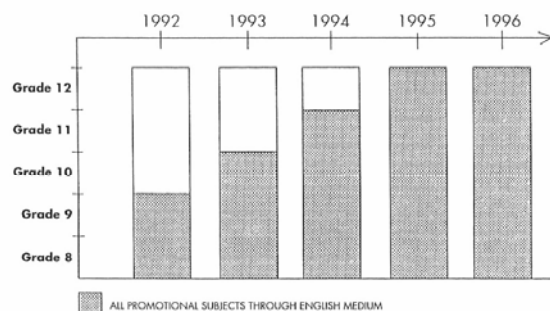


FIG 1b: IMPLEMENTATION OF ENGLISH MEDIUM GRADES 8-12



General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education (HIGCSE) examinations.

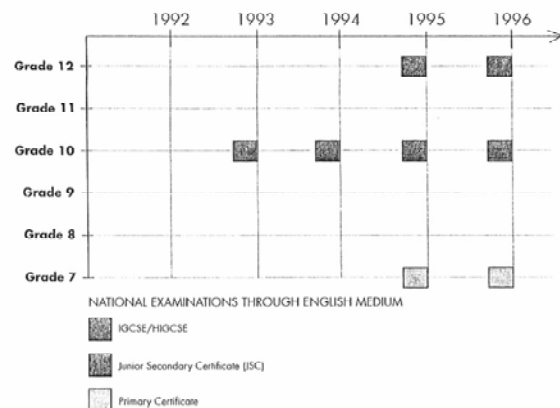
What the Policy Means

- **Grades 1-3** will be taught either through the Home Language, a local language, or English.
- **Grades 4-7** will have a phasing in-system for English medium as described, and illustrated in Fig 1a.
- **Grades 8-12** will have a phasing-in system for English medium, started in 1991 and completed in 1995. This system is illustrated in Fig 1b.
- **Examinations:** From 1993 the Grade 10 national examination will be taken through the medium of English; as will the national examinations for Grade 7 and Grade 12 from 1995 (see Fig 2).

Monitoring

1. There will be continuous monitoring of the language policy as it becomes implemented throughout Namibia between 1993 and 1996. It is intended to be a flexible and progressive policy. Ministry guidelines, already sent to Regional Education offices, outline procedures which will be subjected to constant evaluation, particularly at the classroom and community level where conditions lead to special transitional difficulties with phasing-in of English medium instruction.

FIG 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF EXAMINATIONS IN ENGLISH MEDIUM



2. Central amongst these transitional difficulties are shortages of textbooks, and the urgent transitional need to upgrade teachers so that they can be fully competent to teach through English.
3. In these transitional conditions, while the stated language policy will not change, the use of a language understood by the majority of learners in a class can be permitted temporarily. Indeed, even where resources are satisfactory, experience in other countries has shown that the use of such a local language from time to time may help with the understanding of difficult concepts during the primary cycle.
4. The importance of an effective provision of resources such as books and other materials to schools in all areas is noted. So is the upgrading and provision of language teachers, as stated above, and

subject teachers who will be teaching through English.

5. Finally, it should be noted that in some parts of Namibia the English medium policy is already being implemented.

Amendments to the Policy

1. Nothing in the policy will prevent schools from teaching a foreign language to help promote international understanding.
2. Private Schools may throughout the primary cycle (Grades 1–7) use a language other than English as a medium of instruction provided that they will offer at least one local language as a subject and teach Social Studies in English as provided for in the National Curriculum.
3. Schools are free to organise co-curricular activities to promote any language and culture.

Namibia National Language Conference

1. The Language Policy was further enriched by a National Language Conference, held in June 1992 at Ongwediva Training Centre near Oshakati in the north of Namibia. This Conference brought together over 400 people from many walks of life. It succeeded in sensitising the public about the difficulties of formulating a Language Policy in a country like Namibia, where a number of languages are widely spoken.
2. At the Conference, 22 working groups produced conclusions and recommendations on ways of helping to implement the Language Policy. These focused both on the use of English as official language and main medium of instruction, as well as on ways of promoting and developing Namibian languages. The Conference Report presents the main Conference papers together with these conclusions and recommendations. A workshop will follow the official launching of this Report.

Activities by Ministry

The implementation of the Language Policy for Schools involves some major changes in language teaching in Namibian schools. Learners will only benefit from these changes if the necessary planning, syllabus and materials development and teacher training is carried out. Accordingly, the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) is engaged in the following projects and activities.

Primary Cycle

1. In the Primary Phase, new syllabuses are being developed for both English and the National Languages. Both will be combined syllabuses catering for learners with different needs. In the case of the English syllabus in Grades 1-3, this will consist of a basic component for beginners, a core component for all learners and an extended component for competent speakers of English. From Grade 4 onwards, both core and extended components will be available to support the use of English medium in the other subjects.
2. A common syllabus will be developed for all Namibian national languages catering for the needs of mother tongue speakers and those using the language as a second language.
3. It is intended that the new English syllabus will be introduced in 1994, while the new syllabus for national languages will be available in 1995. Meanwhile, teaching will be based on existing syllabuses.
4. New teaching materials which involve new teaching methods in line with a learner-centred and communicative approach are being developed and trialled at selected schools with the assistance of the Moltano Project funded by the British Government. These materials consist of a Bridge to English Course for introducing English in the Lower Primary Phase. If the pilot phase is successful, materials will be developed for other languages. The Ministry is co-ordinating the projects.
5. New textbooks for English have been recommended for use in Grades 1-7 as a result of evaluation by the Language Committee

for English and trialling in various schools. They will replace existing materials as soon as funds are available.

6. Spot materials are being developed for specific purposes, e.g. Maths teaching at Primary level.
7. A National English Language Upgrading programme for primary teachers of English is being implemented from May 1993, with Namibian and international support.
8. An English Language Teaching Survey, conducted with assistance from Florida State University experts as part of the Education Reform Programme, was started in 1992 and will be concluded in 1993. This survey, together with a Language Proficiency Test, conducted in Grades 4 and 7 in English and Oshindonga, and other studies being undertaken, will provide basic data necessary for future planning and syllabus development.

Secondary Cycle

1. At the Junior Secondary level, where curriculum change was initiated in 1991, the present syllabuses are being revised. Intensive teacher training for all language subjects has been conducted since 1991, involving all NIED personnel.
2. A new textbook for Junior Secondary English, *Secondary English for Namibia*, was introduced in 1993.
3. At Senior Secondary level, the Ministry with the support of the Namibia Association of Norway is embarking on the development of a textbook for Grades 11 and 12 for English Second Language, which will prepare the learners for the IGCSE examination.

4. The IGCSE syllabus for Namibian Languages, which will include Afrikaans, is being developed jointly by the Ministry and the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (UCLES).
5. The HIGCSE syllabuses for First, Second and Foreign Languages have been developed by the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate specially for Namibia, again in partnership with Ministry staff.

Teacher Training

1. In-service teacher training, both for teachers of English and for teachers of other subjects who are using English as a medium of instruction, is being conducted by the Ministry and various Non-Governmental Organisations. The Ministry is beginning to co-ordinate these efforts to avoid duplication. These programmes will lead to the upgrading of teachers' qualifications through proper accreditation. The Ministry is preparing modules in English Communication Skills and English Teaching Methodology, which can be used for in-service training courses.
2. One project targeted at teachers with basic needs for English upgrading is a series of radio programmes, *Let's Speak English*, supported by two workbooks. This was first broadcast in 1992 and is being repeated in 1993.
3. A major project involving considerable financial assistance and the provision of English language specialists by the British Government working within an English Language Teachers upgrading project, is expected to start in mid-1993. By this date, the programme to develop the new Basic Education Teaching Diploma in the Colleges and to conduct teacher in-service training in all

regions is expected to be launched. The British-funded staff will be based in the Teachers' Resource Centres and Teacher Training Colleges and travel to schools to conduct in-service training courses.

Finally, the Ministry of Education and Culture recognises the active and positive support from its Namibian and international development partners, as already indicated above, and looks forward to renewal and expansion of this support as further projects unfold.