



## REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

### MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

**SUBJECT: Responses by Hon. Ester Anna Nghipondoka, Deputy Minister of Education, Arts and Culture**

**A. Questions raised by Hon Torka Victorine Shikongo, on 23 June 2015.**

*Thank you Hon Speaker for the chance to respond to the very important questions from Hon Shikongo & Hon Smit respectively.*

*Hon Members*

**1. Introduction.**

*would like to mention that*

The main functions of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture through the Directorate of National Examination and Assessment and Certification are to provide national assessment and certification service for the school system, to assist in enhancing the quality of the education and monitor educational standards. Every year a number of teachers appointed as markers report in Windhoek for the central marking exercise. For 2014, national examinations, the Ministry did appoint 1527 markers for grade 10 for 35 subjects and 1040 markers for the grade 12 Ordinary and higher level with a number of 53 subjects.

To revert to your questions Hon, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture would like to inform this house that, the credibility, quality and integrity of the national examinations is maintained at all costs and at each level of marking.

## **2. Questions and responses**

### **2.1 How accurate or reliable are the results of each year?**

Hon Shikongo, the results that are released every year are reliable, valid and credible. The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture have stringent procedures when it comes to the setting of question papers and marking of the answer scripts.

Before the marking of the answer scripts starts in each component/paper, the Chief Markers, the Assistant Chief markers and the Team leaders have to meet for three to four days to standardise the memorandum to the questions that are asked in a question paper. This is a framework of agreement to which all relevant markers must adhere to ensure that all processes associated with marking are performed within a set guidelines. This is done to ensure that the marking process has a consistent quality,

and that any conclusions made in relation to the results are comparable with all other results in the previous years.

With regard to the memorandum, The Chief markers, assistant chief markers and the Team leaders always mark a number of answer scripts to ensure that all answers required by a question are accommodated in the memorandum. The same exercise is also repeated on the arrival of markers. The markers will mark similar dummy answer scripts for discussions and finalisation of the memorandum. This is referred to as prior training and standardisation of the marking before markers are allowed to mark live answer scripts.

During the marking exercise a number of four to five markers are always allocated to a Team leader, for supervision and moderation of their answer scripts. A Team leader is in turn supervised by the Assistant Chief Marker who is also supervised by the Chief marker.

To ensure quality marking, Chief markers, Assistant Chief Markers and Team Leaders has a mandate of moderating 30% of the answer scripts marked by a marker and provide corrective measures on the outcome of moderation. The primary objective of moderating an examination paper is to ensure that answers are concise and relevant to the question asked and not ambiguous; the marks allocated are fair and relative to the degree of the difficulty of the question; and that all learners are marked at the same level without discrimination and prejudice.

Hon Shikongo, the Ministry has a mechanism in place of ensuring that the exact marks obtained by a learner are correctly captured in the computer. For this activity, a double capturing of marks at the marking venues has been introduced. The marker has to enter the marks on the **primary optical mark reader forms** and the staff members hired by the Ministry have to capture the same marks on the **secondary optical mark reader forms**.

The two optical mark reader forms are captured separately by the **optical mark reader machine** and where differences in marks are identified, verification is done again by checking the marks on the answer scripts at the marking venue. This is done to ensure that the correct mark of the candidate is captured by the system.

**Therefore, I wish to conclude the question by saying that the results that are released by the Ministry of Education are reliable, valid and credible.**

## 2.2 How many Grade 10 learners have been deprived to proceed to Grade 11 of this injustice?

In order to be transparent in the administration and conducting of the national examinations and to ensure that quality marking takes place, the Ministry did introduce the following services to the grade 10 and 12 learners after the release of results

- A full-clerical re-check of the marks <sup>at</sup> N\$25.00 for Grade 10 and N\$60.00 for Grade 12.
- A re-mark of a subject <sup>at</sup> N\$ 110.00 for Grade 10 and N\$220.00 for Grade 12.
- An explanation of an incomplete result (I) on the statement of results, on request is free of charge for both Grade 10 and 12.

The above fees are Treasury approved fees and the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture must adhere to Treasury Instructions in the implementation of such services.

Hon Shikongo, the re-marking of answer script is usually done by a different marker, usually a senior marker. This ensures that a marker does not re-mark the answer script that she/he marked during the normal marking. Historically, the Ministry has been doing re-marking of Grade 10 and 12 answer scripts on request from candidates, parents or guardians. For the past three years the re-marking outcome for Grade 10 has been as follows:

Year	Total Number of learners registered	No of applications received	No of changes	% change
2012	33 428	1284	20	1,56%
2013	34 054	1359	12	0.88%
2014	35 592	2013	8	0.40%

Looking at the statistics for the past years, I would like to inform the members of this house that there has been a significant degree of decrease in the change of marks or grade after the remarking exercise. This show that the marking process is properly controlled though they are still minor defects detected after remarking.

I would like also to re-iterate that the concept of allowing remarking of examination answer scripts is widely applied, not only at the levels of academic institutions but also in industries where formal examinations are conducted. The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture has a policy or guidelines that govern the remarking process.

The Ministry looked at the answer scripts where change in marks occurred and found the following to be causes of errors:

- Errors during carry-through of marks of incorrectly/partially correct answers. This error seems to be equally advantageous and disadvantageous to the learners.
- A detailed mark scheme makes it difficult for the markers as more alternative answers are accommodated not to disadvantages the learners.
- Poor subject knowledge of the marker was also found to be a contributing factor in some of the changes
- It was also found that learners answer questions in bits and pieces of which some answers are missed during initial marking and this seem to contribute significantly to changes in marks or symbols
- Deteriorating handwritings and letters and digits that have to be interpreted rather than read is a major challenges and equally applicable to markers and learners.

I would like to conclude by saying that, all indicators are positive that remarking can be used as a tool to quality-assure the marking process.

Based on the historical data and analysis there had been no injustice caused to the system and the learners as only very insignificant changes occurred to the learners who applied for a remarking.

### **2.3 How can your Ministry assist the learners whose parents cannot afford the remarking fees of N\$ 120.00 per subject?**

Hon Shikongo, before I respond this question, let me use this opportunity to correct your statement that the re-marking fees are N\$110.00 for Grade 10 and N\$ 220.00 for Grade 12 per subject. The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture has a policy in place on exemption of needy learners who are not able to pay the examination fees for Grade 10 and 12. The Examination fees are subsidized by the Government at 54% for full-time and 40% for part-time learners.

Therefore, re-marking and clerical re-check fees are Treasury approved fees and learners/parents/guardians must pay for the extra fees for the services that are applied for after the release of the results. The good news is that the cost will be refunded if the subject grade changes and no refund if it is only the mark, rather than the grade that changes. It is also worth noting that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture do not change the grade of the learners if a mark goes down following a remark, the original mark will be kept.

As these are secondary services, there is some monetary fee attached to them as approved by Treasury. The fees are related to the administrative costs and marker remuneration are also involved.

Therefore, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture cannot exempt learners, parents or guardians who would like to apply for re-marking and rechecking of answer scripts.

In concluding, your questions, there are two main factors that affects control measures such as checking, adding and transfer of marks by another person than the marker.

- The first of these is mental fatigue. The Junior Secondary Certificate (Grade10) marking is always a high volume of work that must be completed in a short space of time under extreme pressure of deadlines, normal "human error" will definitely start to exert its toll.
- The second factor, not always recognised, is the role of language when marking. As you are aware that some of the markers might not be fluent in English as a communication language, it is always a natural tendency for these markers to think in one's mother tongue when marking as this commonly happens even during their teaching.

### **3. Hon Shikongo, I will move onto your questions on Teachers as Markers**

Each year a number of Grade10 and 12 teachers from various schools apply to become markers, some of these teachers teach Grade 8, 9 and 11 classes and this causes a fragile situation at the school.

#### **3.1. Will the Honourable Minister look into this matter and rescue / remedy this fragile situation at schools?**

In the first place I would like to inform the house that the criteria for appointment of teachers as markers was approved by the National Examination, Assessment and Certification Board of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in terms of part iv of the Education Act ( Act. No.16 of 2001).

The criteria are as follows:

- A teacher should at least have a three years (3) professional Teacher Qualification or similar academic and professional or some other appropriate qualification according to the needs of the subject.

- A teacher should have a teaching experience of at least 3 years in Grade 10 or higher in the subject concerned. In addition to the subject knowledge, teachers should have a thorough understanding of the syllabus and should also be conversant with the technical and academic terminology of the subject in English
- A teacher should currently be teaching the subject at Grade 10 level
- If a person has been a marker in previous years, he/she should have obtained a C grade or better in the subject concerned during the last marking session.

In the application for appointment of markers, teachers are required to indicate if they are teaching Grade 8, 9, and 11 apart from Grade 10. The principal of the school is the first person to recommend or not to recommend the teacher for appointment as a marker in the subjects he has applied for. The principal as the Head of the school must determine, the number of teachers to release for marking in consideration of the workload at the school. In most cases only teachers who are teaching Grade 10 should be released for marking, however, there are cases where the Ministry would request the Regional Directors to release some teachers due to shortage of teachers for marking.

Teachers are appointed as markers for a particular subject component or paper. Each component is marked for a number of days not exceeding 14 days. The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture has a marking program that needs to be followed by teachers appointed as markers. The marking program starts from October each year and end in the middle of December.

Markers report on a weekly basis depending on the marking program. The marking program is designed in consideration of other activities at the school level for which the marker is still responsible for. These are activities as mentioned in your statement. The Ministry also ensures that a teacher is only appointed for one subject or component and not in multiple subjects as he/she must report back at the school.

Therefore, schools should not have problems in the administration and conducting of the Grade 8, 9 and 11 activities, as the principal has that authority of ensuring that the school is well managed even if some teachers come for marking.

For future developments, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture did a pilot electronic marking in five Grade 10 subject. This is a new development in the marking paradigm which has more advantages than the current manual marking as it reduces costs on marking, number of

days for marking and number of teachers to be appointed as markers for a particular subject.

As I am addressing this house, a submission for the technical assistance is with the Office of the Public Service for consideration for full implementation of the project in five Grade 10 and three grade 12 subjects. The number of subjects for electronic marking will be increased every year. The most important aspect is the sustainability of the project after technical assistance and capacity building of our teachers who are markers. The outcomes of the pilot electronic marking were presented to the National Examination, Assessment and Certification Board and were pleased of the outcome. This will also shorten the examination and marking period.

Therefore, the Ministry of Education is not sitting idle but is busy exploring some alternatives to ensure that more teaching is achieved at school level.

**3.2. Can the Hon Minister advertise vacancies for Permanent Markers so that anybody who qualifies can apply to become a permanent marker or teachers who qualify become a Permanent non teaching Marker including Retired Teachers?**

Hon Shikongo, as I have alluded early in my responses, not everybody can be a marker as it may seem to be. Marking is a technical activity that requires a person to be competent and possess sound knowledge of the subject to be marked. It is an exercise that requires a person to be teaching or have taught the subject at a particular level. The person must have a teacher qualification and have majored in the subjects to be marked, The person must have sound knowledge of the syllabus content and be conversant with the topics as outlined in the syllabus.

Marking is an exercise that happens once in a year from October to middle December and for a maximum of 14 days for a subject. Appointing permanent markers for once off period will not be a solution as the Public Service Regulations does not allow appointing a person permanently for week long intervals. Also appointing any person who qualifies without having access to the teaching syllabus and being in contact with the subject content and the learners will be detrimental to the administration and quality of the national examinations. However, the Ministry is using retired competent teachers as markers, but the person should have been involved in the marking process before retirement.

Therefore, as marking is a once off activity, it will not be cost effective to appoint a permanent marker who will demand payment from the Government even when they are not involved with marking. The exercise

of permanent markers is not feasible at all as no SADC examination Body has ever applied it.

I would like to assure the house that the administration and conduction of the national examinations is progressing well and nothing to fear about.

## **B. QUESTIONS RAISED BY HON. NICO SMIT ON 23 JUNE 2015**

1. What is the current situation with regards to the availability of new mother tongue textbooks for teachers and learners across the country?

First, I would like to inform Hon. Smit that the junior curriculum that has been implemented now, is not a totally new curriculum; it is a revised curriculum where some changes have been affected in some syllabus content. Thus schools can still use the old books while cognisant of changes in the syllabus and innovate accordingly.

The versioned (translated junior primary textbooks) mother tongue textbooks are being delivered in schools.

2. What measures are being taken to ensure that a delay in the provision of mother tongue textbooks, if any, is being addressed and resolved to ensure that outstanding are delivered as soon as possible?

As I mentioned previously, textbooks are being delivered in schools. I would like to inform Honourable Smit that the delay, which was experienced this year was not caused by administrative issues, but was a technical one.

Textbooks are developed and translated (versioned) by the publishers. It is a well-known fact that the expertise in African Languages is limited in this country, because the development of the African Languages has been neglected for a very long time. Translators took longer time to translate the textbooks from English to African Languages, because they also have to invent new words and/or concepts in the process of translation. Knowing this challenge, the Ministry has to do quality assurance of the work of the publishers. The quality of translated textbooks varied from very good to very bad. Therefore, the Ministry has to spend time re-translating the textbooks. The textbooks which, were properly translated, were verified quickly, but there were those requiring major work to be done. It's only after that, publishers printed and distributed the books to schools.



I would also like to inform this house that some of us might argue that we know our languages and we have enough expertise in the country, but the type of language that we use on a daily basis might not be at an acceptable levels in terms of orthography and standardisation of words and terminologies.

As country, we really need to invest in the development of our African Languages and this has to be done urgently.

**3. Does the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture have any plan or measure in place to ensure that sufficient time is available for teachers and learners to work through the entire curriculum, and if so, what are these?**

The Ministry develops a curriculum policy document known as the Curriculum Guide for Basic Education, which stipulates, the period allocation for each subject and the guidelines for the implementation of the entire curriculum. The Ministry also develops syllabuses, which provide guidelines on how to teach and assess learning. In addition, the Ministry develops subject policies and manuals for teachers so that teachers are informed about the expectations of each subject syllabus. Teachers develop their own schemes of work, which guide them in the preparation for their lessons.

The teacher support structures at regional (advisory teachers and inspectors of education) and school (heads of department and school principals) levels are there to monitor curriculum implementation. They are responsible for curriculum management at regional and schools level respectively.

**4. Is there sort of plan or measure in place to address the current situation within the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture as it relates to planning and implementation?**

As far as the curriculum planning and implementation, the Ministry has developed a policy that aligns curriculum development and textbook development. This policy has an implementation plan detailing the review of the curriculum of each school phase and the development of textbooks. We are following this implementation plan and so far it is working well.

- 5. How do you plan to lay a solid foundation in early childhood development if one of third of a school year is interrupted by a failure on the part of government to ensure that the requisite materials have been delivered to learners?**

It would not agree with you that one third of a school year is interrupted, because as I said before the junior primary curriculum that is being implemented is not a totally new curriculum. Teachers received English version textbooks in January and in addition, schools have the “old” textbooks in schools that are still relevant. Those books did not become obsolete.

By receiving the new textbooks, schools will have more textbooks than before, especially in African Languages.

Thank you.