



Republic of Namibia

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON FREE EDUCATION AND
STATIONERIES-FINANCING-*Parental Contribution*

BY

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~~Honourable~~ ^{Deputy} Speaker,
Honourable Members,

I rise to enlighten the August House and the public at large about what free education means in Namibia versus parental support/contribution to education.

Despite the fact that education in Namibia, as per Article 20 of the Constitution, has always been free, the introduction and implementation of the SDF seems to have been working in contravention of the constitutional provision of free education, *mainly due to non-adherence to implementation regulations by some schools.*

As a result, there was a study done in 2010 that revealed that the payment of school development fund was a barrier to accessing education for many learners. That means, non-payment of SDF resulted in learners being sent home and those learners who were aware of their unfavourable socio-economic circumstances would usually drop out of school or simply not enrol in school.

To avert this, The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) had introduced access to fee-free education at primary level in 2013. This means all learners should attend school even if the parents cannot afford any contribution. Therefore, **“free education”** means that the Ministry provides for the employment of qualified teachers, the infrastructure in form of class rooms, libraries, etc., water and sanitation facilities, the learning support materials for the curriculum implementation i.e textbooks, laboratory equipment and materials, ICT and other teaching aids, as well as catering for learners with special educational needs.

Another major cost driver in this provision of access to **“fee-free”** education are the government hostels, catering for hostel meals, school feeding programme, support to the community hostels as well as the National Senior Secondary Certificate examinations.

Apart from these provisions by government, there are still other demands for financial resources in order to offer holistic education

because a learner also needs to be developed through extra-curricular activities such as sports, arts and culture.

For schools to continue their smooth operations, the Ministry introduced the Universal Primary and Secondary Education Grants after the abolishment of SDF. This Grant funding gives a per-capita amount to the schools which was previously **N\$ 400** per learner per annum for pre-primary and primary learners and **N\$ 500** for secondary learners, in order to still continue smooth operation.

However, over the years with the increasing number of learners, coupled with the dwindling resources, this per capita allocation became smaller such that in the current financial year 2021/2022, approximately N\$ 200.00 was allocated per pre-primary and primary learner while N\$300.00 for a secondary learner, amounting to **One hundred and fifty-two million, three hundred sixty-six thousand, seven hundred and seventy-two** Namibia Dollars (**N\$152,366,772.00**).

These school grants i.e. Primary Education Grant (PEG) and Secondary Education Grant (SEG), should primarily be used for enriching the curriculum implementation (teaching and learning). Other needs of the school such as cleaning materials, school health and safety, minor maintenance repairs, school fencing and similar projects may also be funded from this grant funding.

In addition to the school grant funding, the Ministry also disburses funds to schools for the procurement of stationeries. In the 2021/2022 financial year, **Fifty-one million, three hundred and thirty-nine thousand, three hundred and eighty-three** Namibia Dollars (**N\$ 51,339,383.00**) was made available to regions for the procurement of stationeries. These funds made provision of N\$ 100.00 for every pre-primary and primary learner and N\$ 150.00 for every secondary learner and the Ministry has maintained that allocation per learner over the years.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members,

From the above elaboration, it is clear that the government through the MoEAC makes money available to ensure free access to education by all Namibian learners. The reality on the ground is that the allocated money is not enough to cater for all the needs as planned.

With the ever-increasing prices, schools are not insulated against such economic adjustments. Thus, even with their best efforts schools will find it difficult to survive and meet all the needs of the school on the basis of the grants alone. As a result, there are instances where parents, through their school board, are required to contribute to an array of needs at their schools. This is done by many parents and it is highly appreciated.

The Ministry is of the conviction that the introduction of the Primary and Secondary Education Grants **did not oust the moral obligation and responsibilities** of parents/guardians towards their children that are attending schools. Parents/guardians are still at liberty to contribute, albeit **VOLUNTARY**, towards the upkeep, maintenance and improvement of the schools of their children (and by inference their own schools). I anyhow want hereby to remind our Principals that it is a policy of the government of the Republic of Namibia to offer free education to all Namibian children. Thus, in whatever effort to get contributions from parents, it should be done in such a way that no Namibian child is excluded, in whatever way, due to parental inability to make a contribution. Thus, whatever inhumane and embarrassing way of treating parents and learners is condemned by the Ministry.

Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members, the MoEAC thus wants to encourage our Regional Directorates to ensure internal efficiency in the distribution of stationeries to schools in terms of timely delivery. Secondly, our Principals are urged to ensure internal efficiency in terms of purchase and fast distribution of stationeries to learners and ensuring that **ALL** stationeries are used up before they request parents for contributions. Schools and their school boards should also ensure continuous flow of information between schools and communities with regard to financial reports and urgent school needs to which parents might need to contribute.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members,

In the pursuit of universal access to education for all, regardless of social class, gender and ethnic background, the Ministry hereby also strongly reiterates that no learner may be denied progress to a next grade or placement at a school for non-payment of voluntary contributions.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members

In recognition of the current fiscal climate, the Ministry further encourages school management and school boards, community members and parents to engage with one another in order to come to a mutual understanding on how best to ensure quality education for our children.

I thank you!