



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

12th April 2023

**HON. ELMA DIENDA CONTRIBUTION ON THE MOTION BY THE HONOURABLE
NICOLAAS SMIT ON THE INVESTIGATION AND FULL AUDIT OF THE EXPENDITURE
OF THE N\$ 14.1 BILLION ALOCATED FOR EDUCATION WITH A COMPREHENSIVE
VIEW INTO INFUSTRUCTURE AND TEXTBOOK EXPENDITURE**

Hon. Speaker

Hon. Members

1. I am honored to speak with you today about a topic that is crucial to the development and progress of our nation, Namibia. Education is a fundamental pillar in any country's growth, and we must take action to ensure our current education system is strong and robust to better prepare our youth for the future.
2. The biggest concern in Namibia is that being in school is not the same as learning. Learners in many overcrowded government schools in Namibia often do not comprehend what they are being taught due to a lack of infrastructure and basic learning necessities such as books. Essentially, they do not learn much after sitting in a classroom for years on end. It is therefore not surprising that some learners feel that they are wasting their time and dropout. Even worse, some parents believe that their children would be better out of school working and earning a living earlier – as they in any case often have little to show for 12 full years in the system, and little to gain

remaining in school only to fail matric. The vast majority of these children do not have learning difficulties or disorders, they are simply born in environments where the school system is failing.

Hon. Speaker

Hon. Members

3. The Ministry of Education Conference, 27 June-11 July 2011

Most of us are aware of the Education Conference of 2011 that was themed: *Collective Delivery of the Education Promise: Improving the Education and Training System for Quality Learning Outcomes and Quality of Life.*

The objective of this conference was to:

1. Provide an in-depth analysis of the current state of the Namibian education and training system at all levels (pre-primary, primary, secondary, vocational, higher education);
2. Identify deficiencies in the current education and training system;
3. Seek consensus on major and large areas in need of improvement in order to deliver quality education and training at all levels
4. Develop resolutions from the conference proceedings which form the basis for developing a road map towards comprehensive reforms of the Namibian education and training system

Difficulties identified at the conference included following weaknesses:

1. Poor learning outcomes at all levels;
2. Poor management and accountability;
3. Inequitable resource allocations;
4. Inequitable access to quality education provision;

5. Inefficiency; persisting decline of morals, values and discipline in educational institutions; and
6. Little articulation between educational programmes at different levels of the schooling system including higher education and training system.

Hon. Speaker

Hon. Members

5. As evidenced in the Ministry of Education Conference of 2011, there is so much that needs urgent remedy for our education system to thrive. Firstly, we need to improve the quality of education in our schools. This can be achieved by ensuring that our teachers are adequately trained, motivated, and supported in their profession. We need to provide them with the necessary resources, such as textbooks, teaching materials, and technology, to effectively teach and engage our students. There are schools that are currently under resourced with materials of the previous syllabus. Introduction of the new syllabus on top of existing issues is surely a recipe for disaster.
6. We need to promote a curriculum that is relevant to the needs of our society and economy. This means ensuring that our students are equipped with the necessary skills to succeed in the job market and contribute to the development of our country. Our syllabus is oriented for job seekers rather than producers. This exacerbates the monumental issue of youth unemployment. Advanced societies in developed countries are visionary and immensely strategic with regards to education sector inputs. They're investing in equipment, labs, technology, and well trained teachers to create the problem solvers, thought leaders of the future. How do we compare? If we study our budget expenditure what will it tell us of our position, our priorities, our strategy and our future? Are we working to create a cheap labour force for the rest of the world? Are we working to build a labour force that will earn below taxable incomes, with only a few paying taxes, and the vast majority depending on grants, burdening the system?

We've under prioritized technical schools, agriculture, sciences and entrepreneurship, financial and even political literacy. And this is not news. This is not a new discovery.

7. Therefore, one must ask, before the introduction of the new curriculum why were the earlier identified weaknesses of the Education Conference in 2011 not addressed?

Hon. Speaker

Hon. Members

8. A pattern shows that the same rural and relatively poor regions have the most schools without basic services and teacher housing. These same regions perform poorest in national examinations and probably have higher rates of dropout. What do we expect when a new curriculum is introduced in such a school? What are the odds of success?

9. Poor school management exacerbates the challenge faced by marginalized learners. Badly managed schools, with poor leadership tend to create conditions teachers are under motivated and inadequately supported. Negatively impacting the moral of teachers and learners alike. If teachers are not motivated to go the extra mile, what example can they be to learners? Weak management and poor management practices tend to be more prevalent in schools which are serving the poorer and more marginalized communities where more children are at risk (Chisholm 2004). In addition, where such conditions prevail real learning is less likely to occur. What do we expect when a new curriculum is introduced in such a school?

10. Some of the best and most sort after public schools of our time, today are a far from their former glory. Concordia, Windhoek Technical School (HTS), Jan Mohr, Academia – what has become of these schools? Why don't we talk about it? To what do we attribute their drastic, catastrophic decline, if not

mismanagement and poor leadership? Today, we are left with Windhoek High School and Delta Secondary School, as the shining beacons of what public schools can be. What have we learned from these schools that we can apply to our other schools? How have we leveraged the resources and practices at these schools which are yielding desirable results, to the benefit of other public schools? Both their principals are approximately 1 year away from retirement. What is the fate of WHS and Delta, will they too decline in status, discipline and performance in the face of an inevitable change in management and leadership? I share this with you, Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members to highlight the extent to which poor school management can present a serious crises in education. We need to be honest with ourselves and answer to the effectiveness of the Ministry's succession management and recruitment approaches when it comes to school management.

11. Public schools are losing their best teachers to private schools. This needs strategic remedy – what is the Ministry's value proposition and attraction and retention strategy for good teachers? Teachers do not want to be in dilapidated, poorly maintained, poorly managed schools, any more than learners do. And who suffers for it in the long run? Our children. Physical infrastructure impacts on access to schools and comfort of learners while in school. These relate to levels of learner performance and dropout, as schools without basic services will struggle to attract trained teachers and will be unwelcoming environments for children, particularly those with disabilities and teenage girls. We are not providing sanitary pads for the girl child at school, and neither are we at least ensuring every child has sufficient access to a safe, clean, functioning toilets. Just a week ago in the Omusati region 340 learners from Oshukwa Primary school in the Okahao circuit had to having their education interrupted as they were sent home due to an absence of functional toilet facilities at the school.
12. This is not an isolated case. In 2020 in the Oshana region the ministry of health ordered for the temporary closure of a school due to a lack of water and poor sanitation – this particular school was reported to have cracks in the floor that were big enough for a child to fall through. Omureti High School in the Kunene region – same problem, learners are forced to use

toilets that are simply unpleasant to visit and pose serious health hazards. The list goes on and on.

13. We hear of flooded, broken, unmaintained schools bathrooms toilets. Sometimes only 2 or 3 functioning ones, needed to service hundreds learners. What is our approach to infrastructure? Can we tell our children to value and take care of their immediate environment, when the ministry itself fails to be the example and it lets buildings falls apart right under its nose?

Some salient statistics related to infrastructure are:

1. 12.8% of schools lack toilets for learners
2. About 11% of schools lack a water supply
3. 17.5% of schools in 2019 lacked electricity, with nearly half of the schools in Kavango West having no access to electricity.

What do we expect in such a school?

The new curriculum management exacerbates the challenges faced by marginalized learners.

Hon. Speaker

Hon. Members

14. The minister of Education, Arts and Culture, Anna Nghipondoka, submitted a report to president Hage Geingob on the 2022 Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary level and Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Advanced Subsidiary level examination results. The meeting between Geingob and Nghipondoka was also aimed at seeking support and guidance on proposed interventions to address the root causes of the weak academic performance of the learners in 2022.

15. The said report must be made available for Parliament to thoroughly scrutinize this report. It should not be communication between the line minister and the President only, because solutions must be sought by everyone.

Hon. Speaker

Hon. Members

16. A success story in the grade 11 for 2022 can be obtained from the Hage Geingob High School and Windhoek High School. The grade 11 syllabus is taught over two years for students to have ample revision time. The learning environment is supplemented by hardworking, highly motivated, extremely invested, highly engaged staff.

17. This is a viable and working example that can be used in trying to ensure the new syllabus is completed on time and adequate revision options are instituted to assist learners to best understand the syllabus in other schools.

18. We need to encourage and support lifelong learning by providing opportunities for further education and training to our citizens. This will not only benefit individuals in their personal and professional development but also contribute to the growth and development of our economy.

19. For us to improve the quality of our education system, we must rectify the difficulties as identified at the Ministry of Education Conference of 2011 which I will repeat:

20. We need to address:

Poor learning outcomes at all levels;
Poor management and accountability;
Inequitable resource allocations;

Inequitable access to quality education provision;
Inefficiency; persisting decline of morals, values and discipline in
educational institutions; and
Little articulation between educational programmes at different levels of
the schooling system including higher education and training system.

21. In conclusion, if we can remedy the issues above our education system will thrive because education reform is essential for the progress of Namibia. We need to work together to ensure that our education system is of high quality, accessible to all, relevant, and promotes lifelong learning. Let us invest in our youth's education, for they are the future leaders of our country. Let our budget, its absorption, and every element of its expenditure show this. Let us be accountable to this.

22. Thus, like any concerned and responsible parent and legislator would, Hon Speaker, I herewith support the motion by Hon Smit that this investigative audit be seen through.

Hon. Speaker

Hon. Members

I THANK YOU.