



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MOTION

POST COVID -19 CHALLENGES IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

(PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL)

HON. MAKGONE S G

MOTION ON EDUCATION

Hon Speaker, Hon Bernadus Swartbooi tabled a motion that seeks to discuss the challenges in the Education Sector with a view to find long term interventions to overcome post Covid-19 impact in the education sector (primary and secondary school)

Hon speaker, Hon Members, It is a known fact that Covid-19 caused havoc all over the world and all countries whether developed, the developing and the underdeveloped countries were affected in one or the other way. This motion expect from us to know the status of our education system before Covid-19, so that we are able to know or compare to what happened with our education sector during Covid-19, to be able to assist us to come up with long lasting or sustainable interventions.

Hon Speaker, our education system all the years is marred with challenges, but we have seen these challenges getting more and more when the financial crisis hit the world as from 2008 and again 2015. A positive of more school access, brought along a number of challenges i.e. Shortage of classrooms, textbooks, photocopy materials etc. The recruitment of teachers in some cases were halted especially within the leadership of some schools, which resulted in schools not being lead and managed well. In some cases subject advisers and inspectors were not recruited, which resulted in schools not having advice on how to deal with the subject matter etc. Hon Speaker, these challenges and other more are that we experienced before Covid-19, but mostly due to the financial situation of the country.

Hon Speaker, through my curiosity I wanted to know whether there are other countries that experienced the same challenges, and I stumbled upon a research article by Adrian Zancajo, with regard to the American education system, and I quote:

“The 2008 financial crisis began a long slide in funding for public education that didn’t fully reverse when the economy recovered; as of 2016, 24 states were still spending less on education per-student (who resonate with this) than before the Great Recession, and schools had 77,000 fewer teachers and other staff while enrolling 1.5 million more children (access),

according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Public higher education was receiving \$3.4 billion a year less in 2019 than in 2008, while shifting costs heavily towards tuition.” This is just to illustrate that we are not the only ones hit by the prolonged financial crisis, before the pandemic. This shows to us that the pandemic hit already weakened education systems in most countries including the developed countries.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members, COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected all aspects of life, including education. As schools around the globe closed to slow the spread of the virus, for millions of students’ learning was disrupted, raising concerns about learning loss, inequality, and students’ mental health and well-being. I will confine myself to the impact of the Pandemic on education as per the motion.

In Namibia we know that schools were closed for some time during lockdown and afterwards it was realized that teaching and learning should continue in the new normal. It is from there that alternative methods to face to face were introduced, and e-learning became the buzz word. These happened under circumstances where some parents didn’t have the amenities to start with, electricity, smart phone, internet, and subject knowledge etc.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members for us policymakers to come up with some high level decisions and interventions, we need to rely on research, we have to correlate what we know with the findings of those who collected the data. It is therefore that I thought of finding out the stakeholder’s perception on the impact of Covid-19 on education, here I’m referring to the parents, teachers and learners.

There is a study done by Annaly Strauss and Keshini Bipath, published 15 September 2021, titled: **Evolving trends of distance learning for basic education in Namibia. A parental perspective during Covid-19 lockdown.**

The main aim of this study was to source the views of the parents of pre-primary to Grade 12 learners in Namibia on their experiences of distance learning during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The research question for the study was **“whether pre-primary to Grade 12 learners had received any form of education during the COVID-19 lockdown?”**

From a total of **3967 (100%)** participants, **939 (23.7%)** answered ‘yes,’ **2922 (73.7%)** indicated ‘no’ and **106 (2.6%)** said ‘not yet’. Based on these results, a conclusion can be made that the majority of parents’ expectations of the provision of education for their children from pre-primary to Grade 12 were not met.

Evidently, the lack of access to digital learning platforms as well as teachers’ and parents’ digital illiteracy contributed to this situation. The socioeconomic status of the role players seems to have been part of the problem.

The results revealed, furthermore, that teachers only shared information in online communities without constructively engaging learners on these platforms. Sharing information on digital platforms does not guarantee student learning.

The 2nd study that I’m citing is titled: **The perception of English teachers, at a selected combined school in Erongo Region, on their readiness to conduct online teaching during the Covid-19 lockdown in Namibia**, published by Perien Joniel, et al. from UNAM

The study findings are clear that teachers were not opposed to teaching online, but issues like the lack of infrastructure, Internet, and insufficient training for learners, teachers and parents were concerns raised. The findings revealed that teachers indicated that they do not have the required IT and skills to compile teaching and learning materials and lessons electronically.

This study’s findings points to a lack of e-readiness in various aspects of implementation of eLearning during COVID19 lockdown period in March to April of 2020 in the selected school.

The 3rd study is titled: **The influence of Online Lessons in Learning English Language amid Covid-19 in Namibian Schools. Published by, Alphonse Muzira, Winwood College, Zimbabwe**

The research sought to examine the influence of online English lessons occasioned by the Covid-19 restrictions and how high school students were affected in four Namibian schools given the high failure rate in English Language by Namibian learners. This study's sample was Grade 11 learners from four schools in Windhoek

The study's findings indicate a plethora of challenges of online lessons in learning English Language amid Covid-19 in Namibian schools during the total lockdown in the year 2020. **55% of the learners** mentioned lack of training in online lessons **15%** pointed to lack of access to home Wi-Fi connection, **10% have** no access to internet whilst **20%** do not have electronic gadgets like, smartphones, tablets, desktop and laptops to do English online lessons. In contrast, some private schools, the Grade 10 students used to have their online lessons on Google Meet and Zoom meeting platforms and teachers were giving feedback regularly. They also used to write online tests and they proceeded well with their educational calendar.

This research concludes that the high school students were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in a negative way. Most of the students failed to attend online lessons due to a number of challenges like, expensive data bundles, erratic network connections and failing to use the limited electrical gadgets available for their learning.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members from all these studies, it is evident that the pandemic forced us into a major leap into embracing digital technology and in there was a danger that from infrastructure, gadgets, skills for teachers, learners and parents, we were not ready. This resulted in subject knowledge and competencies not being transferred.

Again Hon Speaker, I like comparisons, and I read another article by Neil Bates, from Britain, who wrote about, **the role and challenges of technology**, and he said: "The impact of this crisis on schools has brought into sharp focus the importance of access to digital technology and connectivity to support all young peoples' learning. An estimated one million children cannot access the internet, either because they have no computer or laptop, no connectivity or both.

Around 8% of 16-24-year old can only access digital technology through their phones, excluding them from many online learning platform and restricting them from receiving and submitting work online.”

Again the above mentioned indicates that Namibia is not the only country facing technological challenges. This should encourage us not to give up hope.

Hon Speaker, in the motivation the mover asserted that “our learners for two years had not had thorough teaching on the required competencies.” To validate the statement I want us to look back at school attendance of 2020

Grades	Number of days attended	Number of days missed
Pre-primary to Grade 3	94	104
Grades 4,5,6	79	119
Grades 7 & 9	89	109
Grade 8	84	114
Grade 10	120	78
Grades 11 & 12	145	53

Out of the 198 school days planned, the number of days learners attended school in 2020, did not adequately prepare them for the 2021 school year.

I saw the recommendation of Hon Swartbooi, only referring to those who wrote their Grade 11 and 12. In my opinion the whole system is affected and especially those that are at the formation years. According to these results, a Grade one learner only attended 94 days, which is 3 months, I bet you, most of these learners proceeded to the next Grade without being able to count, what about reading and doing arithmetic? The whole education system is affected and these learners represent a generation. If schools are going to continue the normal way with the teaching and learning, I’m afraid we are going to lose this generation. Drastic times need drastic measures and that have to start with us the policymakers.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members, to appreciate the impact of Covid-19 on the Primary Phase, there is a research done by the Professional and Resource Development of NIED, April 2021, titled: **Assessment Study on the Distributed Printed Learning Materials during Covid-19 country wide Lockdown: A National study**

Hon Speaker, all of us have never lived through a pandemic, and there is so much we don't know about learners' capacity for resiliency in those circumstances and what a timeline for recovery will look like. Why do I say recovery time, Hon Speaker? Let's go back and analyse the table I presented: The pandemic 2020 learners of Grade 11 and 12 only missed 53 days of teaching and their results released January 2021, results were not as bad as this ones. The Grade 10 of 2020 lost 78 days of teaching, and they are the Grade 11 &12 2022, whose results were released January 2023, that became a talk of the nation. The current Grade 11 & 12 and beyond, are those who lost more than 100 days, God forbid, but that can only be forbidding if unusual drastic measure are taken.

I therefore recommend that:

1. The potential of innovative financing mechanisms to address education challenges that existed before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, and which will persist is investigated.
2. Educational transformation with regard to e-learning is needed in changing the way we learn and the way in which learning is delivered forever, by fully integrating new digital technology but ensuring that we do not leave the disadvantaged behind.
3. A study to be suctioned to quantify the short-term and long-term academic impacts of Covid-19, for proper interventions not to lose this generation.

In conclusion, we all know that disruptions to learning have continued to negatively impact learners well past the initial hits following the 2020 school closure.

THANK YOU

11

1. 1948

2. 1949

3. 1950

4. 1951

5. 1952

6. 1953

7. 1954

8. 1955

9. 1956

10. 1957

11. 1958

12. 1959

13. 1960

14. 1961

15. 1962

16. 1963

17. 1964

18. 1965

19. 1966

20. 1967

21. 1968

22. 1969

23. 1970

24. 1971

25. 1972