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“Enhancing Participatory Democracy in Namibia” (EPDN),
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SECTOR POLICY ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Summary and recommendations for Civil Society by EPDN



The policy was published in 2013



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Vision

"This policy paves the way for all children in Namibia to learn and participate fully in the education system, particularly in the schools commonly referred to as 'mainstream schools.' In addition, this policy aims to create a supporting learning environment which is accommodating and learner-centred."

Mission

"The Ministry of Education recognises that all children need educational support, and that this support should be integral to every school and to the work of every teacher. Therefore, the mission of the Ministry of Education is to create an enabling, supporting environment in every school for all learners and teachers."

Goal

"The aim of this Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (SPIE) is to ensure that all learners are educated in the least-restrictive education setting and in schools in their neighbourhood to the fullest extent possible."

It is important to note that inclusive education is not just focused on learners with disabilities, living in refugee camps or with emotional and behavioural challenges. Instead SPIE states: "Inclusive Education means ending segregation or the deliberate exclusion of individuals or groups on the grounds of academic performance, gender, race, culture, religion, lifestyle, health conditions or disability. Inclusive Education is based on the understanding that all learners have the right to be educated with peers, friends and family members, in their own neighbourhood or local community."

Leading Offices / Ministries / Agencies (O/M/As)

Namibia's education sector currently falls under the mandate of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MEAC) and the Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation (MHETI). The SPIE is a holistic policy, meaning that it is relevant to all education institutions – regardless of their focus and area of expertise. The policy is therefore "applicable to all government bodies including government-subsidised institutions responsible for education (i.e. Early Childhood Development [ECD], pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary education and training). Teacher training institutions are expected to support the implementation of this policy." Given that the country's education sector is made up to a large extent of institutions for primary and secondary education it is logically that MEAC is leading SPIE's administration.

What does the policy say about responsible bodies?

The SPIE states that the education sector as a whole must "adopt flexible and holistic approaches to budgeting, programme planning and development, and to monitor and evaluate purposefully, with a view to creating an inclusive education system." While the overarching responsibility for the policy rests with MEAC and MHETI, the SPIE's proper implementation will rely on all stakeholders in the education sector understanding the policy's strategies and acting collectively to make them happen.

Furthermore, the policy contains a detailed implementation plan¹, divided into separate strategies

¹ The implementation plan is open ended



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and which assigns activities to specific implementing institutions. These institutions for example, include various government departments that fall under MEAC, as well as the University of Namibia (UNAM) and the Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL).

The implementation plan also provides details on the establishment of coordination bodies and forums such as an Inclusive Education Steering Committee (IESC) which will take over certain responsibilities regarding planning, coordination and the promotion of the SPIE. The IESC is encouraged to include representatives from multiple ministries and education institutions to –“improve collaboration, information sharing and implanting Inclusive Education in the education system.”

The policy also recommends that annual consultations should take place with a wide range of stakeholders such as Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs), charities and service providers for marginalised groups and in special needs education.

Finally, it is also recommended that Regional Inclusive Education Coordination Committees (RIECCs) are set up to implement, manage, monitor and evaluate SPIE implementation at regional and school level.

What main measurable and positive outcome should be produced by the policy?

SPIE outlines eight strategies that are designed to achieve the policy’s objectives and overarching goal. These are all listed in the implementation plan. Every strategy should achieve multiple outcomes, most of which are measurable and tied to specific activities as well as a timeframe and cost estimate. Dates given in the timeframe focus on the years 2013 to 2016. However, many activities do not have an end-date and should be conducted continuously.

Finally, the implementation plan does not have targets as such, instead it makes specific recommendations giving additional advice on how activities should be conducted.

The eight strategies give a strong understanding of the outcomes to be achieved and are listed below:

Strategy No 1

Integrate the SPIE into all other legal frameworks and policies of the education sector.

Strategy No 2

Raise awareness of the constitutional right to education and foster attitudinal change.

Strategy No 3

Support institutional development by developing human and instructional resources.

Strategy No 4

Review the National Curriculum for Basic Education to reflect the diversity of learning needs of all learners.

Strategy No 5

Widen and develop educational support services.

Strategy No 6

Develop teacher education and training for paramedical and support staff.

Strategy No 7

Strengthen and widen in-service training for stakeholders.

Strategy No 8

Develop a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the SPIE.





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Policy Objectives & Benefits

The SPIE has two main objectives which are to:

Objective No 1

Expand access to and provision of quality education, especially for educationally marginalised learners; and

Objective No 2

Support learners with a wide range of individual abilities and needs in compulsory education at ECD, pre-primary, primary and secondary levels.

In a nutshell, SPIE's overarching goal is to achieve equity for all children and young people in the education sector – placing emphasis on addressing barriers to education, improving teaching approaches and teacher training, building capacity, diversifying the curricula and supporting marginalised learners. The policy is aimed "at ensuring that the education system becomes inclusive, sensitive and responsive to the needs of all children, and that all children receive education."

Finally, the policy also encourages school management boards, teachers, parents, guardians and the wider community to get actively involved to learn about and support inclusive education.



What does the policy say about public participation in the making of it and in the revision?

The SPIE was developed by a task force on Policy Formulation for Special Needs / Inclusive Education in collaboration with the Division: Special Programmes and Schools (DSPS) under the former Ministry of education and with the support of development partners and other stakeholders.

The policy itself states that it should be "reviewed and updated every 10 years." A formal, public review process has not begun yet. Currently, it has been decided that the SPIE is still applicable until the end of the National Development Plan Five (NDP5) which has been extended to the end of 2024.

Associated costs / budget assigned to the policy?

The policy's implementation plan provides a broad cost estimate for activities but without a clear timeframe. The total costs listed in the policy comes to just under N\$ 94 million. Given the age of the implementation plan it can be assumed that the costed figure is no longer current.



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Frequently Asked Questions

What does the policy say about its implementation timeframe?

The policy document does not provide an implementation timeframe.

What does the policy say about its enforcement?

The policy does not provide information on its enforcement.

What does the policy foresee about its evaluation?

Strategy eight stipulates the development of a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the SPIE. The list of outcomes tied to strategy eight, the accompanying activities and recommendations – provide adequate guidelines for a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for the policy. Outcomes for example, include the development and successful implementation of M&E tools at the national, regional, circuit and school level and the gathering of additional data on educationally marginalised learners.

MEAC’s Education Management and Information System (EMIS) and the Directorate: Programmes and Quality Assurance (POA) are tasked with various M&E activities as outlined in the policy’s implementation plan.

What does the policy need to succeed?

The education sector has made great progress over the past years, the policy has for example lead to improvements in ECD and stakeholder cooperation in the education sector. However, government education efforts face ongoing challenges including budgetary constraints and coordination issues between the national and regional level. Given the policy’s age and lengthy implementation period it is advisable that a thorough

review is conducted of the SPIE – as recommended by the policy itself.

A comprehensive review, involving all education stakeholders will enable Namibia to update the policy to tackle new challenges and address existing shortcomings.

The policy and civil society - the policy’s impact on the day-to-day work of CSOs

The SPIE is dated however its overall goal and objectives remain relevant and provides CSOs with programmatic guidance. For example, the policy makes explicit reference to focus on and expand services for educationally marginalised communities including children of farmworkers, orphans and those with disabilities. This is useful for CSOs to prioritise and advocate for more inclusive education measures in their region and communities.

The policy has also seen the establishment of active, multi-stakeholder coordinating mechanism in the education sector. NGOs such as LifeLine/ChildLine, Development Aid from People to People (DAPP) Namibia and the Steps for Children Foundation are all actively partaking in these coordination forums and helping to implement SPIE and to improve the education sector.





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Recommendations: How can CSOs make best use of the policy?

The policy provides for a holistic and inclusive education system for all Namibian children and young people. Hence it is an ideal tool for CSOs to advocate and get involved in education matters be it at the community, regional or national level.

While dated the SPIE also offers practical recommendations in its implementation plan to advance inclusive education and to improve the education environment in the country overall to the benefit of all learners.

Besides using the policy for crucial guidance and as an advocacy tool CSOs should also utilise it to engage with government and fellow stakeholders to call for the timely, public and detailed review of the SPIE to ensure that the revised policy considers lessons learned, addresses new challenges such as the 4th industrial revolution, and replicates successful approaches.

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