Dear Dr Goetry

Report on activities following the World Dyslexia Forum, Paris, France and proposed way forward

Please receive herewith the Report on activities following the World Dyslexia Forum, Paris, France and proposed way forward as it relates to the Ministry of Education, Namibia.

The Ministry of Education herewith wishes to again express our appreciation to UNESCO and Dyslexia International for enabling a Ministry official to attend the International Forum on Dyslexia in France earlier this year. This report relates to the process of disseminating the information on Dyslexia as widely possible in Namibia.

The Ministry has committed itself to the establishment of inclusivity, education for all and learner-centred education. Moreover, in the light of equity and a pro-poor approach it is imperative to also afford learners who come from poor or marginalised households with the opportunity to be assessed for Dyslexia and receive special examination considerations and learning support.

Thanking you for your longstanding support for the Ministry of Education programmes.

Yours sincerely

Mr AM Ilukena
Permanent Secretary
Report on activities following the World Dyslexia Forum, Paris, France and proposed way forward

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1. Background and motivation

The *raison d’etre* of the education system is the learners. The following *statistics* have reference to the Namibian situation:

- Analysing the progress of the 1998 Grade 1 entrants: 30% of the 1998 cohort dropped out after the primary phase; 42% of the learners dropped out *before* the Grade 10 examinations; and an estimated 65% did not proceed to the senior secondary phase…¹
- Apparently 20% of all school-going children are repeating a grade in any given year².
- Out of a total of approximately 66 000 learners entering each grade, about 20 000 learners from Grades 1 to 9 drop-out - 12 000 from the Primary phase and 8 000 from the Junior Secondary phase³.
- At the beginning of 2007 and 2008, about 17000 Grade 10 learners were left on the street.
- Comparing Namibia’s SACMEQ II⁴ results with those of the other 13 participating countries is alarming. Namibia’s learner reading scores are third from the bottom, the teacher reading scores are below the SACMEQ average. In Mathematics Namibian learners were bottom and the teachers second from bottom.
- According to international trends it is expected that between 5 and 10% of learners have a Learning Disorder.

Evidently, learners with learning disorders have to be identified as early as possible, receive learning support and obtain special examination arrangements – as is their right - to optimally attain their educational potential.

2. Report on achievements

1. The DVD copies of the presentations made at the Forum have been distributed to the thirteen Regional offices (13), the National Institute of Educational Development (1), the Division: Special Programmes and Schools (1), the Division: Diagnostic, Advisory and Training Services (4) and 5 copies for the University of Namibia (UNAM) and its four campuses. We look forward to the use of these resources during pre-service teacher training by UNAM.

2. The Head Office School Counsellors and Regional School Counsellors (RSC) who resort under the Division: Diagnostic, Advisory and Training Programmes are responsible for assessment and “diagnosis”⁵. From 15 to 16 November 2010 – prior to the National Development and Planning Workshop – 30 School Counsellors were trained on Dyslexia by one of the Namibian experts in Dyslexia, Ms Magda Swanepoel. This introductory training was deemed necessary as training on the administration and analysis of Dyslexia Assessment Instruments is planned for May 2011.

3. The Education Officer: Learning Support from the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) and some of her team members also attended the mentioned Introducing

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¹ Dr Andrew Clegg (2008) using the Annual EMIS Statistics and the enrolments to the Grade 10 Examination.
² Mr January (2008) Chief Education Officer: NIED, Presentation during the National Education Conference.
³ EMIS (2005)
⁵ Diagnosis is a misnomer; only Psychologists registered with the Health Professions Council may diagnose. Counsellors may, under the supervision of a psychologist, “identify”.
Dyslexia workshop. It was indicated that some of the information would be used during the in-service training of teachers in Learning Support.

4. The Directorate: National Examination and Assessment (DNEA) requires that learners with Learning Disorders be subjected to a psychological assessment in order to apply for special examination arrangements. Please refer to the document Rules in terms of Section 15 of the Education Act (Act No 16 of 2001). Currently only Namibian parents that can afford private practitioners apply for special examination arrangements with DNEA. In order to create equitable opportunities for all learners with Learning Disorders the following instruments were purchased for each of the regions and for Head Office with ETSIP funding:
   - The Dyslexia Screening Test: Secondary for every region (and, additionally, for Head Office the Dyslexia Screening Test: Junior).
   - The NEALE Analysis of Reading Ability - The NEALE is used to determine the accuracy, rate (speed) and depth (comprehension) of reading performance. One NEALE for every region and for Head Office.
   - York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YORK) – As the YORK has only been published in 2009 no information is available on its appropriateness for Namibia, whereas the NEALE is used by some practitioners with success for special examination considerations with the Directorate: National Examination and Assessment. One YORK for Head Office so that the instrument can be evaluated.
   - At this time none of the RSCs is a psychometrist (i.e. a registered Psychological Counsellor or Psychologist); they will therefore only be allowed to administer the Dyslexia Screening Test and scholastic tests (Category A and Category B psychological tests), but not an IQ test (Category C).

3. Proposed way forward

1. The School Counsellors should be trained in the administration, marking of protocols, analysis and report writing as it relates to the assessment of learners with Dyslexia. It is suggested that Ms Magda Swanepoel – recognized as first-rate assessors by the DNEA and facilitator of the November 2010 workshop on Introducing Dyslexia - present this training. Dr Susanchen Fourie will assist her. A four-day workshop with a practical component is anticipated. We expect about 50 participants, which will include:
   - the School Counsellors,
   - the Education Officer: Learning Support from NIED and some of her team members,
   - selected Regional Lower Primary Advisory Teachers,
   - a representative from the Division: Special Programmes and Schools and
   - a representative from the Directorate: National Examination and Assessment.

   We hope that UNESCO might be willing to fund this workshop corollary to the UNESCO World Forum for Dyslexia.

2. Subsequent to the World Dyslexia Forum in Paris, Dyslexia International offers an Online Learning Course. This wonderful opportunity is difficult to take advantage of: many officials with the Ministry of Education, Namibia, either do not have access to the internet, has a limited bandwidth, or can use the internet only for short periods because facilities are shared. We will either have to use the Book Version when it is available, or withdraw some of the principal teacher trainers to a facility where they can use the internet, say for four full days.
The last option, although much more expensive, would clearly be more interactive and stimulating.

We would appreciate Dyslexia International and UNESCO’s views on this matter.

The Ministry has committed itself to the establishment of inclusivity, education for all and learner-centred education. Moreover, in the light of equity and a pro-poor approach it is imperative to also afford learners who come from poor or marginalised households with the opportunity to be assessed for Dyslexia and receive special examination considerations and learning support.

Ms Susanchen Fourie (DPhil)
Educational Psychologist

Ms Edda Bohn
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