

2016/2017

BUDGET

CHILDREN AND THE
NAMIBIAN BUDGET:
BASIC EDUCATION



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This is one in a series of four briefing papers, initiated by UNICEF, that examine the extent to which the Namibian Government budgets have addressed the needs of children in the country. Other briefs focus on social assistance and welfare; health and sanitation; and the macro picture – a general overview of the socio-economic situation in Namibia and the budgeting process.

This brief aims to highlight the progress made thus far in

child-centred budgeting within the basic education sector and identify key areas for sector policy and financing reform moving forward.

Whilst reference is made to tertiary education, it is not a focus area of this brief. In 2015, the Ministry of Education was split into the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) and the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation.

1.5%

Allocation to pre-primary education as share of total basic education budget, 2016/17

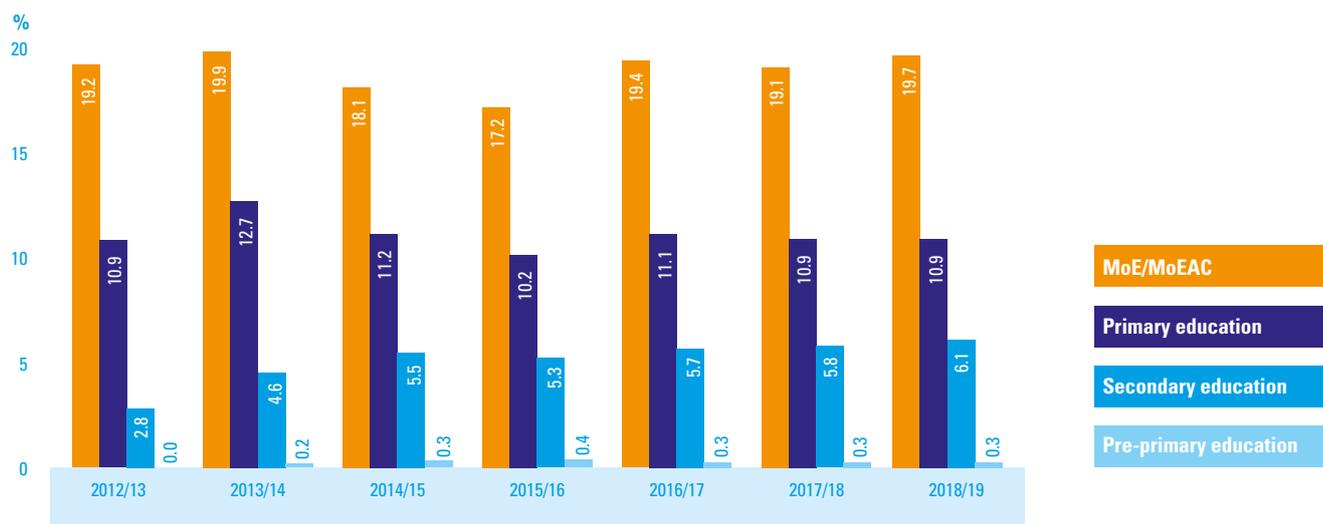


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KEY MESSAGES

- Education continues to receive the largest share of the national budget, its share increasing by almost 2% over the past five years. Namibia introduced universal primary education (UPE) in 2013 and universal secondary education (USE) in 2016. Despite this, drop-out and grade-repeater rates are a serious concern. With the introduction of UPE and USE, there is a need to look at per capita expenditure that will promote pro-poor financing of education whilst not compromising existing models that are working (i.e. school development funds for well-resourced schools). Operational expenditure per learner allocation can be improved through proper data analysis and planning to account for regionally specific challenges, such as relative wealth of the community to which the school caters and remoteness of schools.
- Access to early childhood development (ECD) services and pre-primary education remains limited. There is an immediate need to increase budget allocation to ECD and pre-primary education. Access to ECD and pre-primary education is imperative for curbing the high drop-out and grade-repetition rates, especially in light of the education budget's forecasted decrease over the next two years. Further to this, considerable investments should be made in educators' and pre-primary school teachers' qualifications.
- The challenge of ensuring access to education without compromising quality may be addressed through sound data collection and data-driven planning.
- Improved usage of educational data for financial planning and responding to underperforming regions, circuits and schools can be achieved if:
 - National, regional, circuit and school level data are compatible for improved tracking;
 - Financial auditing systems at the school, circuit, regional and national levels are strengthened to reduce wastage; and
 - Clear and regularly updated guidelines on regional, circuit and school level allocation of funds are provided and complemented with sound accountability mechanisms.
- The learner-to-teacher ratio increased slightly between 2012 and 2015 with some regional variations, while insufficient attention has been accorded to actual class size. The policy on reducing the learner-to-teacher ratio needs to be examined against the backdrop of actual class size in Namibia, with a careful examination of what implications the class size in schools vs the learner to teacher ratio has for infrastructure planning and staffing norms.
- Access to education for children with disabilities and special needs has improved. However, it remains an area in need of attention. Particular attention should be accorded to budget allocations for learners with disabilities and special educational needs. Planning is severely hampered when figures from different datasets vary significantly. This compromises adequate financial planning and financial allocations.

Figure 1. Allocation to education and the three sublevels as share of total budget, 2012/13–2018/19



Source: Economic Association of Namibia analysis based on Ministry of Finance estimates of revenue and expenditure (various years).
 Note: The graph excludes allocations to higher education, training and innovation.

Key indicators

Allocation to basic education (excluding higher education) as share of total budget, 2016/17	19.4%
Allocation to pre-primary education as share of total basic education budget, 2016/17	1.5%
Allocation to primary education as share of total basic education budget, 2016/17	57.5%
Allocation to secondary education as share of total basic education budget, 2016/17	29.3%
Allocation to personnel as share of total basic education budget, 2016/17	71.1%
Pre-primary education public spending per learner, 2015	N\$7,283
Primary education public spending per learner, 2015	N\$15,253
Secondary education public spending per learner, 2015	N\$17,860

EDUCATION AND BUDGET ALLOCATION

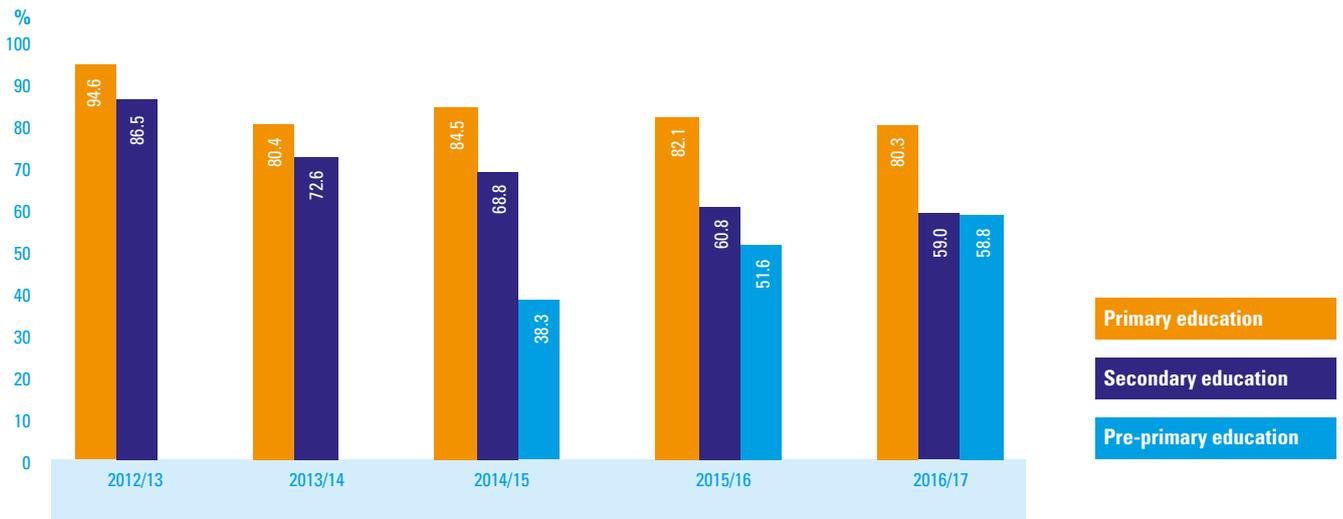
Education has been a government priority since independence in 1990. The sector, comprising both basic and higher education, continues to receive the largest budgetary allocations of all votes exceeding 20% over the years. A total of 23.6% was allocated to education (including arts and culture) in 2012/13. This share has since increased and is expected to reach 25.3% in 2018/19. The budget for education was equivalent to 10.6% of the country’s gross domestic product in 2015. Between 74.0% and 79.3% of this total education budget is dedicated to basic education, arts and culture, which includes pre-primary, primary and secondary education, with the remaining amount being allocated to higher education, training and innovation.

As Figure 1 illustrates, primary education receives the largest portion of the total budget, amounting to 10.9% in 2012/13, and increasing to 12.7% a year later. It has fluctuated since then between 10% and 11%. Pre-primary education receives 0.3% in 2016/17 of the total government budget. This low allocation is a concern and can be considered to be an impediment to learner achievement and low educational outcomes later on. Secondary education’s share is expected to rise from 2.8% (2012/13) to 6.1% (2018/19). This is due to the introduction of USE.

Education accounts for 37.6% of all filled positions in the public sector. It is the most labour-intensive ministry, with wages and salaries absorbing 71.1% of the ministry’s budget in 2016/17, down from 75.3% in 2012/13. The share of personnel expenditure is highest for primary education (80.3%), followed by secondary and pre-primary education, with 59.0% and 58.8% respectively (see Figure 2). Teachers occupy 67.4% of all



Figure 2. Personnel expenditure as share of total allocation to pre-primary, primary and secondary education in percentages, 2012/13 2016/17



Source: UNICEF analysis based on MoEAC data.

Before the introduction of free education through UPE and USE, parents were obliged to contribute towards school development funds (SDF). The mandatory contributions to the SDF have been abolished in order to remove barriers to education for children whose parents cannot afford to make the contribution. Despite government funding through UPE and USE, schools still require additional funding to deliver quality outcomes in education, hence the continued need for SDFs through voluntary contributions by parents and other community members.

filled posts in the ministry. While almost all established positions for primary education teachers are filled (98.0%), only two out of three positions for pre-primary phases are filled and 87.1% of posts for secondary teachers. Of the teachers employed at primary school level, 12.5% have no formal teacher training. At the secondary school phase, this number drops sharply, but it is still above 5%.

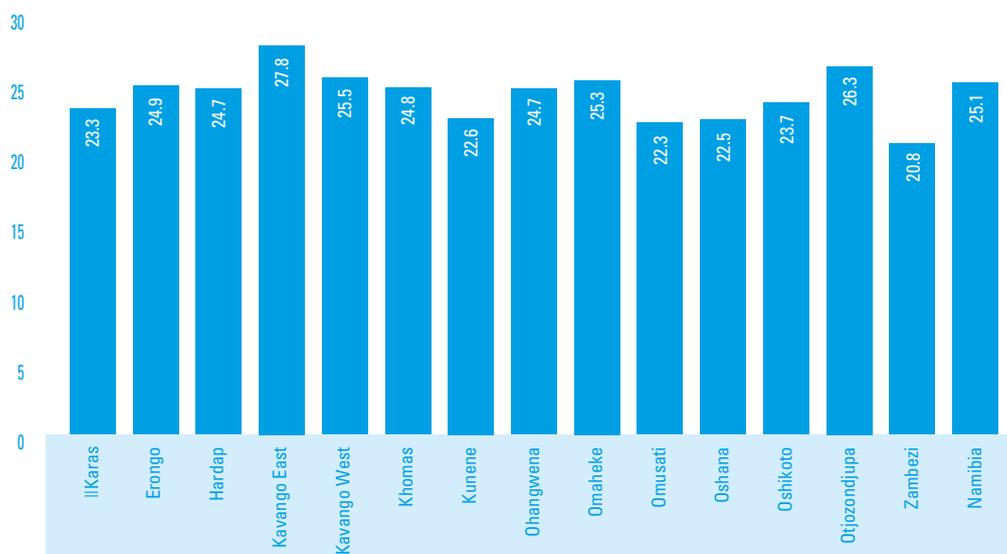
Between 78% (2012/13) and 102% (2015/16) of the allocation to the ministry was actually spent. This shows that the government is able to accommodate overspending when necessary. More worrying than the 2% overspend are the large deviations from planned spending. Therefore, a focus on quality data analysis and the use of data for planning is needed to improve the soundness of financial management and resource allocation in education. For three out of the four years, personnel expenditure exceeded the allocated amount, while the execution rate for capital projects varied between 57% (2012/13) and 93% (2015/16). Quality data analysis and the use of data for planning is essential in addressing the discrepancy in allocation of funds to personnel compared to that for capital projects, as

well as efficient spending on these two areas. Primary education overspent during 2013/14 and 2015/16 by between 2% and 13%, while spending for secondary education fluctuated between under- and overspending.

The growing share allocated to primary and secondary education can be attributed to the government's decision to abolish the compulsory parental contribution to the school development fund (SDF) when introducing UPE in 2013 and USE in 2016 (see box). The abolition of compulsory contributions to the SDF eases access to education, but there is a need to look at per capita expenditure that will promote pro-poor financing, and not compromise existing models that are working (i.e. voluntary contributions to development funds of well-resourced schools). The N\$500 per capita amount for USE should afford the poor access to education, but the abolishment of voluntary development funds at schools in well-resourced areas challenges these schools to maintain auxiliary support services and additional activities that support learning and development.

The budgetary allocation per learner in primary (N\$15,253) and secondary (N\$17,860) education in 2015/16 has seen a significant increase since 2012. Allocation per secondary learner more than tripled during this period and allocation per primary learner increased at a rate of 1.5. Pre-primary education has an allocation of less than half of that received by primary and secondary education, even though enrolment in pre-primary education more than doubled, from 17,572 to 37,148 learners, over the same period. This indicates the need for improved planning in pre-primary education to achieve a beneficial balance in terms of learning and development requirements, to ensure a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

Figure 3. Learner-to-teacher ratio per region



Source: UNICEF analysis based on MoEAC data.

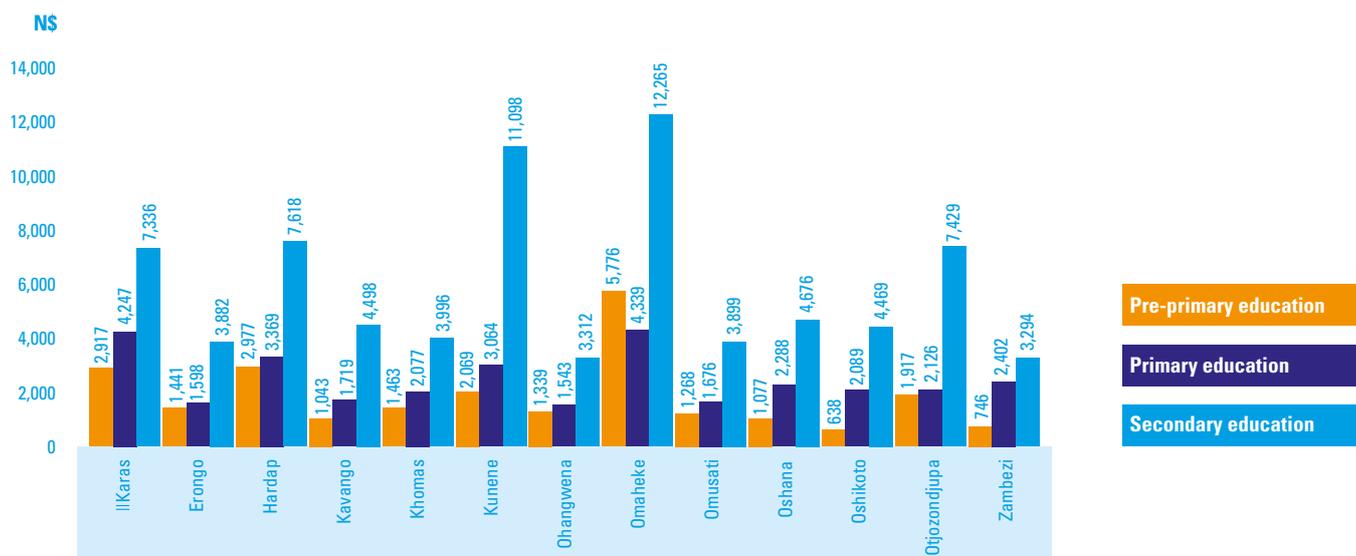
LEARNER-TO-TEACHER RATIO

The learner-to-teacher ratio (LTR) increased slightly from 25.1 in 2012 to 25.5 in 2016. This includes pre-primary, primary and secondary education. The ratio ranges between 22.8 (Zambezi region) and 31.7 (Kavango East region). The Zambezi region saw the largest decline in this ratio, from 25.1 in 2011 to 22.8, while the Kunene region saw the largest increase, from 24.3 to 26.1. The national learner-to-teacher-ratio is within the required range of 35:1 for primary and 30:1 for secondary, but at least 9% of schools have a suboptimal LTR, meaning more than 30 learners per teacher as per MoEAC standards.

It has to be pointed out that LTR and class size are different concepts. While LTR is found by dividing the number of learners by all the teachers in the system, including non-class teaching staff such as administrative principals, resource teachers and home-school teachers, average class size is computed by dividing the number of learners by the number of class teachers only. Importantly, reducing the ratio of learners to teachers does not necessarily mean a reduction in class size. The main policy initiative in Namibia in recent years has been to change the LTR and not to reduce class size. Given that anecdotal evidence suggests that many classrooms in Namibia are overcrowded, this policy thrust requires a more nuanced analysis with implications for physical infrastructure and staffing norms.

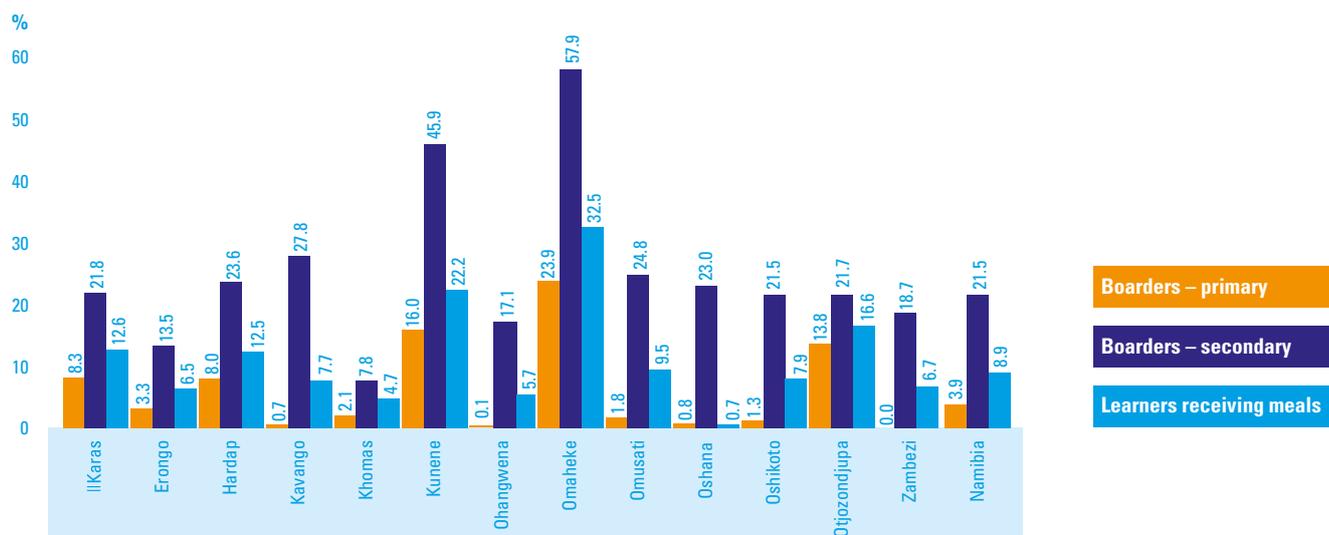


Figure 4. Allocation to the region per learner in NS, 2016



Source: Economic Association of Namibia calculation based on educational management information system statistics and MoEAC financial information.

Figure 5. Share of learners in hostels (boarders) and of learners receiving meals in hostels



Source: Economic Association of Namibia calculation based on MoEAC information.

OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURE

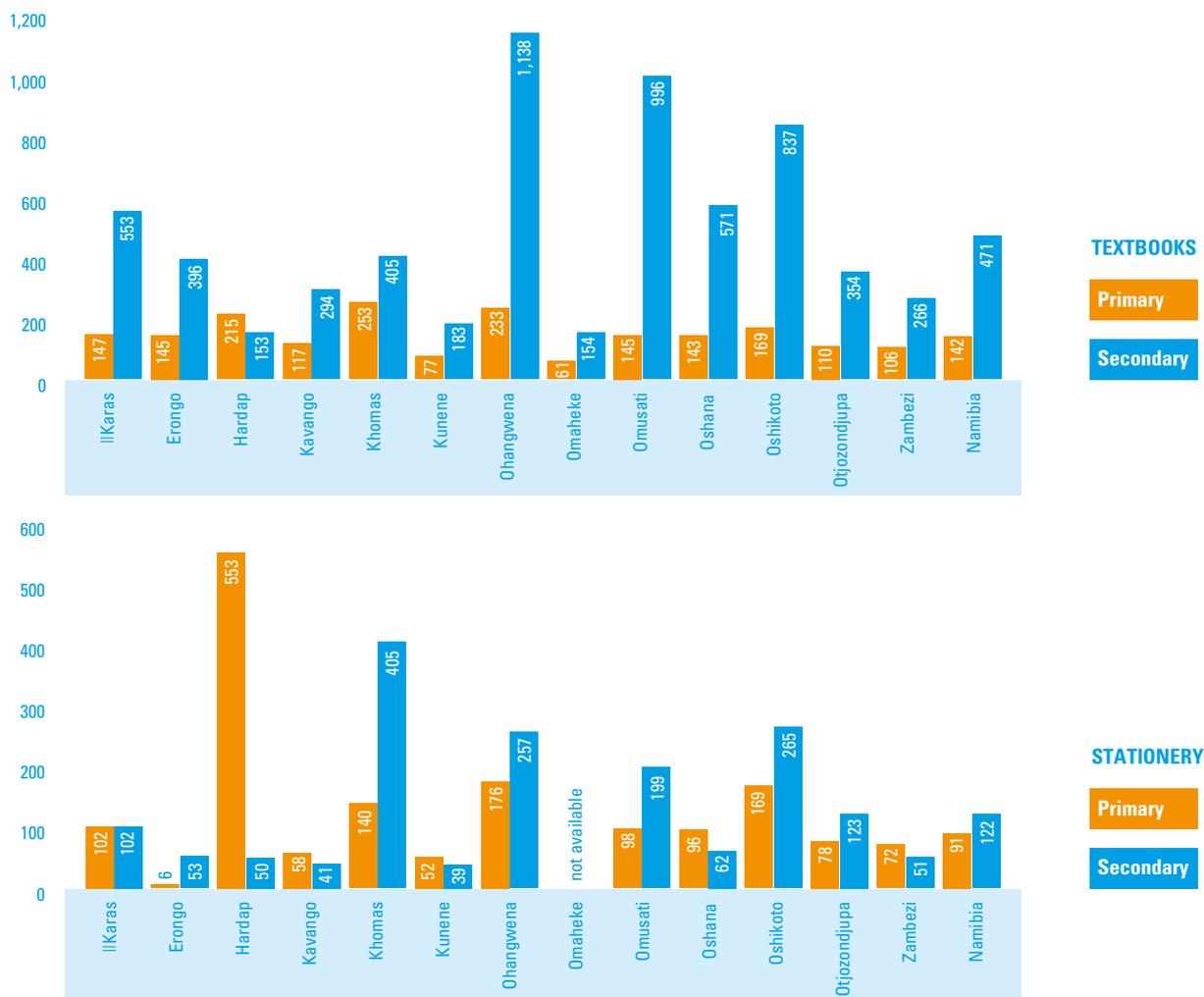
OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURE AS A FUNCTION OF BOARDING LEARNERS

The MoEAC has delegated certain functions to the regions, which receive financial resources from central government for textbooks, stationery, catering at school hostels, etc. The regions receive 14% and 28% of the primary and secondary education operational budgets respectively. On average, in terms of operational budgets, N\$1,508 was allocated per learner for pre-primary, N\$2,216 for primary and N\$4,798 for secondary education in 2016. However, there are

large variations in the allocations per learner across regions, as Figure 4 illustrates. For primary education the amount varies between N\$1,543 (Ohangwena) and N\$4,339 (Omaheke).

For secondary education the range is from N\$3,294 (Zambezi) to N\$12,265 (Omaheke). These wide ranges for primary and secondary education can be explained by the percentage of learners being accommodated in school hostels, as the fund allocation per learner for those accommodated in hostels includes boarding fees. In regions where there are large distances between homes and schools, there are more hostels, and therefore those regions receive higher-per-learner

Figure 6. Allocation per learner for textbooks and stationery in primary and secondary schools per region, in N\$



Source: Economic Association of Namibia calculation based on MoEAC information.

allocations. This trend is evident in the case of Omaheke, which has the highest-per-learner allocation, as well as the highest percentage of boarding learners at 23.9% and 57.9% for primary and secondary education respectively. The same is true for the Kunene region, which comes in second on both counts.

The Ohangwena and Zambezi regions are at the other end of the scale. There are no hostels for primary learners in the Zambezi region and only one hostel in the Ohangwena region, while 18.7% and 17.1% respectively of secondary learners in these regions are boarding at hostels. The Khomas region does not follow this trend: it has the lowest share of boarding learners at 5.2% and 4.7% respectively, but it still receives a considerable amount of funding. Since the majority of funds received from the central government are spent on hostels and utilities, it is possible that the Khomas region has high utility expenses (water and electricity).

TEXTBOOKS AND STATIONERY

In 2016, 8.4% of the total allocation to the regions was allocated for the purchase of textbooks and 3.8% for stationery. Regions spent between 3.5% and 9.7% of their funds on textbooks for primary education and between 3.4% and 15.4% of their allocations on textbooks for secondary education. The share used for stationery differs between regions as well. Erongo spends the lowest share in primary education on stationery (0.4%), while Oshikoto spends the highest (7.7%). Kunene allocates 0.8% of its funds for secondary education on stationery compared to 5.3% used by the Khomas region. The differences in the percentage allocation to textbooks and stationery may be explained by the number of learners in hostels. If there are comparatively more learners in hostels, more resources need to be allocated to hostels, thus reducing the share that can be allocated to stationery.



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INFRASTRUCTURE

Development expenditure rose from 4.1% in 2012/13 to 6.6% in 2016/17, and it is expected to grow further to 8.2% in 2018/19. The funds are mainly used for construction, renovation and improvements of buildings. Of funds allocated for the construction of physical facilities, 15.4% was specifically allocated to basic education facilities, and 8.9% was specifically allocated to nationwide renovations. The construction of schools has eased access to schools. Nearly half (48.6%) of learners had access to the nearest primary school within less than a kilometre in 2009/10, up from 45.5% in 2003/04. Over the same period, access to secondary and combined schools within less than a kilometre improved from 20.9% to 24.9% and from 19.2% to 36.3% respectively. However, children in rural areas, in particular, still have to walk long distances to reach their schools, often without an adequate meal in the morning (see the brief on social assistance and welfare for information about the school feeding programme). Less than a third of learners in rural areas have access to primary schools within less than a kilometre distance, and only every fifth learner has access to a secondary school within this distance.

Despite the improved access to school, school attendance by children aged between 6 and 18 years dropped between 2001 and 2011, from 79.3% to 76.8%.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES

According to *School Drop-Out and Out of School Children in Namibia: A National Review* (UNICEF and MOEAC, 2015), more than 21,000 Namibian children aged

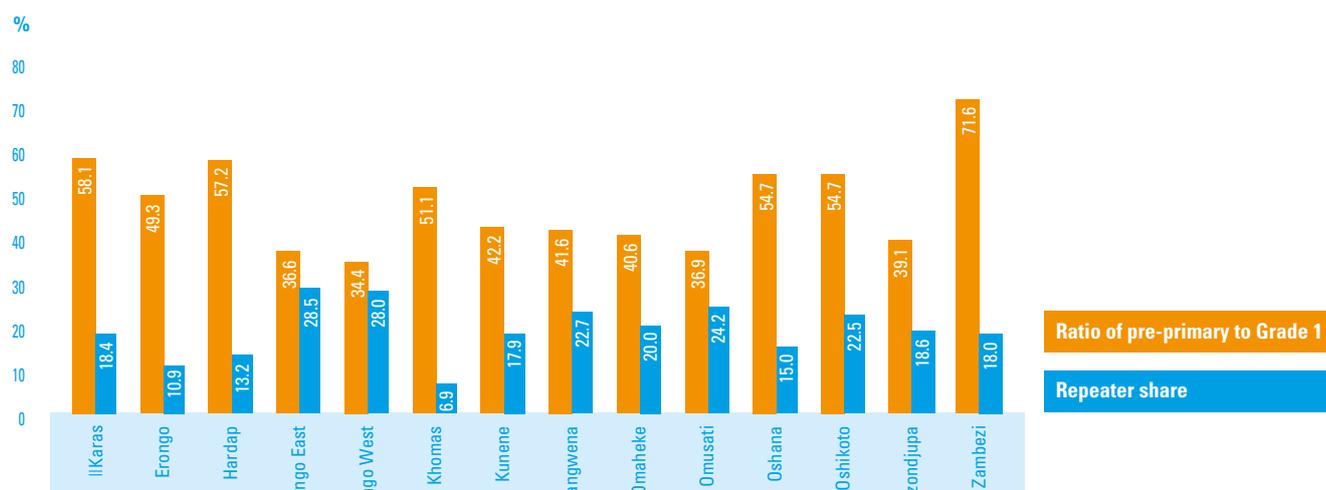
6 to 19 have one or multiple disabilities. Only 65% of these children attend school, a much lower number than the 79% attendance figure for children without disability. The drop-out rates of children with and children without disability do not vary much, but there is significant difference between the two when comparing the percentages of children who have never attended school. Of children with disability, 16% have never attended school, while the comparative number for children without disability is only 6%. Since there are only nine special schools in Namibia, which cater for only 3,020 of children with disabilities, most of the 21,000 disabled children do not have access to suitable schools. It should be noted that datasets differ significantly regarding the scope of the problem and higher-quality data control and reconciliation are required to address the important issue of access to education for children with disabilities.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Access to pre-primary education remains limited. Only 40.7% of learners in Grade 1 are enrolled in pre-primary education, with great differences between regions. Likewise, funding per learner varies greatly between regions, ranging from N\$638 in the Oshikoto region to N\$5,776 in the Omaheke region. Although the Zambezi region receives the second lowest amount per pre-primary learner, at 71.6% the region has the highest pre-primary enrolment rate. On the other hand, the enrolment rate in the Omaheke region stands at only 40.6%, which is the fifth lowest enrolment rate.

According to the Population and Housing Census of 2011, access to ECD centres is even more constrained. Only 13.3% out of a total of 284,698 children between 0 and 4 years of age attended ECD centres in 2011.

Figure 7. Ratio of pre-primary learners to Grade 1 learners and share of repeaters in Grade 1 by region in percentages, 2016



Source: UNICEF calculation based on education management information system 2016 statistics.

Children living in rural areas are left behind, with only 9.8% being enrolled in ECD centres compared to 19.4% in urban areas. According to the 2016 Disability Report, children with disabilities are not disadvantaged regarding access to ECD centres, since 13% of them attended ECD centres in 2011, almost the same share as for all other children. The data suggests that there is a need to increase the number of ECD centres and schools with pre-primary classes in order to drastically improve access and eventually improve educational outcomes. This can be seen by looking at the positive record of a good pre-primary to Grade 1 ratio, which is discussed below.

ECD centres are run by communities or private organisations. However, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) provides support. While 19.87% of the total national budget was allocated to primary education, 0.17% and 0.01% were budgeted for pre-primary and for ECD respectively. The MGECW supports 806 educators with monthly subsidies, up from 529 a year earlier, and targets 1,006 out of 3,340 by 2018/19. In addition, the ministry intends to train an additional 560 educators over the next three years to bring the number to 2,402. Based on 37,865 children attending ECD centres, every trained educator would need to take care of 84 children. This raises serious concerns over projected budgets and available budgets to implement quality ECD programmes since this child-to-educator ratio does not compare favourably to international standards.

At the time of the development of this brief, ECD falls under the mandate of the MGECW, whereas pre-primary education is the function of the MoEAC.

INPUT VS OUTPUT

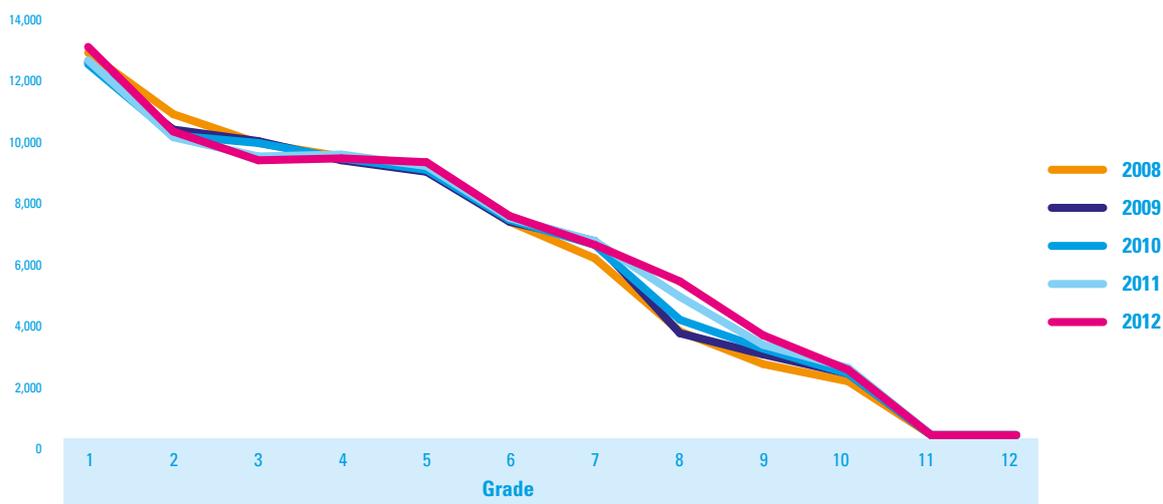
Despite the prioritisation of education in Namibia, the educational outcomes do not meet expectations. Drop-out and repeater rates remain high. The 2016 Out-of-School Report reveals that 11% of primary aged, 18% of junior secondary aged and 34% of tertiary aged children were not in school in 2011. The situation will most likely change somewhat since the government introduced UPE and USE.

According to the ministry's statistics for 2016, 19.8% of learners enrolled in Grade 1 are repeaters. More research certainly needs to be done, but a brief analysis of the repeater rate for Grade 1 and the ratio of pre-primary learners to Grade 1 learners suggests that repeater rates are lower in regions that have a higher ratio of Grade 1 learners who attended pre-primary prior to entering Grade 1 (see Figure 7). The average share of repeaters in Grade 1 for regions with a ratio above 50% is 15.6%, compared to 21.3% for regions with a ratio of below 50%.

A comparison of the repeater rate (see Figure 7) and the allocation per learner (see Figure 5) seems to suggest that the above average allocation per learner results in a below average repeater rate.

There are, however, some outliers. Primary learners in the Erongo region receive the second lowest allocation per learner (N\$1,598), but Erongo has the second lowest repeater rate. Khomas has the lowest repeater rate of 6.9%, but is far from receiving the highest allocation per learner. It should be noted that Khomas and Erongo are wealthier regions and learners in these regions generally have better access to auxiliary educational resources, even though these resources are not directly

Figure 8. Enrolment by grade and year for category 1 schools (most remote)



Source: *The Impact of Incentives for the Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Teachers in Namibia’s Remote Schools*, UNICEF and MOEAC, Windhoek, 2014.

provided for in the per capita learner allocation. This is confirmed in the report on teacher incentives (UNICEF and MOEAC, 2014), which shows that the more remote a school is, the lower the percentage of Grade 1 learners who will survive until Grade 12. In the most remote category (see Figure 8), this survival figure is an astounding 1%, while for the least remote category, the survival rate is 58%.

At the other end of the schooling phase, enrolled

learners in Grade 11 (upper secondary education) in 2016 account for only 62.4% of learners who were enrolled in Grade 10 (lower secondary education) in 2015. There are great variations in the progression rates between regions, ranging from 39.6% (Hardap) to 80.6% (Oshikoto).

The variations between regions may be partly explained by some 2015 Grade 10 learners moving to a different region to enrol in Grade 11 in 2016.

