



Republic of Namibia

A large yellow arch graphic that frames the central text. At the bottom of the arch is a small dark red oval.

Textbook Policy
March 2008

“Building a Learning Nation”

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Explanation of terms

Some terms used in this draft policy require a brief explanation.

Book provision: denotes the supply of learning support materials, including textbooks, to the education sector.

Learning Support Materials (LSMs): LSMs and textbooks are both used in this policy as terms to describe learning materials. LSMs is regarded as a more generic term and includes non-print learning materials (e.g. materials for the study of science and design and technology and computer software such as CD-Roms).

Supply chain: This is an expression for the processes involved in bringing textbooks and other learning support materials from the hands of the author (or creator) to the end user and for linkages between author and consumers (in this case learners and teachers).

Textbook: refers specifically to printed curriculum materials in book format.

The Vision of the Textbook Policy

The Textbook Policy aims to pave the way forward for learners in formal education to have equitable access to learning support materials (LSMs) to develop to their full potential in order to make a meaningful contribution to economic development.

Mission of the Textbook Policy

To plan and implement an integrated, sustainable and coordinated learning support materials (LSMs) supply chain that will provide the best value, curriculum relevant textbooks and other LSMs in an equitable way to all learners and teachers. This will have a direct and measurable impact on the quality of learning opportunity for all learners.

Introduction

The National Textbook Policy was prepared following a review of current textbook and other learning materials development procedures and practices which included field visits and wide consultation with all stakeholders including MoE central and regional officials, representatives of commercial publishing and distribution companies, school personnel and local communities.

Background and Context

Textbook provision: the international context

Textbooks often determine what learners learn and decide what they should be taught. Teachers base their lessons on and choose lesson content from what textbooks contain. They are frequently the only reading matter students have access to and examinations are often to a considerable extent based on an ability to reproduce what is to be found in textbooks.

Without a textbook, many teachers may not be able to teach effectively. In many developing countries, where teachers might be inadequately trained, the textbook is an indispensable resource. It is often perceived as the sole authority for what is to be taught, whereas in developed countries where a greater variety of books and reading materials are available, it may only be a supplement to learning.

Research has shown that textbooks are a cost-effective means of improving educational achievement, especially in the short to medium term. In countries where reading materials are scarce, they have an important role to play. Learning can be enhanced even when there is only one mediocre textbook for every 2-3 students. Even when not mediated by a qualified and experienced teacher, textbooks can have a significant impact on educational achievement.

The importance of book development as an essential pre-requisite for social and economic development is neglected nationally.

The development of materials in support of curriculum implementation is a complicated and time consuming exercise, fraught with difficulties compared with, say, writing and publishing a novel.

An important driver for putting this new policy in place at this time is the planned six-fold increase in government investment in LSMs over the next five years through Phase 1 of the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP). This policy will determine the nature of that essential relationship with publishers which will be modified to improve the performance of the textbook supply chain so that it performs better, provides better value for money by reducing unit costs, and will deliver in a cost effective way, relevant learning support materials on an equitable basis.

Providing textbooks to schools

Textbooks are developed by publishing houses in the private sector, following the curriculum and syllabi developed by the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED).

The textbooks for teaching in Namibia's educationally recognized 13 languages of instruction are developed by the commercial publishers in collaboration with NIED, GTZ (Afrila) and the curriculum unit of the MoE. All textbooks in education require the evaluation and approval of NIED's curriculum panels. The approved textbook titles are listed in the official catalogue which is sent to schools annually from which schools select books to order. Book capitation allowances are set by the regional education offices (REOs) for the schools in their region, but vary widely suggesting that REOs use different formula for calculating the per capita book allowance.

Book orders are reviewed by school inspectors at the circuit (district) level, consolidated at the 13 regional education offices, and sent to the contracted distributors. They raise proforma quotations and return them to REOs who check them against the school book budget and then submit to the Directorate of General Services of the MoE for procurement. The textbooks are issued to teachers who use them in the classroom as their principal instructional tools. At schools where there is adequate supply of textbooks, teachers issue the books to their learners to take books home for study and homework.

Textbook supply chain: current operational status

The three key stages in the textbook supply chain are evaluation and selection, procurement and delivery and payment.

The provision of textbooks is inadequate and seriously constrains the quality of education, especially at schools in disadvantaged and poor communities, where buying a textbook is not an option as these are not easily available.

English, mathematics and the sciences are identified as critical subjects that affect students' overall performance.

Policy Framework

Policy Goal

The policy goal is to direct the effective and efficient planning and management of the national selection, provision and distribution of textbooks and other LSMs so as to achieve the highest standards, best value and equity in the selection, procurement and delivery of all LSMs to assist and facilitate quality learning across the curriculum for the benefit of all learners and teachers.

The overall objective of the policy is to ultimately achieve a textbook to learner ratio of 1:1 for core subjects in the first instance. At primary level this would mean eight textbooks per learner and at secondary level thirteen.

With the introduction of curriculum changes over the past few years and the lack of information on current textbooks inventories at school level it is difficult to project the investment needed to reach and sustain the ideal ratios. In future the revision of curricula and textbooks will be aligned.

Guiding Principles

All aspects of LSMs management and the provision of LSMs to schools need to acknowledge the integrity of an integrated LSMs supply chain cycle. LSMs, their selection, procurement, distribution, use, coordination and management are central to improving educational standards, equality of access and improving the efficiency of the system. With the right LSMs, in the right place at the right time, teachers can be expected to provide a holistic teaching and learning environment which responds to the needs of the curriculum. In the process they will be providing all learners with the essential foundation literacy and numeracy skills that they need to gain full benefit from their educational programme and gain the skills to compete effectively in a knowledge-based economy.

All learners, irrespective of any special educational and other needs they may have, should have access to relevant and appropriate LSMs. The essential LSMs will be specified in the curricula.

Policy Objectives

- To promote the cost effective and timely supply of good quality, relevant curriculum materials to all learners and teachers as a basis for the teaching and learning of skills vital to personal, social and national development in a knowledge-based economy.
- To ensure equal access to quality LSMs for all learners in all schools, in all regions.
- To ensure that the textbook supply chain (procurement and distribution) is managed efficiently and transparently and provides best value for money whilst catalysing the growth of the indigenous publishing industry so as to contribute to the improvement in the quality of educational opportunities and learning outcomes.
- To improve the efficiency of educational management and administration at every stage of the supply chain process.
- To ensure that the best value and educationally relevant LSMs are made available to all learners.
- To broaden access to LSMs and other reading materials to improve the reading culture in schools.
- To ensure that those learners with special educational needs are catered for.
- To ensure that LSMs are attractive and durable and reflect current, regional and international perspectives and approaches.

- To increase the annual per-learner allocation for LSMs.
- To establish an autonomous and independent National Textbook Board whose members will represent a wide range of stakeholders

Priority Policy Strategies

The following strategies have been identified to achieve the objectives of the National Textbook Policy:

- Establishment of a **National Textbook Development Board** to provide the authority to govern all aspects of national textbook development. It could have a similar role to that of the National Examination and Assessment Board.
- Establishment of a **supply chain management unit** within the Directorate of Programmes and Quality Assurance to take responsibility for ensuring all operational stages and logistical processes of the textbook supply chain are working in a synchronised and effective way.
- Provision of **mother-tongue literacy materials**.
- Teacher training and support especially for Grades 1–3 in order to improve functional literacy standards and the utilisation of LSMs.
- Reviews by the National Institute for Educational Development of the **existing policy on the curriculum reform** cycle and its articulation with the timetable for new textbook development, field testing and publication.
- Review of the policy on evaluation of textbooks by subject committees; and the purpose, design and functionality of the **annual textbook catalogue**.
- Changed MoE **tendering and contracting of textbook distributors** including the introduction of a minimum of three-year tender in recognition of the major investment needed to establish efficient distribution, administration and logistics that must be amortised over a reasonable period.
- Use of the latest Education Management Information System (EMIS) 15-day school survey enrolment data as well as the annual census to calculate the **textbooks capitation allowance** for schools based on an agreed transparent standardised formula and ring fenced.
- Modify collection of data for EMIS to **monitor availability, utilisation and distribution** of relevant textbooks annually.
- Establishment of **performance and service standards** with regard to all aspects of order processing and administration and the introduction of a system to monitor them.
- Engagement at regular intervals of a textbook development expert **to review and evaluate** the effectiveness of the field testing and use of textbooks provided to schools.
- Improvements in **teacher:learner textbook ratios** so as to achieve a 1:1 ratio for core subjects by 2013-2014.
- Standard **stock control practices** apply to textbooks and LSMs.

The policy will be implemented with assistance from ETSIP for in-country advisory support, on-the-job training, operational costs and textbook procurement.