



"Sarah"

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CHAPTER 3

Education and training

Article 14



Our children are our future. Members of the Ama Buruxa cultural group from Maltahohe participate in cyber dialogues during 16 Days of Activism campaign - Johannesburg, December 2007.

Photo: Mariette Van Dyk

KEY POINTS

- Namibia has achieved gender parity at primary, secondary and tertiary levels well before the 2015 deadline.
- With a score of 99 % on the SGDI measuring gender parity in education and training, Namibia is in the top five of the best performing countries in this sector.
- At 64%, the citizens gave a significantly lower score than the SGDI based on their perceptions of the country's performance in promoting gender equality in education. Perhaps this is because of the qualitative nuances such as gender violence in schools, quality of education among other factors not captured by the SGDI.
- Literacy levels between women and men are close at 88% and 89% respectively.
- Girls are performing better than boys in all levels of schooling.
- Namibia has a pregnancy policy to reintegrate girls who become pregnant back into the education system.
- At 65%, Namibia has more female primary school teachers.
- All schools have a life-skills programme that includes gender and HIV and AIDS.
- Retention is an issue; girls drop out due to teenage pregnancy, early marriage and HIV/AIDS. Girls and women tend to be responsible for caring for sick family members.
- Gender-based violence in school is a serious problem. Many pupils at all levels suffer physical and sexual abuse in school. Teachers are usually responsible.

Table 3.1: SGDI and CSC on education

	SGDI	CSC
Scores	99%	64%
Rank	4	10

Table 3.1 shows that Namibia has achieved gender parity at primary, secondary and tertiary levels well before the 2015 deadline. With a score on the SGDI of 99 %, the country is in the top five of best performing SADC countries in the education and training sector.

As the SGDI captures only enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary levels and not the quality of education, it is not surprising the citizens do not give a high score. Rather they gave a score of 64%, placing Namibia at number 10 out of the 15 SADC countries according to the CSC. There are still many challenges in the education and training sector such as gender violence in schools, teenage pregnancies and retention.

Background

The Constitution states in its Article 20 (2) that primary education shall be compulsory and the State shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia by establishing and maintaining state schools at which primary education is provided for free.¹

In conjunction with the goals set by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 2 and Namibia's Vision 2030, the objective of engendering all levels of education no later than 2015 appears more likely for Namibia.

Girls drop out of school due to pregnancies and take on caregiving roles at home in most households is prevalent. These girls become mothers at an early age, given away by parents to marry, while boys will be encouraged to continue with their education. In some religious communities, the family might compel the boy to also drop out of school as he is considered an embarrassment to the clan for impregnating someone out of wedlock. This affects their performance at school.

There is an Education Act in place to guide education in the country.



Our children are our future. Former councillor and teacher Karolina Pieters with her class of 2006 in Matohé. Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

Enrolment and retention



The Protocol provides that state parties shall enact laws that promote equal access to and retention in primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and non-formal education.

Table 3.2: Access and enrolment in education sector: 2009

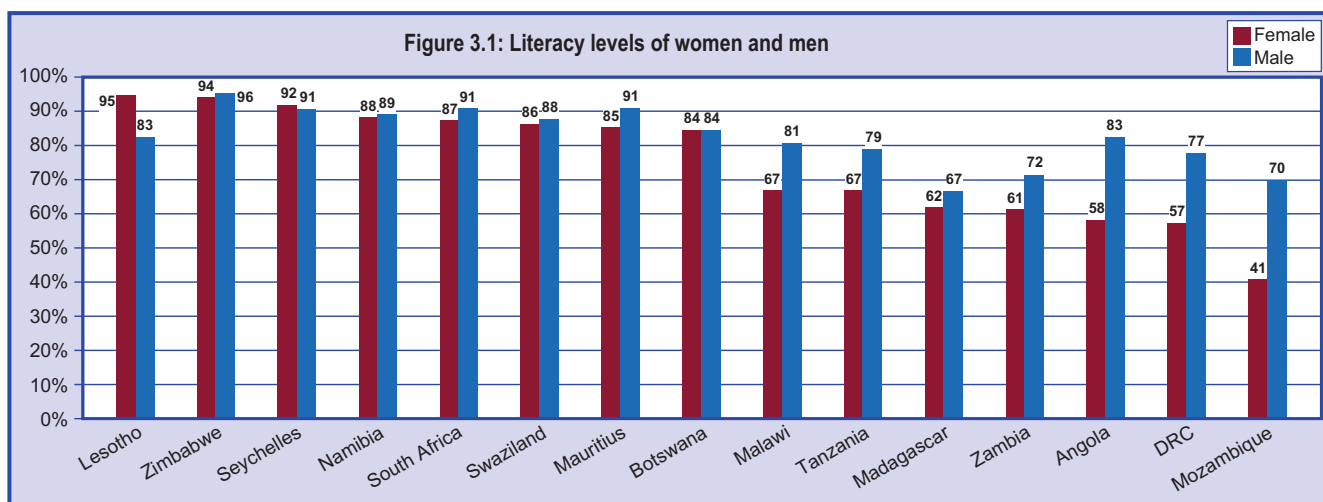
Type of Data	% Women/girls	% Men/boys
Literacy	88%	89%
Enrolment		
Primary School (2008)	49%	51%
Secondary School (2008)	53%	47%
Tertiary level *	59%	41%
Vocational	69%	31%

Sources: Namibia Country Report 1995-2009 On the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action; Being +15; Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare; January 2010.

* The numbers for enrolment at Tertiary level are from three institutions, University of Namibia, Polytechnic of Namibia and The International University of Management.

¹ Namibia Constitution.

Literacy

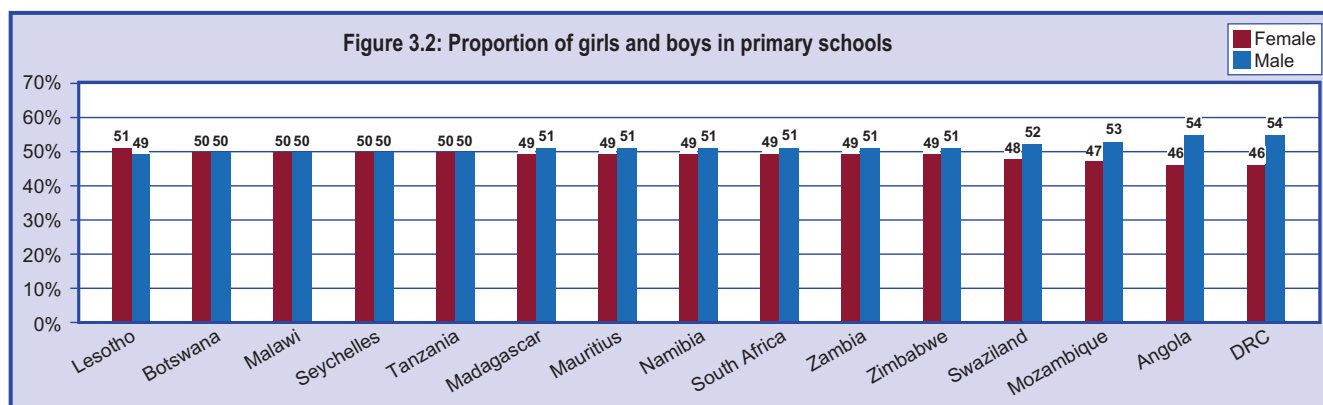


Source: Gender Links Regional Barometer Report, 2012.

Namibia along with all other SADC countries except Seychelles, have lower literacy levels for women: Figure 3.1 shows that with the exception of Seychelles, women in Southern Africa have lower literacy levels than men. The gap between women and men in

narrow in Namibia but is very worrying in some SADC countries. For example in Mozambique, only 33% of women are literate compared to 57% of men. Likewise, DRC, Angola, Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi, and Madagascar all have significant gender literacy gaps.

Primary school



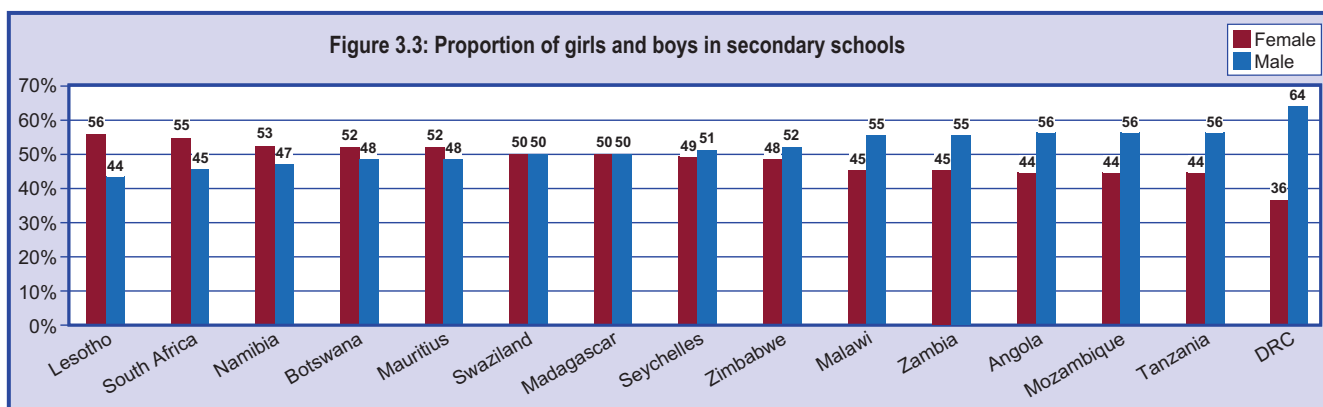
Source: Gender Links Regional Barometer Report, 2012.

Namibia almost achieving gender parity: Primary education continues to be Southern Africa (and Africa's) greatest success story. Namibia is almost at gender parity in primary school along with most SADC countries, there are now roughly equal numbers of boys and girls at primary schools. The widest gaps are in Angola and

DRC, where girl learners still comprise 46% and 45% of primary school-goers in classrooms respectively.

In primary school, it is almost a 50/50 split in the numbers of male and female learners, with 50.5% male learners and 49.5% female learners.

Secondary school

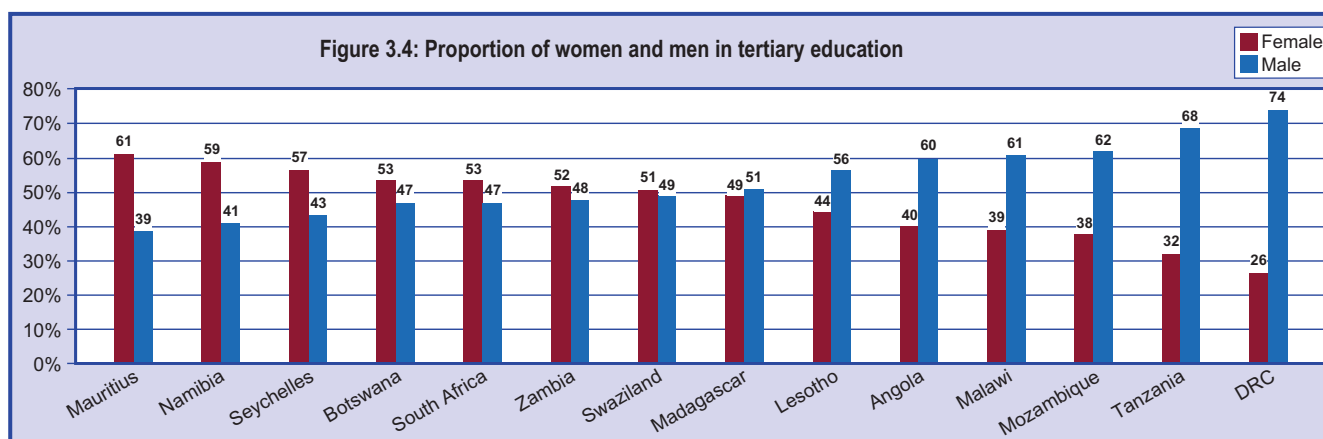


Source: Gender Links Regional Barometer Report, 2012.

Namibia has slightly more girls than boys at secondary level: Namibia along with Botswana and South Africa have slightly more girls than boys which is consistent with demographics. Lesotho has a considerably higher proportion of girls than boys in secondary school (56% girls) as a result of boys herding

cattle. Seychelles and Swaziland have an equal number of girls and boys in secondary school. The fact that the gender gap at secondary school level is rapidly narrowing this sets SADC countries apart from their counterparts in the rest of Africa.

Tertiary education



Source: Gender Links Regional Barometer Report, 2012.

Namibia is among seven SADC countries with a higher proportion of women than men at tertiary level: In nearly half of all SADC countries, tertiary institutions have equal numbers or more women, than men. Seven SADC countries (as compared to five last year) now have higher proportions of women than men at tertiary level. These are Seychelles, Namibia, Mauritius, South Africa and Botswana joined by Zambia and Swaziland.

Student's funding mechanisms

Education in Namibia government schools is free up to Grade 10 and compulsory. Government education guidelines say that no child will be turned back, because of a parent failing to pay school development funds. However, the practice in some schools is that children are not given their school reports until outstanding fees are paid up. The Constitution stipulates that the Minister may partially or fully exempt any learner or any category of learners from payment of tuition, boarding or any other fees.

The government and other nongovernmental organisations like Forum for African Women Educationalists Namibia (FAWENA) provide annual

bursaries to students who perform well. Access to these bursaries is open for both girls and boys.

Challenging stereotypes



The Protocol requires that by 2015 state parties adopt and implement gender sensitive educational policies and programmes addressing gender stereotypes in education and gender-based violence.

Table 3.3: Gender disaggregated data on school administration

Staff category	No of women	No of men	Total	% women	% men
Principals					
Teachers	12 921	7909	20 830	62%	38%
School governing bodies/Boards					

Source: *Education Stats*, 2008.

According to the statistics on teachers, there are more women in the profession than men. It would be interesting to see whether this representation translates to greater women representation at the administration level, but we were not able to access the data.

The Constitution makes provision for each school to have a school board, of not less than five members and

not more than 13 voting members. However there is no gender provision in the election of school board members. So even though each school might have a school board, the information regarding who is on the school board is not with the department of education. The government, through the Department of Education does not gather data on the composition of school governing bodies.

Table 3.4: Women and men in university faculties

Faculty	No of women	No of men	Total	% women	% men
Medical and Health	600	175	775	78%	22%
Education	536	371	908	59%	41%
Humanities and Social Sciences	662	355	1017	65%	35%
Science	350	552	902	39%	61%
Law	219	203	422	52%	48%
Economics	1096	901	1997	55%	45%
Agriculture	81	124	205	40%	60%
Foundation Programme	32	34	66	48%	52%

University of Namibia (2007).

Source: *MGECW-Progress Report on the Implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa*, Nov 2009, p.19.

Girls tend to opt for Humanities and Social Sciences faculties. In terms of curriculum development, the department has an Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme as well as the Programme

Quality Assurance Directorate which is also required to address issues of gender sensitivity when it comes to material and curriculum development.

The Institute for Educational Development is responsible for textbook development, review and syllabus to ensure that gender mainstreaming is built in.

Although all three higher learning institutions enrolled more females than males in the 2007 academic year, male students still dominate in most economically viable subjects. Both the University of Namibia and International University of Management enrolled 44% male and 56% female, while at the Polytech it is 46% male and 54% female. The department's target is to get as many female students as possible into the critical fields such as science, technology and medicine.

Most female students are studying in fields traditionally considered feminine. For example the majority of UNAM female students are enrolled in nursing, teaching, humanities and social science, while subjects such as agriculture, natural resources and science are dominated by male students. Looking at Polytechnic, males dominate Engineering and Information Technology by 83%, while females are the majority with 73% in communication and secretarial studies.

In terms of measures to improve performance, there are extra classes which are part of primary and secondary education. FAWENA organises specific Science and Mathematics classes over holidays for females. These classes take place over May and August holidays.

Policy on teenage pregnancy

Official statistics on pregnancy-related school dropouts in Namibia for 2007 show that 1,465 learners dropped out for this reason. 96% of them were girls. There are large regional disparities, with pregnancy-related drop-

outs being highest by far in Kavango and Ohangwena, followed by the regions of Omusati, Oshikoto, Oshana and Caprivi. Information from other sources indicates that the official figures may be an underestimate. Other sources tell us that Namibian women continue to give birth at fairly young ages, although there is some improvement on this point in the post-independence era.

In 2008 the Ministry of Education held a nationwide consultation on a new policy on the prevention and management of learner pregnancy. In October 2009 Cabinet approved the final draft. The policy states that a learner who becomes pregnant may stay in school until four weeks before the birth, provided that she is healthy and that the learner, school and family are in agreement regarding this arrangement. The learner may return to school as soon as she is ready following the birth, provided that she and the baby are healthy and that there is a care plan for the baby. A social worker and health worker must confirm the health status and care plan for the mother and baby. The policy places a strong focus on preventing learner pregnancy and on supporting learner fathers to become responsible parents. Civil society worked closely with Government to develop the policy.

Gender violence in schools

Education institutions are relatively safe, but there cases of violence are still reported. There is strong law enforcement when it comes to violence and the use of violence. Bullying remains a major concern. There are also other forms of violence such as psychological abuse. This type of abuse is seldom acknowledged in policies.

There is no policy to address the issue of teachers molesting students, but there are guidelines on corporal punishment which was outlawed after independence. If a teacher is found guilty of this offence, it is punishable by law.

It is not only teachers who are molest learners but also senior students. Most of these "crimes" committed on the school ground are dealt with according to the Education Act. A disciplinary hearing is conducted to establish what crime has been committed.

Sexual relations between teachers and learners are prohibited and any teacher, who breaches this, will lose their jobs. They are not allowed to teach for a period of eight years, after which if they want to return, they would need to reapply. If while on suspension, they engage in sex with learners, this will lead to immediate dismissal.



GL Namibia country Manager Sarry Xougus-Elsies with members of the Arandis junior council - September 2010. Photo: Laurentia Golley

Some parents protect teachers who have been found to be having sexual relations with learners because they see them as a source of income. There are also cases where learners do not reveal the true identity of the father to protect him from losing his job.

The Constitution has a section on the Code of conduct for Teaching Service. This speaks to the professional conduct of teachers and the procedures to be followed and the measures to be taken in case of contravention of or failure to comply with any provision of the code.



Young girls march for peace during 16 Days of activism against gender violence - Tses in Namibia, November 2012.

Photo: Laurentia Golley

"Sexually Transmitted Marks" - who is to blame? by Sheena Magenya

The latest "trend" from institutions of higher learning is that students and lecturers are exchanging a lot more than knowledge and information. It is 'alleged' by some students that lecturers are soliciting sexual favours from students in exchange for better academic pass marks in their respective courses. Who is responsible for this trend, which in a doctor-patient relationship is deemed unethical?

Sex-for-marks, often dubbed "Sexually Transmitted Marks" (STM) is a well-known phenomenon. The University of Namibia (UNAM) and Walter Sisulu University (Mthatha campus, South Africa) made the news in 2011 with the sex-for-marks scandal. Cases have also been reported in Malawi and Zimbabwe.

In the Namibian case, the probe conducted by the university did not yield any result, as no students came

forth with information. The university exonerated the lecturers.

The STM case in Namibia is a typical case of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions. A research conducted by Gender Links in 2010 titled *Gender in Media Education (GIME): An audit of Gender in Journalism and Media Education and Training* found out that sexual harassment is rife in tertiary institutions. Of the 25 institutions audited in Southern Africa 11 (44%) have sexual harassment policies while 56% do not.

UNAM for instance addresses sexual harassment in the Disciplinary Codes of Conduct that apply to both staff and students. The document also defines sexual harassment; sets out procedures of dealing with sexual harassment cases and the punishment to be

administered. However, the GIME research also found out that sexual harassment policies are not well known or enforced.

The problem at stake is that lecturers involved in such relationships justify it and claim that it involves two consenting adults having a relationship or engaging in consensual sexual relations. Many students agree with this. However, with cultures and practises that blur lines between what is seen as sexually appropriate behaviour still in practise, these expressions come as no surprise.

As a facilitator in a focus group discussion with female students on the issue, I learnt that some female students had a hard time recognising some male advances as sexually provocative.

"We deal with the male students who fondle our buttocks. It's the same when you leave campus, the taxi drivers do the same and shout obscenities at us. We're just used to it," said one student. Another one added, "It's what men do. We have learned to ignore them."

Compared to the lewd advances of fellow students and other men in public, the subtle coercion that lecturers might apply is not easily identified as inappropriate or as sexual harassment, even though the student in question is not entirely comfortable with the situation.

Sexual harassment and exploitation has become normalised by a society whose culture allows men to inappropriately touch or communicate with women, and teaches women to quietly tolerate it.

Sadly, the sex-for-marks syndrome perpetuates the culture of silence and increases cases of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions. Investigations have been called for, but an air of denial still hangs.

A UNAM professor affirmed this when he pointed out that he did not see anything wrong engaging in a relationship with his student who is of age. "We have

some very mature students here, and it is not illegal for two consenting adults to be in a relationship. What if she's the one that proposes the relationship?"



Sheena Magenya.
Photo: www.paynamibia.com

Many people, lecturers and students alike, feel the same - that the fault is as much

the students' as it is the lecturers'. If people are going to take the lecturers to task then the students should also be taken to task.

There is a modicum of truth in these sentiments, but these should be seen rather as a focus on the dual accountability on the conduct of both the students and lecturers, not as a way to exonerate the actions of the lecturers, which are engrained in power relations. Sounds simple enough, but if you have students that don't know what sexual harassment is, how can they report it?

The STM problem in many ways reflects the patriarchal dominant nature of relationships in society, whether sexual or otherwise. Lecturers, doctors and managers among others, regardless of sex or age or cultural orientation, are in a position of power over their students, patients and employees respectively.

There is a patriarchal understanding of power that it can and should be abused and exploited for self-serving reasons. This myopic understanding of power is what has lecturers justifying sex-for-marks.

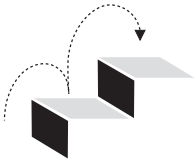
On the other hand, young women are taught directly by their culture and indirectly by pop-culture that sex and their superficial sexuality is a tradable commodity and can be used as a means to an end.

So how did our conversation with the lecturer end? Despite reminding him that he is a signatory to a code of conduct that required him to always be professional in his activities as a lecturer; and that a lecturer sleeping with a student, whether of age or if she initiated it is abuse of power, he remained adamant.

Thus any attempt to present sexual harassment in a perpetrator-victim frame will do it no justice. It is but a minor reflection of a bigger problem, the institutionalisation of patriarchy and the sexualisation of the female body.

Until a social and cultural system that presents a different understanding of power and gender relations, women and men will continue to exploit whatever leverage they have to get their way. Sexual harassment in institutions of higher learning will only end if young women understand what sexual harassment is and learn not to abuse their sexuality in order to attain a qualification.

Sheena Magenya is a freelance journalist based in Namibia. This article is part of the Gender Links Opinion and Commentary Service, bringing you fresh views on everyday news.



Next steps

- More research is needed to assess the extent and nature of sexual violence at schools in the country; and efforts need to continue to make schools safe. This could include a nationwide campaign against sexual, physical and emotional abuse in schools targeting teachers and communities.
- More initiatives are needed to sensitise girls to take up careers in science and technology through career fairs, career guidance and counselling.
- Adoption of policies to address the issue of teachers molesting students.
- Review of curriculum and syllabus to ensure that gender is mainstreamed.