



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

NATIONAL PROMOTION POLICY GUIDE
FOR JUNIOR AND SENIOR PRIMARY SCHOOL PHASE

2015

For implementation:

Junior Primary phase, Grades 1-3 in 2015

Senior Primary phase, Grades 4-7 in 2016

Ministry of Education
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FOREWORD

The National Promotion Policy Guide for the primary school phase was developed as per the Cabinet Directives based on the outcomes of the 2011 National Conference on Education. The Ministry of Education was directed to review the National Promotion Policy in order to address the “automatic promotion” of learners who did not achieve minimum number of competencies to be considered competent for the next grade.

The Policy Guide replaces all previous circulars on promotion of learners in the primary school phase. The guide is implemented together with the revised curriculum for the primary school phase: the junior primary phase (pre-primary to grades 1 to 3 in 2015 and the senior primary phase (grades 4-7) in 2016.

This Promotion Policy Guide sets out a framework for uniform learner promotion, retention and reporting learners progress in the primary school phase in Namibia.

This guide states the aims of the promotion policy, policy principles, key features of the policy, rules and regulations, learner performance levels, promotion requirements, requirements for reporting learner achievement and progress, roles and responsibilities of key education stakeholders, guidelines for identification of learners at risk and referral procedures.

School Principals and Heads of Departments should monitor the quality of assessment tasks and the implementation of the promotion policy principles and procedures in order to ensure that the guide is implemented in a consistent way.

The school must keep parents informed about rules and regulations of the policy, learner promotion requirements, requirements for reporting learner achievement and progress and guidelines for identification of learners at risk and referral procedures so that they can follow the progress of their children and support their education.

The National Promotion Policy Guide for the primary school phase will be revised and merged with the senior secondary school phase promotion policy once the whole Basic Education curriculum is revised.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DNEA	Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment
IEP	Individual Education Plan
JP	Junior Primary
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCBE	National Curriculum for Basic Education
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
SP	Senior Primary

1. INTRODUCTION

Before the Namibian independence in 1990, schools implemented a policy of grade repetition for many years. However, there were high dropout rates, high repetition rates and low achievement in schools. The policy of grade repetition was replaced by a policy of semi-automatic promotion in 1996. Semi-automatic promotion has been viewed as a compromise between grade repetition and social promotion. The policy of semi-automatic promotion has been implemented with limited success in schools. A research study on the evaluation of learner achievements conducted in 2011, found:

- the current promotion practices in schools were not effective in reducing repetition and dropout rates in the Namibian education system;
- the learners who were held back or transferred to the next grade did not receive adequate learning support;
- that promotion requirements and grading were not applied in a consistent manner.

Educational research has shown that neither automatic promotion nor grade repetition addresses the problems of low achievers satisfactorily; the potential solutions lie in providing learners with better learning opportunities. As part of the resolutions of the 2011 National Conference on Education, Cabinet directed the Ministry of Education to ensure that each learner should achieve minimum levels of learning achievement before being promoted to the next grade. The Ministry was further directed to:

- urgently review automatic promotion practices and provide clear guidelines that leave no opportunity for different interpretations and implementation practices;
- provide support to repeaters and learners who have not acquired the necessary skills and competencies;
- make special provision for learners with hearing and visual impairments and disabilities to enable them to be assessed fairly.

Take note that the policy applies to the revised curriculum and will be implemented according to the curriculum implementation schedule.

The policy guide aims to provide a framework for uniform learner promotion, retention practices and reporting learners progress, in schools. It aims to minimise inconsistency in the use of grade ranges, grade descriptors and promotion requirements across school phases. The guidelines contain in this policy replace all previous circulars on promotion requirements and guidelines used in Namibian schools.

This policy guide supports the implementation of the major educational goals of access, equity, quality and efficiency

2. POLICY PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Learner-centered education presupposes that all children can learn and develop given the right circumstances, and recognizes that this will vary from person to person.
- 2.2 Learners will progress through Basic Education in as near to normal time as possible. Some learners will achieve very highly, most will achieve adequately, and some will have limited achievements.
- 2.3 Learners benefit most by remaining with their own age group. Gifted learners in mainstream/inclusive schools may lack some emotional and social skills to be promoted above their age group on the basis of academic or other excellence alone. Hence in collaboration with the learning support group, effective intervention, individual/differentiated tasks and support should be provided so that gifted learners are sufficiently challenged. Similarly, learners with learning difficulties who are held back repeatedly may be more harmed than helped in their development. Preferably, no learner should be more than three years above the appropriate age for a year grade.
- 2.4 Gifted learners receive enrichment programmes.
- 2.5 Grade repetition appears to be productive for learners who did not experience enough of the previous grade to enable them to acquire the expected competencies.
- 2.6 Learners shall be assessed through both formative and summative methods to determine the extent to which they achieve subject competencies in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- 2.7 Assessment is an ongoing component of the curriculum, designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction and keep track of continuous progress of the learning process. Schools monitor slow learners' participation in lessons and assignments.
- 2.8 As soon as it is determined that a learner is not capable of achieving specified subject competencies, the teacher should clearly identify the learning difficulties and set out a plan of action (support programme) to remedy the learning difficulties.
- 2.9 Principals monitor the work done by learners within support programmes and ensure that continuous individual feedback is provided to both the learners and the parents.
- 2.10 In cases where the promotion committee is absolutely convinced that a learner would definitely not benefit from progressing to the next grade, a learner should repeat a grade.
- 2.11 Parents/guardians must be kept fully informed of why it is necessary for their child to repeat a grade, what will be done by the school to ensure that they achieve the necessary competencies, and what the home can do to support the learner.

- 2.12 Learners who do not progress to the next grade must receive counselling to help them understand their situation and must receive learning support, focusing on the competencies which they did not achieve. Learning support forms part of everyday teaching and should also be portrayed in lesson plans.
- 2.13 Schools form partnerships with parents by maintaining close communication, inviting them to visit the classroom, and providing them with instructional materials to use in tutoring their children at home. Parents/guardians are informed and updated regularly on the performance and progress of their children at school. Parents should be involved in order to support their children throughout their schooling and not only when they repeat.
- 2.14 All repeating and struggling learners receive learning support. The learning support team should plan and compile suitably structured individualised programmes for learning support, particularly those taking place outside normal teaching time.
- 2.15 Learning Support to be given by the class or subject teacher. The teacher also involves other resource persons to provide support. These include the learner's peers, older learners, community volunteers, retired teachers, etc. Home or in-school support done by any of these resource persons should be carefully guided and monitored by the teacher.
- 2.16 A policy and procedures for special education referral and placement is in place.
- 2.17 Referral is conducted as early as possible to utilise learners' skills, aptitude and talents. Learners who cannot benefit from their current setting should in consultation with parents and guardians be referred to another school setting that caters for their needs. A learner will be considered for admission to resource schools or learning support classes through referral by the multi-disciplinary learning support team.
- 2.18 Teachers receive training to enable them to understand and meet special needs, assessment practices and have access to resource persons with expertise in remediation and specialised education in an inclusive setting.
- 2.19 Hard of hearing learners attend regular schools from the onset to capitalise and encourage residual speech, particularly when the learner does not need Namibian Sign Language. Equally, learners with low vision should attend regular schools with the necessary support services, such as enlarged text and appropriate formatting.

3. FEATURES OF THE POLICY

3.1 Early Identification

Learners who might be at risk of being held back are identified through continuous assessment methods and teacher/principal recommendations, and parents or guardians are informed of their children's status.

3.2 Provide high-quality learning support

Learners who have been identified as in need of learning support receive additional instructional support in school, and other intervention services targeting specific learning areas of difficulty. In addition to receiving instructional support in school, schools may offer a variety of out-of-school support services.

3.3 Limitations on the number of times a given learner can be retained

In the interest of keeping learners close to their chronological peers and avoiding the potential psychosocial toll of repeated retentions, limits are placed on the number of times any given learner may repeat.

Learners who do not achieve the minimum competencies required for promotion in a particular grade should repeat that grade. A learner should only repeat twice in a school phase. A repeating learner should be given learning support.

A repeater who is at risk of being transferred must be referred to the Multi-disciplinary learning support team. (In other words, if a learner is doing a grade for the second time and it is clear that this learner will again not pass and therefore will have to be transferred to the next grade, the learner must be referred to the Multi-disciplinary learning support team.)

3.4 Building capacity of schools and teachers

Adequate professional support is provided to schools and teachers in dealing with learners with learning difficulties. Regional offices provide additional support to schools.

3.5 Building and sustaining stakeholder support

Schools build and sustain parental and community involvement and support.

3.6 Ongoing Monitoring

Learner progress is to be monitored by the Learning Support Team using information from formative assessments. Learners who are at risk of a first or second repetition are provided with additional learning opportunities.

4. RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR PROMOTION

4.1 Promotion requirements are applicable to all government and private schools, registered with the Ministry of Education that are offering the Namibian school curriculum.

- 4.2 In Grades 1 to 7 the decision to advance or repeat a grade should be made in the best interest of the learner by the teachers, the school principal, and inspector of education.
- 4.3 A promotion committee of the school should discuss borderline cases. The team of subject teachers should all participate in decisions about repetition or promotion.

5. LEARNER PERFORMANCE LEVELS

The learner's level of achievement in relation to the competencies in the subject syllabuses are shown in letter grades/symbols. When letter grades are awarded, it is essential that they reflect the learner's actual level of achievement in relation to the competencies in the subject syllabuses. The relation between the grades awarded and competencies are shown below. Achievement for all learners in Grades 1-7 should be shown in letter grades/symbols A – E, where A is the highest and E is the lowest grade. A learner is ungraded if she/he obtains U.

Grade	% Range (Gr. 1-7)	Competency Descriptors
A	80%+	Achieved Competencies exceptionally well. The learner is outstanding in all areas of competency.
B	70-79%	Achieved Competencies very well. The learner's achievement lies substantially above average requirements and is highly proficient in most areas of competency.
C	60-69%	Achieved Competencies well. The learner has mastered the competencies and can apply them in novel situations and contexts.
D	50-59%	Achieved Competencies satisfactorily. The learner's achievement corresponds to average requirements. The learner may be in need of learning support in some areas.
E	40-49%	Achieved the minimum number of Competencies to be considered competent. The learner may not have achieved all the competencies, but the learner's achievement is sufficient to exceed the minimum competency level. The learner is in need of learning support in most areas.
U	0-39%	Not achieved the minimum number of Competencies. The learner has not been able to reach a minimum level of competency, even with extensive help from the teacher. The learner is seriously in need of learning support.

Learners who have not turned up for tests/examinations or not made any attempt will get 0%. An average will be calculated for such learner on marks obtained throughout the year if valid reasons with documentary proof are provided.

6. PROMOTION REQUIREMENTS

A learner shall not pass a subject if he/she has not mastered the minimum required competencies described in the subject syllabus and shall not be promoted to the next grade if he/she does not meet the minimum requirements for promotion as described in this policy guide.

The promotion subjects are specified in the *National Curriculum for Basic Education*. The support (non-examinable) subjects must be taught as prescribed in the *Curriculum* and assessment grades must appear on the learners' progress reports. All assessment must be done as per the prescriptions of the National Curriculum and related subject syllabuses. The standard for some continuous assessment tasks should relate to the assessment specified in subject syllabuses.

6.1 Pre-primary

Learners will normally be ready to commence with formal teaching and learning in Grade 1 after completion of the school readiness programme. All learners who turn six before/on 31 December of the Pre-primary school year (where implemented) should be admitted to Grade 1 the following year.

6.2 Grades 1 - 3

The promotion subjects in grades 1-3 are the languages used as the medium of learning, another language, Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Arts, Religious and Moral Education and Physical Education.

Out of 7 subjects, a learner in Grades 1-3 should be promoted to the next grade if he/she has obtained:

- a. **E**-grade or better in 6 out of 7 subjects;
- b. **E**-grade or better in the language used as the medium of learning, including at least a **E** in the Reading Component;
- c. **E**-grade or better in Mathematics and the other language;
- d. an overall average of an **E** (40%)

6.3 Grade 4

The promotion subjects for grade 4 are the language used as the medium of instruction, another language, Mathematics, Natural Science and Health Education and Social Studies.

Out of 5 subjects, a learner in Grade 4 should be promoted to the next grade if he/she has obtained:

- a. **E**-grade or better in 4 out of 5 promotional subjects;
- b. **E**-grade or better in the language used as the medium of learning;
- c. **E**-grade or better in Mathematics and the other language;
- d. an overall average of an **E** (40%)

6.4 Grades 5 - 7

The promotion subjects in grades 5-7 are English, another language, Mathematics, Social Studies, Natural Science and Health Education, and ONE of the following: Design and Technology, Elementary Agriculture, Home Ecology.

Out of 6 subjects, a learner in Grades 5-7 should be promoted to the next grade if he/she has obtained:

- a. an **E**-grade or better in 5 out of 6 promotional subjects,
- b. an **E**-grade or better in English, other language and Mathematics;
- c. an overall average of an **E** (40%).

Promotion committee

In each school there should be a promotion committee comprising of the school principal, heads of department and class/subject teachers. The committee has the overall promotion responsibilities by, among others, ensuring consistency in dealing with borderline cases. All recommendations by the committee should be endorsed by the Regional Education Office.

Borderline cases

These are learners who are on the edge of one category (failing) and verging on another (passing) according to the minimum promotion requirements (border). Their performance is near to the promotion mark / percentage. Borderline cases involve the following:

- learners who failed only one subject with less than 5% of the actual required promotional threshold of 40% or;
- learners who failed a grade with less than 5% of the actual required promotional threshold of an overall average of 40% (provided they failed only one subject).
- special conditions or extenuating circumstances the learner experienced during the year or examination period.

Though these learners do not quite meet accepted, expected or average standards, they should, after consultation by the promotion committee, the multi-disciplinary team and the learning support group, be promoted to the next grade. They must then receive learning support through the Individualised Education Plan in the subject/s in which they could not achieve the required competencies.

7. REPORTING LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT AND PROGRESS

The Education Act, No. 16 of 2001 stipulates that the principal of a state school must ensure that the parent of each learner is provided with regular reports in writing on the academic progress, general behaviour and conduct of the learner.

Progress reports for each learner in Pre-primary to Grade 7 must include:

- A level of mastery of prescribed competencies in learning or developmental areas
- a letter grade or percentage (Grades 1-7) indicating the learner's level of progress in relation to the prescribed competencies of each subject
- written reporting comments to show progress in language in the specific areas of reading and writing (for Junior Primary phase)
- written reporting comments that clearly describe, in relation to the competencies:
 - what the learner is able to demonstrate in terms of knowledge and skills
 - areas in which the learner requires further attention or development
 - ways of supporting the learner in his or her learning
 - written comments to provide information on attitudes, work habits and effort

8. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The Regional Director should make sure that this policy guide is understood by the inspectors of Education, advisory teachers, principals and parents. Measures should be taken to ensure that the document is deliberated on at all levels. Inspectors and the advisory teachers must take full responsibility to facilitate and monitor the implementation of this policy guide, and must report any unfavourable situation or irregularity to the Regional Director. Principals are responsible and accountable for the successful implementation of this policy guide. They should ensure that the guidelines are understood by teachers, parents and learners.

8.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The regional offices, school boards, school principals and teachers have different, yet complementary, roles and responsibilities in the implementation of this policy guide.

It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (head office directorates) to:

- provide this policy and make it available to schools and parents;
- provide relevant curriculum that defines the expected competencies for each subject and grade
- provide opportunities for professional development of teachers in assessing learners, learning support and special education
- provide resources to assist schools in their work to implement the policy
- take full accountability for assisting principals and teachers in the implementation of this policy guide

It is the responsibility of regional education offices to:

- ensure that the policy is followed in schools
- offer each school assistance in following this policy
- monitor the effectiveness of the policy and address deficiencies

It is the responsibility of school principals to:

- ensure that teachers follow this policy
- provide additional learning opportunities
- adjust school programs to support more intense learning and the provision of learning support
- assist teachers with the interpretation of the policy and monitor regular communication between schools and parents
- maintain complete and accurate records of learner achievements.

It is the responsibility of teachers to:

- follow this policy
- identify learners with learning difficulties and provide learning support
- monitor the learning progress of all learners
- provide parents with complete and accurate evaluation of their children's performance
- indicate, in relation to the subject competencies what each learner is able to do, areas in which a learner requires further attention or development, and ways of supporting a learner in his or her learning
- provide a description of each learner's behaviour, including information on attitudes, work habits and effort.

9. IDENTIFICATION OF AT-RISK LEARNERS

At-risk learners are learners who are most likely to be educationally marginalised. These learners may include children of farm-workers, children in remote areas, street children, children in squatter camps, resettlement camps or refugee camps, children with disabilities and impairments, children who are considered “too old for school” in the current education policies (whether they are within or outside the system), children of families in extreme poverty, children who head households, child labourers, children with learning difficulties, orphans and vulnerable children, the girl-child, the learner-parent, children with extreme health conditions or chronic illnesses, and children with emotional or behavioural challenges.

The identification of at-risk learners should be based on barriers that inhibit the learning, focusing on the learners and their individual needs, their progress, and the outcome of their learning. The central role of identifying at-risk learners is to provide effective learning support to meet the unique educational needs of each of these learners. The identification is done in consultation with the Learning Support Group, the class teacher and the parents/guardians.

10. REFERRAL PROCEDURES

Referral involves identifying learners' specific areas of weakness and strengths, and the appropriate service through which the learning difficulties could be addressed and remedied. Referral takes place after critically analysing the outcomes of assessment. Referral is done in collaboration with the learning support team, in order to assess the learner's needs and draw up an appropriate Individual Education Plan (IEP). The outcome of the IEP should be attached to the cumulative record card and passed on to the next teacher or school.

Policies and procedures for referral should be followed where it is found that a learner persistently experiences learning difficulties despite early detection and intervention. This should be supported by systematic learning support, differentiated teaching and alternative assessment. Referral should be conducted as early as possible in order to utilise learners' skills, aptitude and talents and to avoid repetition. Learners who are unable to benefit from main stream schools should be referred to a school setting that caters for their needs, such as a resource class or learning support class.

A learner will be considered for admission to resource schools or learning support classes if referred by the multi-disciplinary learning support team. This team should include the regional school counsellor, a psychologist or a medical professional. Referral can be done on the basis of a diagnostic assessment of the following criteria:

- specific learning impairments
- intellectual impairment
- hearing impairment
- visual impairment
- emotional and behavioural difficulties
- any combination thereof

12. ANNEXE 1: DEFINITION OF TERMS

To help implementers understand this policy guide, key terms are defined as follows:

<i>Alternative assessment</i>	An assessment approach that assesses other potentials and talents that learners display apart from the academic potentials
<i>Assessment Grades</i>	Standardised measurements of varying levels of comprehension within a subject area. Grades can be assigned in letters (for example, A, B, C), as a range (for example 1-4), as descriptors (excellent, great, satisfactory, needs improvement), or in percentages. Grades, mark ranges and descriptors are gauged into criterion assessment benchmarks
<i>Borderline cases</i>	Cases where learners failed a subject or failed to meet the average percentage (but failed only one subject) with a limited margin of less than 5%.
<i>Differentiated assessment</i>	An assessment approach offered to learners who experience difficulties learning in various academic subject areas. It deviates from the traditional assessment approach.
<i>Grade repetition/retention</i>	The practice of making learners who have not fully mastered the curriculum and thus do not reach certain academic standards repeat the year while the peers are promoted to the next year of study.
<i>Learning support</i>	It's the physical, social, emotional and intellectual support given to learners that may experience barriers to learning to enhance a learner's capabilities in learning. Learning Support might include differentiation, adaptation of teaching and learning methods and materials, assistive aids, special arrangements in examinations, counseling, etc.
<i>Learner promotion</i>	The practice of promoting learners who have met the minimum competencies to the next grade
<i>Learning Support Team/ group</i>	A team consisting of teachers ensuring that the subject/class teacher offers needed support to learners while working in consultation and collaboration with them.
<i>Grade/Phase repetition</i>	The practice of learners not repeating more than once in a grade and twice in any of the Primary and Secondary Phases
<i>Referral</i>	Refers to a system of referring learners who are repeating to attain competencies for promotion through a formal schooling system to a schooling system that suits their needs after being alternatively assessed and demonstrated other talents and skills.

***Multi-disciplinary
Support Team***

The Multi-disciplinary Support Team includes the Regional School Counsellor, Speech therapist, Occupational therapist, Physiotherapist, Social worker, Psychologist, Learning Support Coordinator, Life Skills teacher, other medical and paramedical personnel, parents/ guardians and member(s) of the Outreach team. The composition of relevant members of the multi-disciplinary team varies from learner to learner. Parents play a vital role in the education of their children and are an integral part of all decisions. Communication channels for obtaining and providing information about learners should be established between the school and the Multi-disciplinary Support Team as appropriate. The specialists of the Multi-disciplinary Support Team is responsible for co-ordination of assessment, placement and periodic evaluation on learner's progress at specified intervals based on stipulated competencies in the Individual Education Plan respectively.

***Promotion
Committee***

A committee comprising of school principal, heads of departments, and teachers to oversee the overall promotion issues at school level.



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