

ARTICLES

SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN NAMIBIA INNOVATIONS, PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES *Ex Africa Semper Aliquid Novi*

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Abstract

This abstract focuses on the state of school libraries in Namibia, giving an overview of the effect of apartheid on education. Statistics show the uneven distribution of materials to schools. Present and future needs for both training and equipping of libraries are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The school library scene in Namibia today is very much a product of yesterday. It stems from more than a century of colonialism and apartheid culminating in educational privileges for the few and educational deprivation of the many.

This report shows that a new state, a democratic constitution, a single Ministry of Education and Culture, the abolition of the separate ethnic education authorities i.e. of apartheid, as well as the total opening of all schools for all races, have not after more than four years, succeeded in bringing about any marked change as far as the provision of libraries in Namibian schools is concerned.

In order to understand the magnitude of the problem which the new government inherited, it is necessary to dwell upon the political dispensation prior to Namibian Independence on 21 March 1990.

NAMIBIAN EDUCATION PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE

South West Africa, as the country was then called, was first colonized by the Germans and then by the South Africans, a period which together comprised over 100 years of colonial rule.

In 1978, high hopes for immediate independence with the adoption of Resolution 435 by the United Nations, were shattered when Proclamation AG 8 was promulgated by the occupying South African régime. Proclamation AG 8 entrenched apartheid to such an extent in Namibian education, that even in the South

Africa of the seventies and eighties, one cannot find a situation quite comparable to it.

The country was divided into 11 ethnic education authorities i.e. the administrations for the Owambo, Kavango, Caprivians, Tswana, Herero, Damara, Nama, Coloureds, Rehoboths, Whites and National Education, the latter of which was responsible for some 93 schools in so-called "grey areas" including the schools of the San (Bushmen) who were considered incapable of running their own affairs.

Where in the Republic of South Africa, even before the ANC took over government, i.e. during the heydays of apartheid, at least a portion of "white" taxes went into black education, Namibian tax money for education was distributed solely on ethnic grounds. This meant that Kavango taxes went into Kavango education, Herero taxes into Herero education, white taxes into white education and so forth.

The full implication of this unjust system was that vast sums of money became available for the 66 white Namibian schools. During these years, for the whites, "golden years of unlimited bounty," white schools were stocked and overstocked with computers, laboratories, school buses, extravagant school halls, sports facilities and of course, media centres which boasted stocks of printed and audio visual media as well as equipment of which many schools in the so-called first world could be envious.

THE STATE OF NAMIBIAN SCHOOL LIBRARIES AT INDEPENDENCE

The Department of Information Studies of the University of Namibia conducted a survey of Namibian school libraries which was released in August 1990, a few months after Independence. The main findings of the survey were that only 23% of all Namibian schools kept a book collection of some sort. "Book collection" encompassed anything ranging from fully equipped media centres to traditional school libraries with mainly printed sources, to book collections in staff-rooms, store-rooms and passages, to book-nooks in classrooms.

More than 77% of Namibia's 1,153 schools (today there are 1,350 schools) were without any library facilities or even book collections. The unequal distribution of Namibian school libraries can clearly be seen from Figure 1.B. There were practically no school libraries in the far north i.e. Owambo, Kavango and Caprivi where 815 of the 1,153 Namibian schools, i.e. 71% of all schools, were situated.

Only 13% of Namibian schools were funded for their libraries by their education authorities. Figure 1.E shows that schools in the far north were grossly neglected not always as a result of lack of funds, in one case owing to mismanagement of funds. One former ethnic authority returned between R18 and R36 million of unspent money to the state coffers every year between 1985 and 1989 which in total comes to a sum of between R90 million and R180 million (US \$30 million and \$60 million).

In 1990, there were 330,000 books in Namibian school libraries, but of this sum, 71% were in the 66 former white schools at a ratio of 13.6 books per pupil. The minimum average number of school library books per pupil recommended in seven countries of the world is 12. The other ten former ethnic education authorities shared the remaining 29% as indicated in figure 1.G.

The overall ratio of school library books per pupil for the country as a whole was 0.9:1 however if the books in former white school libraries are excluded, the ratio of library books per pupil in schools under the other ten former education authorities drops to 0.3:1.

The same grim picture emerges as regards serial publications and audiovisual materials. Figure 1.H shows that almost all the periodicals, newspapers, audiocassettes, videocassettes, phonorecords, slides, transparencies, photos, maps, multi-media kits and models could be found in the 66 former white schools. More than a third of the respondents indicated that "the library is sometimes never opened due to circumstances," and very little reader guidance or curricular media use was taking place, as shown in Figure 1.Q.

Only 8.5% of Namibian schools had a central library room, of which approximately 4.5% had a floor area of more than 40 m². The average internationally recommended floor area for a school library is 276 m². Of the few central library rooms, the majority

were in former white schools as indicated in Figure 1.L.

Often these library rooms were partly or even wholly used for purposes other than library related matters e.g. for a class-room, staff-room, for medical examinations, church services, etc. More than a third of the respondents indicated that this was the case. Often authorities supplied a library room but no stock to put into it or staff to manage it. An empty room without stock is not a library and it is not surprising if it is then used for other purposes.

Some school libraries were totally devoid of furniture, many had no electrical plugs and some schools such as the so-called "tree schools" in the north had no electricity at all. Such schools obviously are not in a position to use audiovisual media as required by modern education.

The survey clearly showed that the physical planning of school libraries in most of the former ethnic authorities was either non-existent, or haphazard and inconsistent.

Only in former white schools and in some coloured schools were library books properly issued, catalogued and classified. Many libraries did not issue out books at all. Only 15% of the schools offered media user education to pupils and there was no uniform syllabus for the subject. Many schools were not always sure whether a syllabus existed. Most Namibian pupils, of whom at least 70% had illiterate parents, were leaving school in 1990; even those with matriculation were unprepared as life-long readers and students.

Only 4.6% of Namibian schools had a full-time teacher in the library. These teacher-librarians were appointed mainly in former white schools. In some schools "nobody" was responsible for the library, not even part-time or after hours. Some school principals were not keen to "waste" staff on the library. The distribution of qualified school librarians as shown in Figure 1.R, again reveals a totally deprived far north where 71% of all Namibian schools are situated.

Of the 370,000 school-going pupils in Namibia in 1988, only 2,500 i.e. 0.7% sat for matriculation. Of these, almost half failed. During the seven year period of 1982-88, 90% of all white pupils who sat for matriculation passed. Only 21% of all pupils from the ten other former ethnic authorities combined passed (see Figure 1.U and 1.V).

There seems to be a positive correlation between matric performance and the presence/absence and state of Namibian school libraries, but I do not state that there is a positive correlation since other factors such as poorly qualified teachers in general, lack of classrooms, textbooks etc. have not been considered. I rather see the lack of Namibian school libraries as part of a complex syndrome of educational deprivation which culminates in poor matric performance.

THE STATE OF NAMIBIAN SCHOOL LIBRARIES TODAY

Much time in this report has been devoted to the state of Namibian school libraries of the very recent past, for the simple but unfortunate reason that not much has changed during the four years since Independence.

As has been mentioned, the 11 ethnic education authorities no longer exist, and all schools fall under one Ministry of Education and Culture and are open to all races. The former white schools, which are located predominantly in urban areas of the developed part of Namibia, are now fully integrated and African parents who have the transport, are queuing up to get their children into the well-equipped and well-staffed former white schools. Obviously, between the 66 schools, only a small fraction of the more than 300,000 African Namibian pupils can find a place.

Things are also not what they were. The financial utopia which these former white schools had started to take for granted, has come to an end. There is no money for luxuries any more, and unfortunately, it seems that school libraries are considered to be one of these luxuries. Funds for stock and equipment have been severely cut and almost all full-time teacher-librarians have been given a heavy load of teaching in addition to their library duties.

On the positive side, some foreign and local aid has been forthcoming. A number of the most deprived schools are being equipped with modular book cabinets for classrooms containing 180 books each. A local project financed by Standard Bank distributed one book cabinet each to 46 schools during 1991. During early 1992, the first 30 mobile modular book cabinets were distributed to 16 deprived schools, sponsored by the Overseas Development Agency (ODA) through the British Council. Fifty cabinets per year to 50 deprived secondary schools were promised for the next three years.

The Finnish Development Agency (FINNIDA) sponsored 600 mobile modular cabinets to more deprived schools. The first of these were distributed late in 1992 and early 1993. To date, 596 schools have received one modular cabinet each, which is still a far cry from supplying several cabinets for various classrooms in each school; but 275,000 more pupils at least now have access to some books.

Mobile modular library cabinets

Mobile modular library cabinets are considered to be the answer for Namibian schools without a central library facility, although we do not consider it to be a permanent substitute for the central school library/media centre. It certainly has great advantages above the stationary classroom collection which has the following disadvantages:

- * pupils are exposed to only a limited collection which cannot possibly cater to all their informational and recreational reading needs and interests;
- * the collection is only accessible to a specific class and inaccessible to all other pupils in the school;
- * it is expensive because duplication of certain standard titles which are needed in every classroom, becomes necessary. (I know of a school principal who bought 50 copies of the same book to provide a copy for every classroom! He could have bought 50 different titles with the same money and put them in a central collection or a mobile cabinet for the whole school to use);
- * the classroom collection is usually not open during break times, after hours etc., with the result that only the "faster" pupils, who finish their work before the rest of the class, find an opportunity for additional reading; the "slower" pupils hardly get a chance, since these books are also rarely issued out for home use.

The advantages of mobile modular library cabinets are as follows:

- * the cabinets on wheels move from classroom to classroom with the various subject teachers;
- * various cabinets for reference works, audiovisual media, recreational reading books, various subjects, etc. are possible;
- * story-book cabinets for the junior primary can be interchanged every term, e.g. between four Grade 2 classes, each pupil will be exposed to 800 titles (200 titles per unit X 4) per year;
- * the cabinets have shelves inside and lockable doors for safe-keeping;
- * if the school is given a central library facility at a later stage, the cabinets can provide the necessary shelving by pushing them against the walls, pushing them back to back for double-sided shelves, stacking them on top of one another (the wheels can be removed);
- * one teacher who receives in-service training, can be made responsible for the management and control of all mobile modular library cabinets in the school;
- * since the materials in the cabinets are processed at head quarters, they are prepared for issuing and a computer printed book catalogue kept in a container on the inside of the cabinet door, is also provided for every cabinet.

Basic information science as a compulsory school subject

A new school subject, called Basic Information Science, has replaced the outdated subject called Book Education or Media User Education, offered in schools of some ethnic education authorities before Independence.

The subject content is unique in the sense that the existence of at least a school library or a book collection of some sort in a school is not a prerequisite to teach the subject. The first nine modules of the 15 module syllabus, are specially tailored to schools without libraries and acquaint pupils with the information phenomenon *per se* as it appears in the environment, in the heads of elders, community leaders and other experts, and in the mass media. This subject has been made compulsory for Grades 8 and 9 since January 1991 and the curriculum committee has progressed far with the draft syllabi for the subject for Grades 4 to 7 for implementation early in 1995. In-service training of teachers who are offering the subject, Basic Information Science, has been taking place during the last 3 1/2 years and is still in progress.

FORMAL TRAINING FOR NAMIBIAN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

The University of Namibia offers two courses in school librarianship, i.e. a beginners course, Library Science I (120 hours per annum) and an advanced course, Library Science II, after completion of the beginner's course (180 hours including practical per annum). The students registered for these courses are receiving basic teacher training for the Higher Education Diploma Secondary and the Higher Education Diploma Primary.

The courses in school librarianship are not compulsory but a large number of students, varying between 50 to 120 for the beginner's course and 13 to 30 for the advanced course, have been registering for these courses which have been offered since 1986. (Student numbers mentioned above apply as from 1987.)

Students majoring in school librarianship (after completion of the advanced course) can register for a third year course in which the teaching methods and micro-teaching of the compulsory school subject, Basic Information Science (book/media user education) are taught (120 hours per annum). Upon successful completion of these three courses, a holder of one of the above-mentioned diplomas, will not only be a qualified teacher but also a fully qualified school librarian/media teacher.

The Windhoek Teacher Training College trained school librarians at intermediary and advanced levels but these courses are unfortunately being phased out. Instead, some media education will be included in the new curriculum of the Basic Education Teachers Diploma to be offered at the four teacher training colleges. The introduction of a Postdiploma Certificate in School Librarianship is also being considered.

As far as distance teaching is concerned, the Centre for External Studies of the University of Namibia has included the beginner's course, Library Science I, in the curriculum of the Education Diploma Primary which is offered on distance teaching by the University of Namibia.

At the University of Namibia, the Department of Information Studies will be phasing in a new four year degree in Information Studies, the B INF (Baccalaureus Informationis) degree from 1995 onwards. Students who have completed School Library Science I and II, will get recognition for these courses for the B INF, or alternatively, for the BA degree.

THE FUTURE OF NAMIBIAN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Apart from supplying one mobile modular cabinet per school to less than half of Namibian schools, no new school libraries have been established since Independence. Lack of staff and funds prohibit the massive expansion of library services to all schools.

There is at present still no library legislation in Namibia which can provide the statutory basis for a national library service, in spite of various recommendations in this respect.

Uncoordinated provision of school library materials by some foreign donor agencies, distributed haphazardly to schools, have already caused problems. Many of these materials "are not processed or properly accessioned and therefore not properly accounted for, while the most needed information in the books remains inaccessible to the learners. This inevitably creates a sense of helplessness which soon leads to frustration and eventually to total neglect, thus completely negating all efforts to inculcate a reading habit and to create an inherent need for individual information retrieval and use" (Klynsmith, 1993: 173-4).

Many of these donations do not constitute a balanced collection, are inadequate in numbers and do not cater to the reading and language preferences of Namibian youth. There is no statutory coordination to prevent different agencies from donating the same books, sometimes to the same schools. Some schools may already have a well-equipped library, others have neither the facilities or expertise to house a collection.

Books costing vast sums of money have become lost in this manner in Namibia (before Independence, and now even more so) or they are kept under lock and key in some school store-rooms, for fear that they may be lost.

The inculcation of a "book culture" also needs to be developed. Teachers and particularly school principals need training in the use of a variety of sources of information to enrich their teaching.

Various recommendations have been made to government regarding the development of a school library network, and particularly a network of school-community libraries for the rural areas.

In May 1990, a Broad Policy Statement drafted by the Coordinating Council Sub-Committee for Library and Information Services was tabled. Recommendations included the provision of modular book cabinets to all schools without library rooms, the maintenance of present school media centres and the using of schools to serve the surrounding community with reading materials.

Long term project proposals include a 7 year plan during which time all schools will be equipped with small libraries of 500 books each. Guidelines regarding the nature and language of the book collection, opening hours, services to the school and community, facilities and size of the media centre, organization, the teaching of basic information science, curricular media use, staffing and the in-service training of staff are also set out.

The only recommendations that have been taken up so far are those on modular book cabinets, since these were mainly funded by donor agencies, and the offering of the compulsory school subject, Basic Information Science.

On 5 March 1993, participants and policy makers of a nine day seminar on the *Coordination of Library and Information Services in Namibia*, sponsored by the German Foundation for International Development (DSE), presented more recommendations to government, many of which were similar to previous recommendations made by experts and bodies. These included:

- the provision of mobile modular cabinets to all schools without library facilities;
- a pilot project to investigate the feasibility of school/community libraries in rural or isolated areas;
- the appointment of resource teachers in all schools to offer the subject, Basic Information Science and to manage the school resource centre or the various mobile modular cabinets in the school;
- clerical help for the resource teacher, if he/she is required to teach other subjects.

These recommendations are only an extract pertaining to school libraries, of wide-ranging recommendations for a national library and information service for the country as a whole. The only recommendation, which has been acted upon to date, was the appointment in July 1993 of a committee to prepare legislation for a National Library and Information Services Act for presentation to parliament.

Funding still remains the most pressing problem. The present educational crisis has forced the government to devote the limited education budget almost wholly to the building of classrooms and other urgent facilities, the provision of textbooks and the upgrading and salaries of teachers.

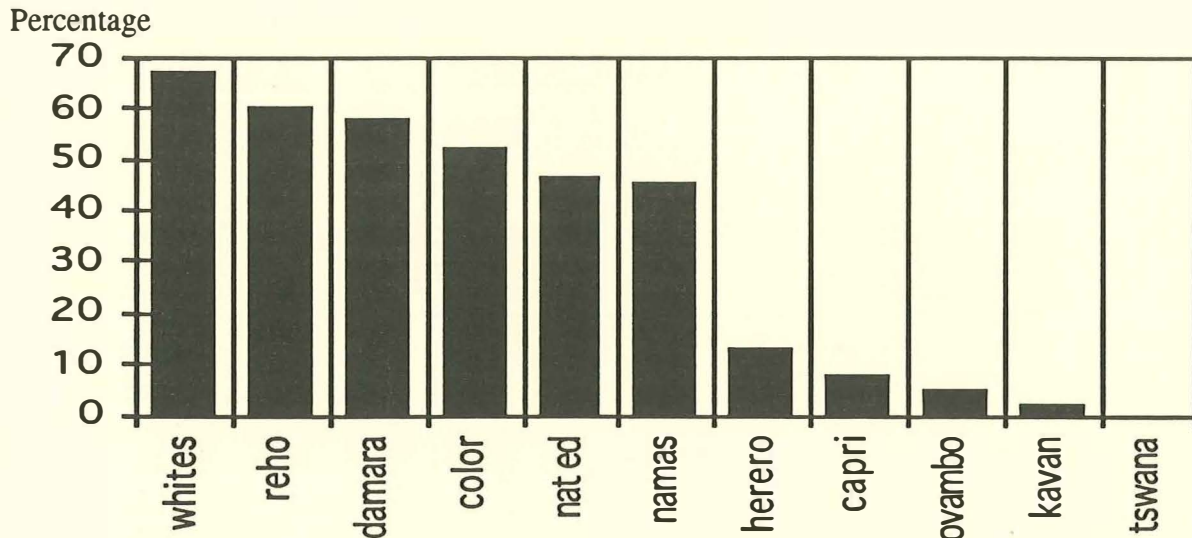
Libraries are not even getting a small slice when the cake is cut. Of a 1991 budget of the Ministry of Education and Culture of R580 million, only R14 million, i.e. 2.4% of the total budget, was allocated to the Department of Culture which is responsible for art, drama, music, the archives, the museum and libraries including school, public and government libraries. Of the 2.4%, the libraries, the museum and the archives received only 1% for the 1992 fiscal year, and for 1993 they received only 0.6% of the Ministry's budget. So it is rather a question of libraries getting a few, ever diminishing crumbs falling from the table. In the 1991 Annual Report of the Namibian Ministry of Education and Culture, libraries hardly feature at all.

CONCLUSION

Recent developments regarding the preparation of library legislation for Namibia give reason for some hope but only the future will tell when and if the Namibian school library will receive its rightful share and be able to play its destined role as an essential tool towards educational advancement and excellence. Until such time that policy makers realize that the school library is no luxury but a *sine qua non* for successful teaching and learning, the establishment of a school library in every Namibian school will remain an uphill struggle.

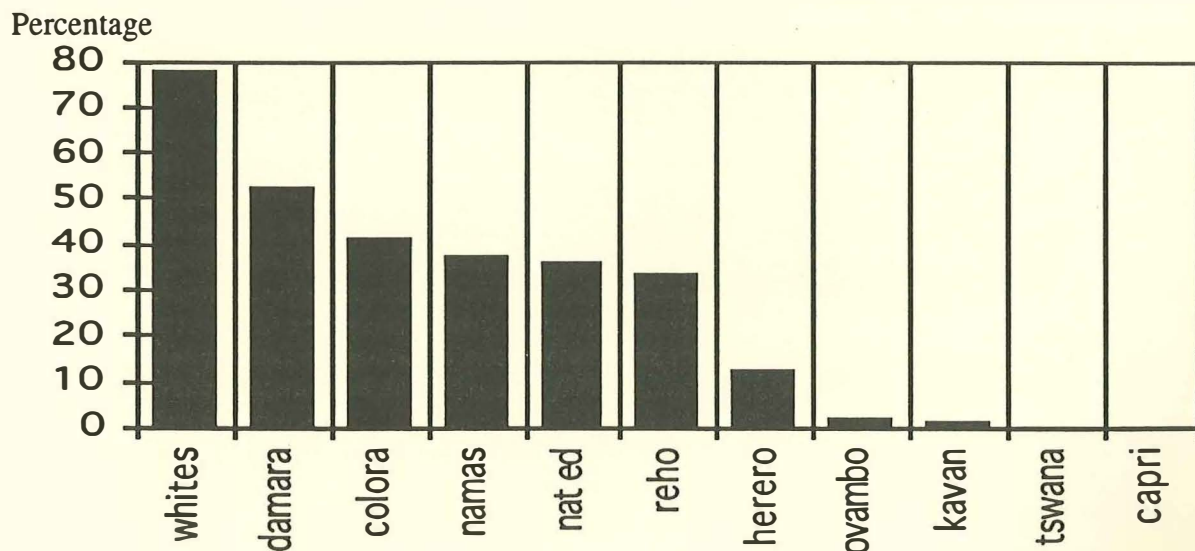
FIGURES

1.B Pupils with Book Collections



* **AUTHORITY** - It is known that all 17,224 pupils except junior primary pupils under the former Administration for the Whites are exposed to well-equipped media centres and 100% response would have given a percentage nearer to 80%

1.E Funding of School Libraries



* **AUTHORITY** - It is known that 100% of former white schools are more/less fully financed by the former educational authority for whites.

1.G

Total number of library books; average percentage and number of library books per former authority and school; ratio of books per pupil
(Total no. of books in diminishing order)

Authority	No. of Library books	Total no. of pupils	Average % of books per authority	Books per pupil ratio	Total no. of schools	Average no. of library books per school
Whites	*234,250	17,224	71.4	13.6	66	3,549
Nat. Ed.	**28,717	42,921	8.7	0.7	93	308
Coloureds	24,313	15,946	7.4	1.5	37	657
Damaras	13,603	9,921	4.1	1.4	23	591
Rehoboth	9,014	10,000	2.7	0.9	39	231
Namas	8,662	11,877	2.6	0.7	38	227
Owambo	6,890	193,219	2.1	0.03	507	13
Caprivi	2,000	20,935	0.6	0.09	71	28
Hereros	264	16,595	0.0	0.02	40	7
Kavango	200	34,563	0.06	0.005	237	0.8
Tswana	0	1,068	0.0	0.0	2	0
11	327,913	374,269	±100%	0.88	1,153	248

* If a 100% response had been given, the number of library books and percentage would have been even higher.

** The figure includes two private schools which combined have 18,800 library books; the number of books in schools under full control of the Department which took part in the survey, is 9,917. According to information given by the Department, there are 13,010 library books in 10 operating school libraries in schools under their direct supervision.

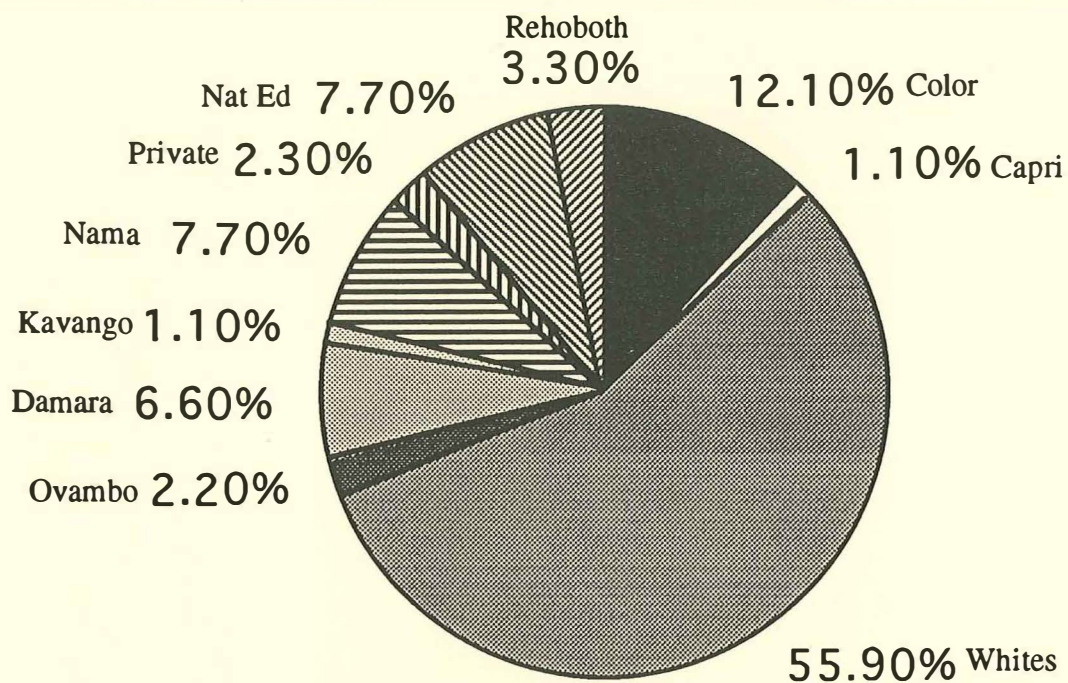
1.H Number of serial publications and audio-visual media in Namibian schools per former educational authority													
Authority	Per.	New.	Cas.	Vid.	Fi.	Rec.	Sl.	Fs.	Tr.	Ph.	Ma.	Mm.	Mo.
Owambo	13	6	0	10	0	0	3	0	52	0	51	0	0
Kavango	-	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
Caprivi	0	0	5	10	0	0	-	20	7	0	26	0	0
Tswana	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nama	31	13	31	2	0	0	0	0	42	0	12	2	2
Damara	26	13	11	33	0	13	0	0	47	0	73	0	15
Herero	4	0	10	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Whites	1458	135	1489	784	1	837	729	1656	1933	369	594	561	29
Coloureds	151	15	37	2	0	0	3	0	41	0	53	0	0
Rehoboth	5	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	2
Nat Ed.	118	16	8	25	0	0	17	5	15	0	65	0	2
Pr. Schools	22	7	36	21	0	79	0	250	267	0	0	0	5
Total	1828	221	1627	888	1	929	752	1931	2404	369	888	563	55

Key: Per. = Periodicals
 New. = Newspapers
 Cas. = Cassettes
 Vid. = Videos
 Fi. = Films
 Rec. = Records
 Sl. = Slides
 Fs. = Filmstrips
 Tr. = Transparencies
 Ph. = Photos
 Ma. = Maps
 Mm. = Multi-media sets
 Mo. = Models

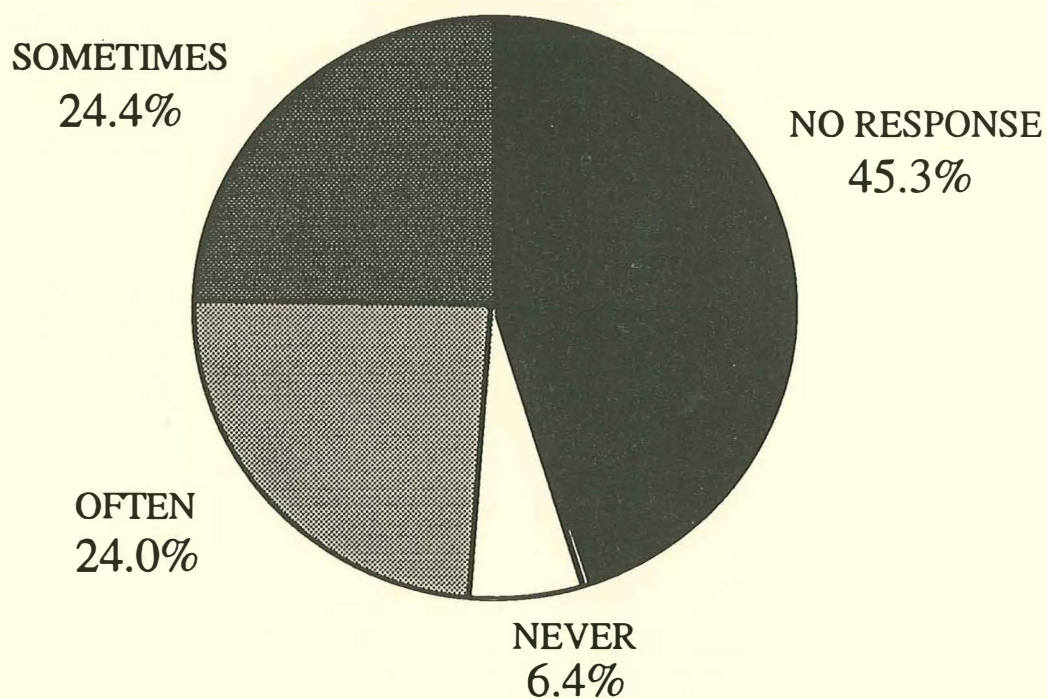
**Percentage of each type of medium kept by former white schools as a
percentage of media kept in all Namibian schools**

Periodicals titles subscribed to:	80%	Models:	55.7%
Newspaper titles subscribed to:	61%	Photographs:	100%
Cassettes:	91.5%	Records:	90%
Videos:	88.2%	Slide sets:	96.9%
Maps	66.9%	Filmstrips:	85.8%
Transparencies:	80.4%	Total number of former white schools:	66
		Total number of Namibian schools:	1153

1.L School Library / Media Centre Facilities

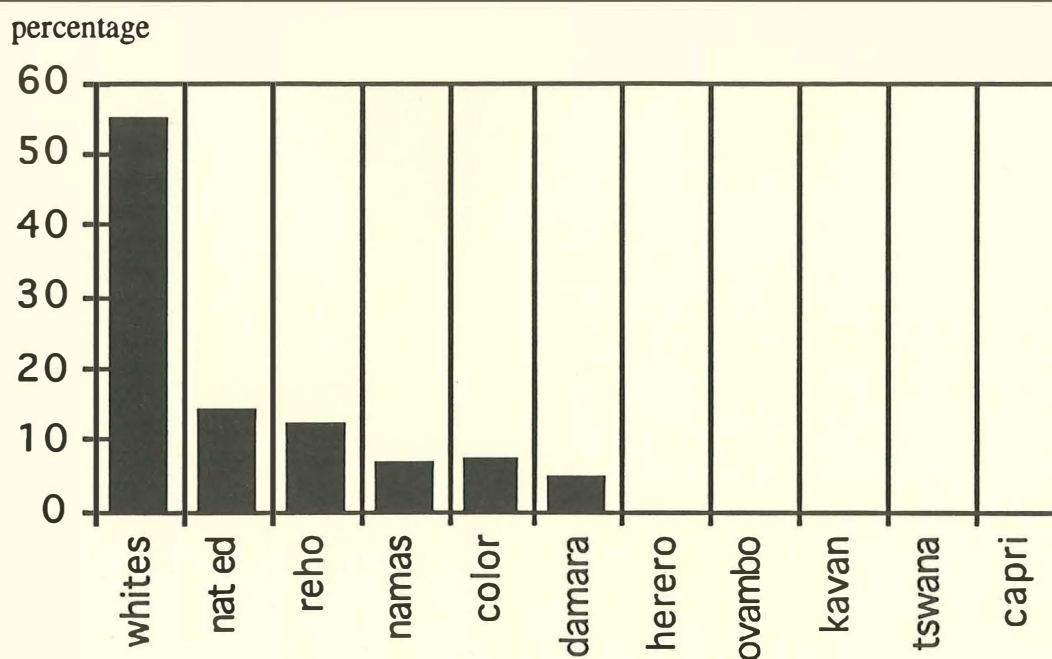


1.Q Curricular Use of the School Library



1.R

Qualified Librarians



1.U Matric Results 1982-1988 Cape Senior Certificate per Education Authority

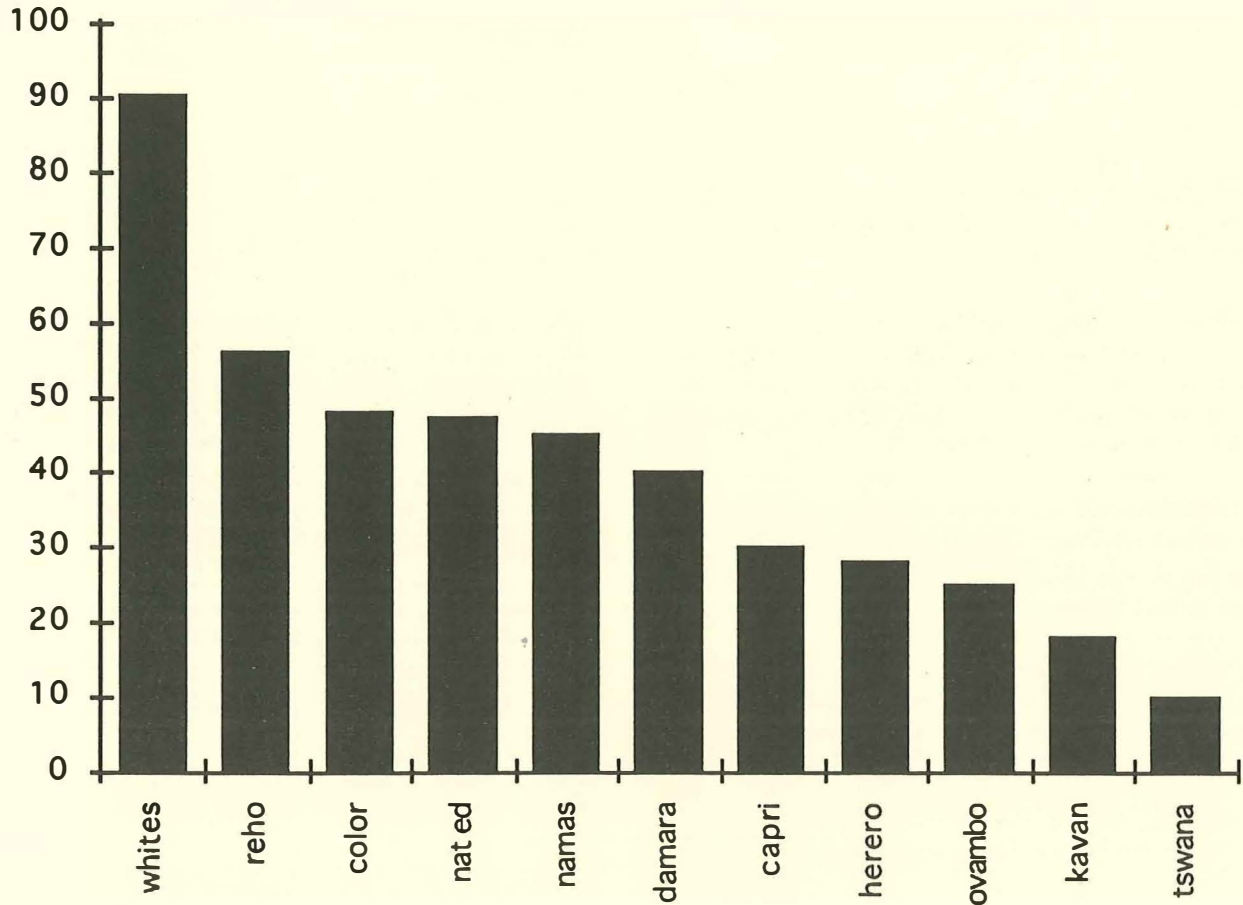
Authority	Sat for Exam		Passed		Failed		% Passed
	Total '82-88	Average per year	Total '82-88	Average per year	Total '82-88	Average per year	
Whites	5,799	828	5,219	746	580	82	90%
Rehoboth	1,166	167	646	93	520	74	55.4%
Coloureds	1,789	255	853	122	936	133	47.7%
Nat Ed.	1,840	263	858	123	982	140	46.6%
Namas	683	98	308	43	463	65	45%
Damara	731	104	290	141	441	63	40%
Caprivi	1,015	145	305	44	710	101	30%
Herero	250	36	72	10	178	25	29%
Owambo	2,431	347	621	89	1,810	258	25.5%
Kavango	272	39	49	7	223	32	18%
* Tswana	101	51	10	5	90	45	10%
Totals	16,077	2,333	9,231	1,323	6,933	1,018	57.4% Excl. Whites 20.9%

* No matric results for Tswana schools for 1982-1985 and 1988.

Averages of 1986 and 1987

1.V Matric Results 1982 - 1988 Average Percent

Percentage



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