

School attendance boys versus girls

In Namibia there are more girls going to school than boys. In fact, last year there were over 12 thousand more girls in total in school than boys.

Is this because more girls than boys are born? Or do more boys die in early childhood? Or are boys kept out of school more than girls to do homestead chores such as spending time at the cattle post, or herding goats?

We will not know the answers to these questions until the Population Census figures of last year have been analysed and made available. Nor will we know until then how many boys and girls do not attend school at all.

But we do know from education statistics available that there are great variations in the school attendance of girls and boys, both between regions and between school levels.

Regional differences reveal for example that in 1991 there were more boys attending school in the regions of Katima Mulilo and Rundu than there were girls attending. But in Ondangwa region more girls attended school than boys.

Looking at school levels, statistics reveal that in total less girls attend secondary school than boys. The drop-out rate of girls is much higher than that of boys, in particular after Grade 10, the end of Junior Secondary Education. At Senior Secondary level girls are in the minority in all regions of the country.

A closer look at the results of the 1991 matriculation examination, which only 42% of all candidates passed, shows the following:

Of the total number that passed 46% were girls. But girls achieved 51% of the university exemptions.

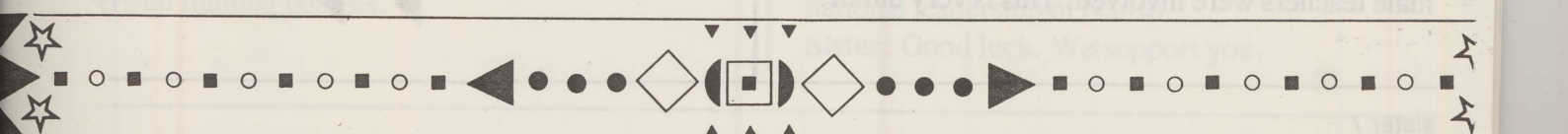
If we look at a racial breakdown of figures we see that of all the students that passed matric last year 50% were white, 17% were coloured and 32% were black.

If we compare the pass rates of black urban schools to those of black rural schools we see the following: Of those students that passed matric in Katutura, 52% were girls and 48% were boys.

In rural schools girls only made for 34% of the pass rate against a 66% of the boys. Altogether 193 white girls achieved university exemption in comparison with 15 black girls (8 from the rural areas).

It is clear that the effects of Bantu Education, and the lack of proper resources in black schools and in black homes will still take some time to be eradicated.

However, more research according to gender is needed to assess the situation of boys versus girls in education. Only proper research studies will give us answers to questions such as why is the pass rate of girls so low in rural areas compared to that of boys, and why are the numbers of girls attending secondary school considerably lower than that of boys.



Less girls attend secondary school in Namibia than boys. In our society more emphasis is placed on the education of boys. The high rate of teenage pregnancies is another reason for the high drop-out rate of girls during secondary school.