



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Office of the Minister

PUBLIC NOTICE

PHASING OUT OF GRADE 8 AND 10 SELECTIONS AND
13 YEARS OF UNIVERSAL EDUCATION UP TO
GRADE 12 IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

By Hon. Lucas Dawa Dekena MP, Minister for Education
Tuesday December 10th, 2024

INTRODUCTION

I have decided to take this Public Notice to clarify my earlier policy announcement and give assurance to parents and those concerned about examinations and selections by answering some common questions.

As Minister, I guarantee every parent that examinations will not be phased out. Examinations are essential for monitoring student progress, evaluating learning outcomes, and guiding future planning. What we are intending to reform is removing selection processes that unfairly push children out of school at early grades.

Q1: Would you like your child or sibling to end his or her education journey at Grade 8 (Aged 14), Grade 10 (Aged 16), or complete the full 13 years of schooling?

A: Following my recent announcement of the phasing out of Grade 8 and 10 selections, which grade 8 and 10 examinations have been used as a tool in the process, concerns have been raised about this policy.

As Minister, I guarantee every parent that examinations will not be phased out but will be strategically increased in the next few years to assess learning outcomes and improve the standard of teaching and learning.

Selections at Grade 8 and 10 in our education system will be phased out to provide universal education up to Grade 12 – 13 years of education for all children and leaving no child behind.

Q2: Why is the government phasing out Grade 8 and 10 selections?

A: There are several key reasons for this:

- a) **Universal Education:** Papua New Guinea and all UN member nations have committed to delivering Sustainable Development Goal 4, which obligates us to ensure that every child completes universal primary and secondary education by 2030. We have to do what it takes to deliver on this commitment. Consequently, in 2017 and again in 2020, the government approved and directed the Department of Education to implement the 1-6-6- school system structure to remove elementary schools, improve quality and have all students progress from preparatory all the way to Grade 12.
- b) **Ending an Outdated System:** Our current selection process is a remnant of the colonial education system that encouraged social and economic classes and created a few white collar jobs. Globally, there is hardly any modern education system that promotes a selection system. We must decide what is best for our country then to maintain a colonial legacy that classifies some of our young people as failures, drop outs and unfits.
- c) **Fairness:** It is unfair to push children out of the system at Grade 8 (around age 14) or Grade 10 (around age 16) without equipping them with proper skills and knowledge. This change ensures every child has the opportunity to reach Grade 12 education and be prepared for life and pursue further education, training, or employment.

With every child progressing to Grade 12, families will have greater confidence in their children's future. Communities will benefit from a more educated population that is better equipped to contribute to societal and economic development.

Q3: Will examinations be removed altogether?

A: No. Examinations will remain in our national education system. The misconception that examinations are being removed is incorrect. We intend to remove the selection processes at Grades 8 and 10. Examinations will still be conducted to assess students' knowledge, skills, and aptitude. These examinations will guide us in identifying areas where students excel, whether academically or

in vocational skills. There will be additional assessment of learning to compare our students in class, grade, national (National examinations), regional (PILNA and AGRA) and international (PISA and TIMMS) levels. The National Assessment Policy under review will provide further details.

Q4: Will education standards drop because of this policy?

A: Not at all. The government is committed to maintaining high education standards. Examinations and assessments will continue to measure student performance and uphold quality. Phasing out Grade 8 and 10 selections does not mean compromising on standards; rather, it ensures that every child progresses through the education system with equal opportunities.

There are development challenges that affect students learning, such as large class sizes, not enough teachers, curriculum resources etc, but overtime we are committed to conquer them. But first, let us all work together to get every child complete 13 years of basic education and collectively address the quality education needs. We are removing the elementary school system and introducing early childhood education in 2025, curriculum and examinations reforms will continue, upgrading teacher academic and professional qualifications will continue. These reforms will take time to show results.

Q5: Do we have the infrastructure to accommodate all students going through to Grade 12?

A: Infrastructure poses several challenges, so we are taking a collaborative approach to addressing this. These include:

- 1. **Flexible Open Distance Education:** we will continue to expand Flexible, Open, and Distance Education (FODE) to provide a pathway for students who cannot fit into conventional schools with classrooms. Secondary schools, districts, provinces and registered Study Centres are being supported to increase the capacity to allow students to continue to grade 12. Completing Grade 12 is also possible through other pathways like TVET.
- 2. **Provincial and District Support:** Provincial and district governments will play a crucial role in increasing school capacity by building more classrooms in existing schools and increasing new schools. Every LLG is required to have a minimum of one high school and NDOE will support provinces and districts to increase conventional high/ secondary schools' capacity. Many districts like Kokopo and provinces like WHP, are already taking ownership.
- 3. **Vocational Centers:** We will strengthen vocational pathways so students from Grades 9 to 12 can acquire practical skills alongside academic education. Vocational/Trade courses are offered in technical high schools and vocational training centres. Every district is required to have the minimum of one vocational training centre. We urge every district and province to work towards this target.

Q6: What steps are being taken to address teacher shortages for Grades 9 to 12?

A: To ensure we have enough qualified teachers, we will:

- 1. Recruit university graduates with subject-specific expertise and provide them with a **Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE)**. This one-year program will prepare them to teach in high schools and secondary schools; and
- 2. Allow university graduates to begin teaching and complete their PGDE qualification after one or two years of service.

These measures will enable us to address the increased demand for teachers while maintaining teaching quality. An advertisement will be put out shortly in the papers allowing graduates to start applying for their training and

engagement.

Q7: Will all provinces begin implementing these changes in 2025?

A: The answer is No. Phasing out of grade 8 selections will be implemented in Provinces that are ready. This means, provinces with higher transition rates—those already having over 70–80% of students from Grade 8 to Grade 9—will take the lead.

Q8: Will selections at grade 8 and Grade 10 happen in 2025 and in all provinces?

A: Firstly, exit of selections at grade 8 and 10 will not happen together in the 2025 or in the same year. We will only start with removing grade 8 selections in 2025, and thereafter, based on the experience and results of that phase commence removing selections at grade 10.

Secondly, implementation of the reform will not happen in all provinces in the same year or in 2025. We will analyse enrolment and grade 8 to 9 transition data, before we work with provinces that are ready. Provinces with the lowest grade 8 drop-outs, or highest grade 8 to 9 transition rates would be the first. Provinces with the highest transition rates are often those with sufficient schools/classes and teachers to accommodate grade 8 students. We will start with a few provinces in 2025 and progressively cover all provinces in the following years.

Q9: What about students who drop out after Grade 12 exams? Where do they fit in the system?

A: For students exiting the system after Grade 12, we are developing pathways to ensure they have opportunities for further education or employment. These include:

- 1. Vocational Training: Expanding access to vocational training centers to equip students with practical skills for the workforce.
- 2. Higher Education: Increasing opportunities for tertiary education and training through scholarships and partnerships.
- 3. Employment Pathways: Collaborating with industries to create job opportunities and apprenticeships for Grade 12 graduates.
- 4. Second Chance Opportunities: Students who are weak academically can upgrade their academic results through FODE too.

Every effort will be made to support students in finding meaningful pathways after school.

CONCLUSION

My fellow citizens, education is a right for every child. My message is simple: this reform is about giving every child the opportunity they deserve to reach their full potential. By removing Grade 8 and 10 selections, we are taking a bold step toward a fairer, and a more inclusive education system.

Yes, there are challenges, but together—with the support of parents, teachers, and all stakeholders—we can achieve this vision. Education reform is never easy, but it is necessary for the progress of our nation.

The phasing out of Grade 8 and 10 selections is a step toward building a stronger, more equitable system that leaves no child behind. Examinations will remain to assess learning and help us maintain education standards. Quality education investment will always remain a priority every year.

Let us work together to ensure that every child in Papua New Guinea has access to quality education and the tools they need to succeed in life.

Authorized for release by:

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