

**IDENTIFYING THE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS THAT SHAPE  
THE ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS OF GRADE 12 LEARNERS FROM TWO RURAL  
SCHOOLS IN THE OSHIKOTO REGION OF NAMIBIA**

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF MASTER OF EDUCATION IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF  
THE WESTERN CAPE.

BY

**SAKARIA AMUTENYA**

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**Supervisor: Professor Beverley Thaver**

## DECLARATION

I declare that *Identifying the social and environmental factors that shape the achievement levels of Grade 12 learners from two rural schools in the Oshikoto region of Namibia* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as references.

Signature.....*A. Mulenya*.....  
Date.....*27-02-2014*.....



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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late elder sister, Itsuwe Teopolina Magano Amutenya, who has been always my inspiration, and encouraged me to work hard in school. Sadly, she could not live to witness this achievement to which she contributed substantially.



## ACRONYMS USED IN THIS STUDY

BETD	Basic Education Teacher Diploma
CO A	Classroom Observation from School A
CO B	Classroom Observation from School B
ECP	Education Certificate Primary
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
HOD A	Head of Department from School A
HOD B	Head of Department from School B
INSET	In-service Education and Training
LA	Learners from School A
LB	Learners from School B
LEP	Limited English Proficiency Learners
LRC	Learner Representative Counsellor
NAMCOL	Namibia College of Open Learning
NCBE	National Curriculum for Basic Education
NEC	National Education Certificate
NSSB	National Standard Setting Body
PA	The Principal from School A
PB	The Principal from School B
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
TA	Teachers from School A
TB	Teachers from School B

## KEY WORDS

Schools

Teachers

Learners

Learning outcomes

Teaching and learning

Classroom management

Teaching strategies

Teaching methods

Academic performance

Learner achievement levels



## **ABSTRACT**

### **Identifying the social and environmental factors that shape the achievement levels of Grade 12 learners from two rural schools in the Oshikoto region of Namibia.**

S. Amutenya

M Ed Thesis, Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape

The primary purpose of this study was to understand how certain factors could contribute to the low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners from two selected rural schools. For the purpose of this research these two schools were referred to as School A and School B. The academic performance of Grade 12 learners from schools A and B has been very low since 2008-2010. On average, these two senior secondary schools produced less than 5% of their learners who qualified for entrance to the University of Namibia (Ministry of Education, 2003-2010).

The researcher reviewed the literature in order to get to understand the main contributors to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners from schools A and B in the Oshikoto region. The literature review revealed some aspects which have an influence on the achievement levels of learners, such as: school environment, rural schools and study time, the role and function of the teacher, teachers' professional identities, teachers' personal identities, teachers' commitment and dedication to their work, teachers' education and training, teaching methods and approaches, teaching resources, English as a medium of instruction in the classroom, subject choice-curriculum, school promotion practices, classroom management skills, teachers' expectations of learners, and learner motivation and academic commitment.

This study adopted a qualitative research design approach and a case study analysis. Data collection for this research was conducted by means of using different sources such as questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations and document analysis at both schools. This triangulation in data collection was to cater for the shortcomings encountered when one method is employed (Nieuwenhuis, 2011). Respondents for this study were the principals, head of departments, teachers and learners in schools A and B.

The findings of this research revealed that the predominant contributors to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners at schools A and B were mainly related to: school environment and study time, the role and function of the teacher, teachers' professional and personal identities, teacher commitment and dedication, teacher expectations of learners, the use of English as a medium of instruction, lack of teaching resources, lack of broad subject choice, school promotion practices, and lack of learner motivation and commitment. The researcher concluded that most of the crucial factors which seemed to have an influence on the low achievement levels of learners at both schools were similar.

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that more hostels need to be built at schools that offer Grade 12, schools need to establish some committees that would motivate and provide counselling to low achieving learners. Apart from that all learners should be given the rights to choose their subjects which they wish to study from Grade 11 to 12. Grade repetition for Grade 11 learners should be introduced in Namibian schools.



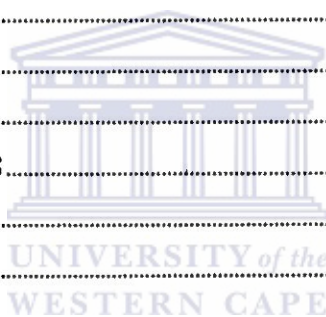
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# CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Given the importance of Grade 12, both in terms of accessing higher education institutions as well as the employment market, achievement at this level remains a crucial policy concern in some developing African countries such as Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Botswana (Berg and Louw, 2006; Kapenda *et al.*, 2011; Legotlo *et al.*, 2002; Nenty, 2010; Oluwatoyin, 2006). Low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners are a matter of concern in all 13 educational regions of Namibia (Ministry of Education, 2003-2010). The problem of low academic performance of Grade 12 learners has been and is still persistent in the Oshikoto educational region, despite educational reform programmes implemented since 1994 (Ministry of Education, 2003-2010).

Since Namibia got its independence in 1990, the Ministry of Education enacted policies in order to improve the quality of education and address the prevailing low academic achievement levels of learners in schools. From 2008 until 2010, less than 5% of Grade 12 learners from schools A and B met the entry requisite criteria to the University of Namibia (Ministry of Education, 2009). This informs us that approximately 95% of Grade 12 learners from schools A and B attained low academic achievement levels from Grade 12 and could not reach the entry requirements to the University of Namibia. Hence, it is evident that academic performance levels of Grade 12 learners from schools A and B were disappointing to all stakeholders in education, such as the Ministry of Education, teachers, parents and learners themselves in the Oshikoto region (Iyambo, 2010; Mutorwa, 2004).

Legotlo *et al.* (2002) emphasize that Grade 12 results are used to measure and judge the effectiveness and efficiency of the school system. Research studies have been conducted to investigate the causes to low academic achievement levels of Grade 12 learners in southern African countries such as South Africa, Botswana, Malawi, Lesotho, Namibia and Zambia (Berg and Louw, 2006; Kapenda *et al.*, 2011 ; Legotlo *et al.*, 2002; Nenty, 2010). Low achievement

levels of Grade 12 learners are not only a matter of concern in Namibia, but it is also a concern in many African countries (Berg and Louw, 2006). In this regard, a good education system is reflected by good performance in schools' Grade 12 examinations' average pass rates in each academic year (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). If the performance levels of Grade 12 learners are low each academic year, this reflects that there are crucial problems within the education system which need to be identified and addressed. Scholars indicate that there are several factors that may impact on learners' performance levels at schools; some of these factors are: school leadership and management, socio-economic factors, school environment, teachers' actions, teaching methods, learners' cognitive abilities, learners' motivation, learners' study skills and so on (Alma, 2001; Haralambos and Holborn, 2008; Legotlo *et al.*, 2002; Mwamwenda, 1996; Kasambira, 2000; Seibert, 2002). In this respect, I was interested in understanding the reasons and contributory social and environmental factors that could account for the low levels of learners' performance at schools A and B in the Oshikoto educational region of Namibia.



## 1.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Given the need to identify the social and environmental factors that shape the achievement levels of Grade 12 learners at schools A and B, the aim of this study is to:

- understand how certain factors could contribute to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners in schools A and B.

## 1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

As a resident of the Oshikoto region in which schools A and B are located, I learnt with dismay that most of Grade 12 learners at these schools complete Grade 12 with very low academic gains. So far, between 2003 and 2012, there has been limited improvement in the academic achievement levels of Grade 12 learners at schools A and B in the Oshikoto region. In this

regard, this study is important because various factors which were found to be the contributors to poor performance levels of Grade 12 learners at schools A and B, were exposed. Furthermore, if the recommendations made in this study are implemented this will help to increase Grade 12 pass rates in schools A and B. As a result, more students will enrol for degree programmes at the University of Namibia as well as at other institutions of high learning in Namibia and abroad. Apart from that, the findings of this study act as an eye opener for the Ministry of Education to notice some of the possible factors which might be causing poor performance levels of Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto region. The findings of this research are also expected to aid teachers about possible factors that could have negative or positive influences on Grade 12 learners' academic performance levels. Hence, some of the findings of this research would be helpful to the teachers so that they will be able to assist most of their learners in school and meet their learning needs. The Namibia Education Act (Act No. 16 of 2001) stipulates that more efforts should be undertaken to improve the conditions of teaching and learning, especially in rural areas, in order to improve the achievement of educational outcomes in schools.

The Namibia National Curriculum for Basic Education (2009:4) states clearly that, "at the end of Grade 12, learners should be well prepared for further study or training or employment". In this regard, as a professional educator, I was interested to identify factors that could contribute towards low academic performance levels of Grade 12 learners in schools A and B in the Oshikoto educational region of Namibia. Teachers are expected to "mitigate and counteract problems" that are impeding the academic success of learners in schools (Hargreaves, 2003:1). Calhoun, Hopkins and Joyce (2002) state that it is teachers and educational researchers who should be able to discover elegant modes of teaching and learning that would bring about successful academic achievement levels of learners. In addition to that, teachers and all education stakeholders need to identify problems that contribute to the poor academic performance levels of learners in schools, so that they will be able to meet the learning needs of their learners appropriately.

## 1.4 CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

The Oshikoto region, situated in the northern part of Namibia, is one of the thirteen regions in Namibia. Most of the people in this region are Oshiwambo speaking. Even though there are many different tribes in Namibia, the tribe of the Oshiwambo speaking people is the largest tribe in the country. Most of the Oshiwambo speaking people live in the four regions situated in the Northern part of Namibia which are, Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana and Oshikoto. The living of most of the community in these regions depends on subsistence farming.

Until 1948 there was no state school in the northern part of Namibia (Harber, 1993). This means that, until 1948, many Namibians who lived in the northern part of the country were illiterate because schools in the country were limited. By 1958, when the Bantu Education System was introduced in Namibia, the system was divided into segments for each ethnic group in the country (Mutorwa, 2004). This meant that Blacks, Coloureds and Whites had separate education systems in terms of syllabi and educational infrastructures.

Dahlstrom (1995) states that teachers who had a teaching qualification in Namibia before independence in 1990 were those who had done the Education Certificate Primary (ECP) course. The ECP course was a two-year programme and it could not provide Black teachers with adequate teaching skills and expertise (Dahlstrom, 1995). Dahlstrom (1995) further highlights that most teachers were unqualified before Namibia got its independence in 1990 (Dahlstrom, 1995). There was no quality, equality and democracy in the teacher education system in the country (O'Sullivan, 2004).

Before Namibia got its independence in 1990, there was no university in Namibia whereby teachers could receive teacher education training (Dahlstrom, Swarts and Zeichner, 1999; Harber, 1993). There was only the Academy, which was a tertiary training institution for mainly White student teachers in Windhoek (Harber, 1993). Harber (1993) further highlights that the other training institutions for teachers which existed in the country were Windhoek College of Education, Ongwediva College of Education, Rundu College of Education and Caprivi College of Education. At Windhoek College of Education only White student teachers were allowed admission (Harber, 1993). Facilities at Windhoek College were adequate and superior to



facilities at all other colleges of education that were meant for Black student teachers (Harber, 1993). In 1981 there were only 200 white student teachers at Windhoek College of education, despite the college facilities being meant for over 1500 students. Black students could not be admitted to this college (Harber, 1993). The other colleges were meant for Black student teachers in the northern part of Namibia (Dahlstrom, 1995; Harber, 1993). These colleges were not of the same quality as Windhoek College of Education. Colleges for Black students were of poor quality in terms of building capacities, resources and quality of teacher education programmes (Dahlstrom, 1995; Harber, 1993). This meant that at colleges where Black students were trained there were inadequate facilities, and this could result in poor learning processes and academic performance levels of Black students too.

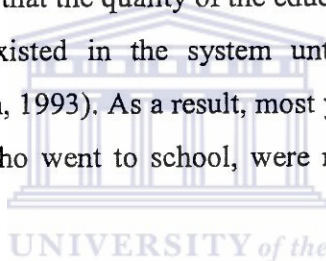
Harber (1993) insists that Black students did not receive the same educational training courses that were offered to White students. In effect, Black teachers were poorly educated in the colonial education system (O'Sullivan, 2004; Dahlstrom *et al.*, 1999). Black teachers in Namibia during the colonial education system were not empowered with pedagogic skills with regard to a learner-centred approach, which develops critical thinking and problem solving skills among learners (Harber, 1993). Harber (1993) further highlights that teachers were just trained to transmit the political ideology of the apartheid system of the South African colonial regime.

Statistics show that at the start of Namibian independence there were many teachers who did not possess any professional teacher training (Mutorwa, 2004). In 1990 “over 60% of teachers were unqualified and 99% of these teachers were Blacks” (O'Sullivan, 2004:7). Under qualified teachers are teachers who had some form of pedagogic training but were inadequately trained (O'Sullivan, 2004). O'Sullivan (2004) further states that until 1990 80% of the Black teachers were under qualified.

Dahlstrom (1995) informs us that Black teachers at the training colleges were admitted to the Education Certificate Primary (ECP) course. The ECP course was a two-year programme and did not provide Black student teachers with a proper teaching qualification (Dahlstrom, 1995). After independence most Black teachers in the country were known as unqualified teachers because most of them who had a teaching qualification had ECP as their highest teaching qualification in the country, by then. The ECP course was later replaced just before independence by the

National Education Certificate course (NEC) (Ministry of Education, 1993). This suggests that before independence in 1990, most Black teachers in the northern part of the country were not in possession of any degree teaching qualification. It is also evident that immediately after independence most Black teachers were not qualified at a degree level too. This seems to have negative implications in the current education system of Namibia, because some of the teachers who teach in Namibian schools currently are those who were under qualified before Namibia got its independence in 1990 (Ministry of Education, 1993).

On the eve of independence, when an educational survey was undertaken in the northern part of Namibia in 1988, it was found that 70% of Black learners who reached their final year of primary education failed to go to secondary schools (Dahlstrom *et al.*, 1999). In addition, Dahlstrom *et al.* (1999) note that in 1990 about two-thirds of the population could not read or write. Nearly 40 000 young Namibians out of a 1, 5 million population had no access to schools (Dahlstrom *et al.*, 1999). This meant that the quality of the education system was very poor in the country. The racial inequalities existed in the system until 1990 when Namibia got its independence (Ministry of Education, 1993). As a result, most young Black Namibians could not go to school, while those Blacks who went to school, were not exposed to qualified teachers (Dahlstrom *et al.*, 1999).



When the SWAPO government took office in 1990, the Ministry of Education experienced more problems about teachers in the education system (Ministry of Education, 1992). Many teachers were unqualified, under qualified and incompetent (O'Sullivan, 2004). The shortage of qualified teachers was very high in the country. Moreover, there was a lack of incentives for teachers, like poor remuneration and accommodation for teachers in the rural areas. Furthermore, teachers lacked competencies to adequately analyze the syllabus and do proper lesson preparation at schools (Meyer, 2002; Ministry of Education, 1992).

After independence all unqualified teachers who were teachers at secondary school level in Namibia were transferred to teach at primary schools (Ministry of Education, 1992). All of these teachers were advised to upgrade their teaching qualifications through in-service training programmes. As a result, most of the teachers who are teaching at primary schools in Namibia are those who were unqualified teachers before Namibia got independence. Unqualified teachers

are no longer allowed to teach in Namibian schools (NCBE, 2009). The Ministry of Education (2009) has set up minimum requirements for teachers in the teaching profession during the educational reform programme that was completed in 1999. The minimum requirement for teachers teaching from Grade 1-10 in Namibia is a three-year education teaching diploma (Ministry of Education, 2009), while the teaching requirement for teachers who teach at senior secondary school level (Grade 11 and 12) is a four-year teaching degree (NCBE, 2009).

Currently, many of the teachers who were under qualified before Namibia got independence in 1990 are in possession of the Basic Teacher Education Diploma (BETD) which they acquired through in-service training programmes. Many primary school teachers in the northern part of Namibia are still poorly qualified compared to secondary school teachers (Ministry of Education, 2009; NCBE, 2009). Furthermore, most of the teachers in Namibia who teach at primary school level are qualified only with a three-year teaching diploma (Ministry of Education, 2009). This suggests that more qualified teachers are allocated to teach at senior secondary schools in the country than in lower and upper primary phases. This means that when learners at lower and upper primary schools are exposed to poorly qualified teachers, they seem not to get a good education foundation. Ndimande and Zeichner (2008) emphasize that quality of teachers' education and training levels at a particular school determines the levels of learners' achievement levels.

The Namibian National Curriculum for Basic Education (NCBE, 2009:37) clearly states that "teachers in Namibia must be appropriately qualified and correctly deployed to teach in the phase and subjects which they are allocated". No teacher should be allowed to teach any subject for which they are not qualified (NCBE, 2009; Dahlstrom *et al.*, 1999).

The Academy which provided teacher education training programmes before independence was, after independence, replaced by the University of Namibia (Dahlstrom *et al.*, 1999). At independence teacher education was considered the first national priority and was reformed in line with the four major goals of education in Namibia, which are access, equity, quality and democracy. These goals were to be realized through the educational principles of a learner-centred education in Namibia (Leczal, Liman, Pomuti and Swarts, 2003; Mutorwa, 2004). In order to address the needs of unqualified teachers in Namibia, the Ministry of Education

introduced a Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) course in 1993 in all four colleges of education. This was a three-year course and it introduced a learner-centred approach to primary and secondary school teaching in Namibia (Dahlstrom, 1995). Since 1993 the Ministry of Education also introduced In-service Education and Training (INSET) programmes for under qualified teachers in Namibia (O'Sullivan, 2004). Currently all senior secondary school teachers in Namibia are trained at the University of Namibia at a degree level (Dahlstrom *et al.*, 1999).

According to recent research about weighing the effectiveness of the BETD programme, it was reported that this programme has many weaknesses and cannot effectively meet the needs of educational reform in Namibia (Ministry of Education, 2009). Consequently this programme was discarded as from January 2010 and was replaced by a four-year degree programme offered by the University of Namibia. In the light of this, as from 2010, all student teachers at all colleges of education in Namibia will be trained at a four-year degree level.

In order to improve the quality of teachers in Namibia, a National Standard Setting Body (NSSB) for the teaching profession has been established to develop a competence framework and standard for teaching (Mutorwa, 2004). Mutorwa further explains that the National Standard Setting Body was meant for developing teacher education programmes, the performance of teachers and assessing the programmes offered to teachers by different tertiary institutions in Namibia. This process was completed in 2006 (Ministry of Education, 2003; Mutorwa, 2004).

Mutorwa (2004:12) argues that the quality of education in Namibia is influenced by many factors such as teachers' "level of qualifications, effectiveness, professionalism and language proficiency". More teachers are being trained in Namibia in order to alleviate and address the shortage of teachers and to improve the competencies of teachers. For the nation to prosper, it should have its human resources development at a high standard to ensure that it is able to compete with the rest of the world" (Mutorwa, 2004:12). In this regard, Ministry of Education (2003) expressed a concern that there are still "disparities" existent between educational regions in Namibia in terms of provisions of quality human resources. The Ministry of Education further states that there are still large numbers of under and unqualified teachers in the country. This is contributing to disparities in the quality of education in the country in terms of inputs and learners' achievement levels. Another factor which is challenging the successful implementation

of education in Namibia is a lack of English proficiency among school teachers and learners (Leczel *et al.*, 2003).

The National Curriculum for Basic Education (2009) states that teachers must employ learner-centred teaching approaches in the classroom and they should work for 40 hours a week. In addition, the curriculum stresses the point that effective learning and teaching are closely linked to the use of teaching and learning materials (e.g. books, posters) and information communications technology-ICT (e.g. computers, audio and visual media) in the classroom. It is the responsibility of a teacher to select and develop the most appropriate materials and media that can adequately support learners' learning in the learner-centred curriculum. Teachers should ensure that effective teaching and learning is taking place during lessons in the classroom. They should make sure that work in the classroom is organized in accordance with the principles of the learner-centred approach (NCBE, 2009). This means that the teacher has to take on a wide repertoire of classroom roles. These include being a manager and organizer of effective learning, a counsellor, and a coach as well as being an instructor (NCBE, 2009).

Despite the fact that the number of qualified teachers is increasing now in Namibia, there are still many unqualified teachers at primary schools (EMIS, 2007). Many of these teachers have a poor understanding of the English language because they were taught in Afrikaans before independence (Harber, 1993; Mutorwa; 2004). Lack of English proficiency among teachers seems to be the cause of poor understanding in English among learners in schools in the northern part of Namibia, and this seems to have a negative influence on learners' achievement levels at secondary schools.

Despite all the educational reform programmes introduced by the Government of the Republic of Namibia since 1994, the academic performance for Grade 12 learners is consistently below average in many educational regions of Namibia (Iyambo, 2010). Iyambo (2010) expressed that more efforts should be made in order to improve the achievement levels of Grade 12 learners in the country.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION**

What are the social and environmental factors that could contribute to the low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners from two rural schools in the Oshikoto region?

## **1.6 METHODS AND TECHNIQUES**

The selection of participants for this study was limited to two senior secondary schools in the Oshikoto educational region of Namibia. The study focused on collecting data from two principals, two heads of departments, ten teachers and ten learners. Novice teachers were not respondents of this study. This study focused on collecting data from the experienced Grade 12 teachers. Many respondents for this study were teachers because the teachers' role has significant influence on learners' academic attainments at school.

The researcher spent four weeks collecting data for this study. In particular, the researcher spent two weeks per school collecting the data for this study. The researcher employed instruments such as questionnaires, structured interviews, focus group interviews and observation forms in order to collect the data.

## **1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Every study has its certain limitations (Nieuwenhuis, 2011). The limitation of this study could be that, some teachers indicated to the researcher that they were very busy with their school work and were not able to answer the questionnaires on time. Due to the time constraints, some of these teachers might have rushed to answer the questions in the questionnaires shortly without providing more crucial information for this study.

## 1.8 CHAPTERS OUTLINE

The chapters are outlined as follows:

### CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Chapter one begins with the introduction, aim and objectives, rationale and the context of the study. The context of the study outlines the historical background of the Namibian education system and teachers. The research question, methods and techniques, and limitations of the study are also presented in this chapter. The chapters outline of this thesis is presented in Chapter one, too.

### CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the review of relevant literature for this study. The discussion in this chapter seeks to identify the social and environmental factors which could potentially influence the achievement levels of learners at school.

### CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Chapter three explains methods and techniques applied to collect data for this study. In particular, this chapter explains the research methodology, design, areas of study, sample, instruments, data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

### CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the data collected for this study from schools A and B.

### CHAPTER FIVE: COMPARISON OF THE SCHOOLS

Chapter five presents a comparative discussion of the data collected from schools A and B. The conclusion, recommendations and possible areas of further research are also presented in this chapter.

The next chapter will present a review of relevant literature for this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the literature review which seeks to understand possible factors which could have an influence on the achievement levels of learners. Burn-Ncamashe (2005:12) states that “review of literature bears significance on providing the researcher with deeper insight into the topic of research”. Factors which influence learners’ achievement levels at school are varied (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000; Killen, 2010, Legotlo, Maaga and Sebego, 2002; Oluwatoyin, 2006). Some of these factors are prior education and experiences of the learner, the motivation or desire to obtain a good score, knowledge of the language being used as a medium of instruction at school among learners (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). In addition, Legotlo *et al.* (2002) emphasize that low achievement levels of learners at school are influenced by a variety of factors. In this regard, Chapter two outlines some of the debates in the literature as these pertain to various social and environmental factors which have a significant influence on learners’ learning and achievement levels. Specifically, the debates in this chapter surround the following topics: school environment, rural schools and study time, the role and function of the teacher, teachers’ professional identities, the teacher’s personal identity, teacher commitment and dedication, teachers’ education and training, teaching methods and approaches, teaching resources, English as a medium of instruction in the classroom, subject choice-curriculum, school promotion practices, classroom management, teachers’ expectations of learners, and learner motivation and commitment.

### **2.2 ORGANISATION OF THE SCHOOL-SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

This section outlines some of the debates about how the school environment is important with regard to learners’ achievement levels at school. This includes aspects of how the school environment influences learners’ learning process and academic achievement levels.



### 2.2.1 SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Scholars tell us that the schools' physical environment is an important aspect of a productive learning process (Mwamwenda, 1996; Killen, 2010). In particular, there are views that the physical environment in which the school is situated plays an important role with regard to learners' performance (Chapman, 2010; Farrant, 1999). The physical environment of a school consists of buildings, such as classrooms, laboratories, play grounds, libraries and classrooms, and varied levels of resources such as text books, and teaching equipment, among others (Farrant, 1999; Mwamwenda, 1996). Effective teaching and learning takes place in schools which have adequate classrooms, libraries and teaching resources (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). In this regard, the physical buildings and resources are important aspects of the school (Berry, 2002; Legotlo *et al.*, 2002).

According to Berry (2002), there is a link between the physical environment of the school and low achievement levels of learners. For example, if the school does not have adequate classrooms, learners will be overcrowded in classrooms and this will affect their learning outcomes negatively (Berry, 2002). In addition, if the school does not provide adequate text books to the learners, this will make it difficult for learners to learn effectively (Berry, 2002). Different schools have different physical environments and availability of resources, and these factors have an influence on learners' performance levels (Mwamwenda, 1996). The rural environment is especially important since this study's focus was on rural schools (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002).

The other important aspect of the school environment is the school uniform of the learners (DeLong, 1998). DeLong (1998) tells us that the school environment tends to be conducive to learning when all learners at the school wear school uniforms. DeLong (1998) further highlights that schools that do not have school uniforms tend to have many learners with disciplinary problems and this could have negative influences on learners' educational outcomes. When learners do not wear school uniforms, they tend to concentrate on what to wear at school, rather than concentrating on their studies (DeLong, 1998). There seems to be a link between school uniforms of learners and learners' achievement levels at school

### 2.2.2 RURAL SCHOOLS AND STUDY TIME

According to Farrant (1999), every school needs to be equipped with all necessary resources which may enhance effective teaching and learning. Schools which are under resourced are prone to low academic performance levels of their learners (Farrant, 1999). Many rural schools in Namibia are under resourced in terms of textbooks distribution and school infrastructures (Mutorwa, 2004). In particular, lack of adequate classrooms and shortages of text books in schools contribute to low performance levels of learners (Mutorwa, 2004). Lack of classrooms at schools seems to be one of the factors that contribute to overcrowding of learners in classrooms too. Huebler (2008) tells us that the learner-teacher ratio in most public schools in developing countries of Africa is 30 to 40 or more learners per one teacher, while in developed countries the learner-teacher ratio is 13.7 learners per one teacher. The learner-teacher ratio in developed countries is smaller in comparison with the learner-teacher ratio in developing countries of Africa. Teachers who teach larger classes of learners can dedicate less time to teach each learner than teachers who teach smaller classes (Huebler, 2008). Huebler (2008) insists that overcrowding of classrooms makes it difficult for learners to concentrate on the material and to learn. Mutorwa (2004) emphasizes that there is a need to address inequalities of resource allocations to schools in Namibia in order to improve the quality of education.

#### WESTERN CAPE

Christie (2008) highlights that the academic performance of an individual learner is influenced by inadequate teaching resources at school. Success and failure in school tend to be influenced by socio economic factors of the school (Christie, 2008). For example, learners who attend school at under resourced and poverty stricken schools, become victims of achieving low academic gains (Christie, 2008). Hence, low academic performance levels in rural schools are mainly a result of poverty and unequal allocation of teaching resources (Mutorwa (2004). In this regard, Barcinas and McCracken (1991) inform us that rural schools are not equipped with adequate teaching resources as other schools in urban areas. These inequalities in education lead to low achievement levels of learners in rural schools, and high achievement levels of learners in urban schools (Christie, 2008). Barcinas and Mccracken (1991) state that learners who attend school in urban areas tend to perform better academically because they are more exposed to modern technology like computers and the internet than learners at rural schools. In this respect,

Christie (2008) emphasizes that there is a need to address inequalities in resource allocation to schools in order to provide fair education to all learners in an education system.

Rural schools are not only confronted with the problem of inadequate resources, but long distance travelled by learners and hunger during school hours (Farrant, 1999). This means that when learners are tired because of walking long distances, or feeling hunger at school, they are not likely to learn and achieve quality learning outcomes.

According to Burde and Linden (2007), learners in rural areas travel long distances to and from schools. Abane *et al.* (2011) comment that learners in rural areas spent more time walking to and from school, rather than spending more time on doing their learning tasks. Walking long distances to school on a daily basis would be tiresome and might have a negative impact on learners' learning. For example, if the learner is exhausted by the distance, this can reduce his or her concentration in the classroom during the lesson (Abane *et al.*, 2011). In this respect, Abane *et al.* (2011) suggest that there is a need to address the long distances travelled by learners to schools because these learners are also exposed to the danger of snakes, and trouble makers such as robbers, rapists, and so on. Abane *et al.* (2011) indicate that the expansion of boarding houses at schools would help learners from travelling long distances to and from schools. This means that the provision of accommodation for learners at schools in rural areas would be the right thing which could address the problem of long distances travelled by learners.

Day learners can be distracted from engaging in their learning tasks by performing various household activities in rural area such as farming and cooking (Abane *et al.*, 2011; Burde and Linden, 2007). Agbor (2012) confirms that the community in rural areas in Africa are poor and their living depends on subsistence farming. As a result, most learners in rural areas do not have enough time to study because they are always expected to provide farming labour at home, such as cultivating, looking after livestock, harvesting, and so on (Agbor, 2012). Learners who have accommodation at school seem to have ample time to fulfil their learning tasks rather than day learners. For example, the school calendar of the Ministry of Education in Namibia does not allow boarding learners to go for outings. Boarding learners are only allowed to leave the hostel during home weekends or school holidays (Ministry of Education, 2009). In the light of this,

boarding learners seem to have more time to study at school than day learners who seem to be preoccupied by performing domestic chores at their homestead.

### 2.3 THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE TEACHER

While one of the main functions of the teacher is to set up the conditions for effective learning at school (Moore and Quinn, 1994), achieving effective teaching is a major task. In addition, the teacher needs effective teaching skills and abilities to use those skills in order to achieve improved learning outcomes of learners (Moore and Quinn, 1994).

According to Wright (1987), teachers have many roles to play at school in order to achieve high learning outcomes of their learners. Cohen *et al.* (2010:225) highlight that the teacher is considered as a “manager, observer, diagnostician, educator, organizer, decision maker, presenter, motivator, counselor, and evaluator”. Cohen *et al.* (2010) further reinforce that teachers have a variety of tasks to fulfil in schools so that effective academic achievement levels of learners can be attained (also see Moore and Quinn, 1994). These roles include preparing teaching lessons, engaging learners in the learning process, maintaining discipline among learners, motivating learners to take their school work seriously, and so on (Killen, 2010; Mwamwenda, 1996). Moore and Quinn (1994) highlight the task-oriented nature of teaching and the commitment to improving the learning outcomes of their learners at school. In specific terms, the teacher selects the curriculum to be taught, decides exactly what learners should know, and consistently guides the learners throughout their academic activities by using his or her “effective teaching techniques” (Moore and Quinn, 1994:23). Therefore, teachers have to perform a variety a tasks.

Adendorff *et al.* (2001:45) posit that “teachers are the keys for the futures of all generations, because they have significant influence on the lives of all young children as well as the entire youth”. The teachers’ role is very significant in every society because they educate, lead and direct, the youth into proper adulthood life (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001). Indeed, teachers are accountable for preparing young people for their futures so that they will be self-dependent

adults, with regard to literacy, numeracy and economic welfare (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001; Moore and Quinn, 1994). The role that teachers play at schools is very significant, in terms of the contributions they make towards learners' education (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001). In this regard, Ndimande and Zeichner (2008) add that teachers are technicians who are the most critical elements in determining the quality of learners' achievement levels in schools.

According to Killen (2010), the role of the teacher in school is to mediate learning for the diverse needs of all learners in the classroom, including those with barriers to learning; ensure a conducive learning environment which is appropriate to every individual learner's learning. Learners learn in different ways and by different teaching methods. Hence, some learners in the classroom are those who "can learn on their own, some need some help in learning, and some need a lot of help in learning" (Moore and Quinn, 1994:49). Learners' learning outcomes are determined by the teacher's commitment towards his or her teaching norms and mediating learners' learning effectively (Killen, 2010).

Killen (2010) informs us that the teachers are required to demonstrate adequate knowledge of the subject content. In this respect, teachers are expected to have deep knowledge in the subject they teach (Killen, 2010).

Hargreaves (2003) adds that teachers, more than any one, are expected to improve the academic achievement levels of learners in schools. In addition, Hargreaves (2003) emphasizes that teachers are the sources of the knowledge for each society worldwide. Thus, without teachers, their commitments and competence, the futures of nations would be malformed and stillborn (Hargreaves, 2003). In this regard, the role of the teacher is very crucial in education, because the teacher's role determines the extent to which learners will perform academically at schools (Killen, 2010). In light of this, Aadde and Zee (2009) reinforce that teachers are primarily expected to master their subject knowledge as experts in that field so that they are able to teach their learners effectively. Indeed, teachers who are experts in the subjects that they teach, act as role models for their learners (Burke, 1987). Burke (1987) adds that learners do enjoy lessons presented by expert teachers, because expert teachers teach clearly and explain things understandably. Therefore, the roles of teachers at any particular school have significant

influence on the learning outcomes and the achievement levels of learners at that particular school (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001).

The role of teachers – besides teaching – also involves extracurricular activities and recreational activities which learners enjoy at school (Farrant, 1999). Some of these extracurricular activities are football, netball, athletics, and so on (Cohen *et al.*, 2010; Farrant, 1999). In particular, teachers are tasked with organizing sports and teaching physical education lessons in school (Farrant, 1999). Teachers are not only preoccupied with the teaching norms at school, but they have also many other functions to fulfil at school (Wright, 1989). In this regard, Wright (1987:10) states that a teacher can be “a father, mother, judge, technician, librarian and more”.

As shown above, the role of the teacher is an important factor in influencing the learning outcomes of the learners in a particular school. Hence, teacher identity is also significant. This will now be addressed.



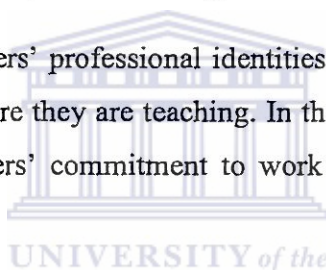
### **2.3.1 TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES**

According to Soudien (2002), teachers embody different qualities shaped by their backgrounds, social profiles, genders, levels of training and general competencies, all of which contribute to their identity as teachers. Teachers' identities are shaped by various factors, some of which are: levels of professional qualifications, their commitment to teaching norms, their schools, local environments, and so on (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001; Carrim, 2002). Thus, we can understand the role of the teacher better if we understand who teachers are and what factors shape their identities as professional teachers in schools (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001).

Gender relations are important factors and there are debates in the literature. There are arguments with regard to the role played by female and male teachers at school (Chisholm *et al.*, 2005; Carrim, 2002; Carrington *et al.*, 2008). Carrim (2002) argues that women are considered as subordinates to men in their households and this implies that the work performed by female teachers at schools is devalued. The research by Carrington *et al.* (2008) on whether male or

female teachers' genders have an influence on male or female learners' performance at school revealed that the gender of a teacher does not have a significant influence on learners' performance. The findings of the research indicate that most learners are not impressed by the gender of their teachers. Learners do, however, recommend their teachers' identities with regard to knowledge, authority, intelligence and humour (Carrington *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, learners indicated that male teachers are good at sport, funny and make good jokes, but they can shout at learners, while female teachers were considered as kind, not shouting at learners and they give rewards such as stickers (Carrington *et al.*, 2008). The findings also indicate that female teachers were more likely to see relationships with learners as enjoyable, while male teachers were more likely than women to choose effective teaching strategies relating to subjects (Carrington *et al.*, 2008). The point here is that Carrington *et al.* (2008) state that both male and female teachers can be effective or ineffective teachers. This research shows that the learners' were drawn to the teachers' knowledge of the subjects they were teaching.

Soudien (2002) indicates that teachers' professional identities in different schools vary and are also shaped by the environment where they are teaching. In this respect, in some schools where there are adequate resources, teachers' commitment to work tends to be high. This may be different at under resourced schools.



Hence, what Soudien (2002) is telling us is that the school environment and resources may have an influence on the performance of the teacher and this shapes the identity of the teacher, too. For example, if the school lacks resources, learners may attain low achievement levels and this achievement will be attributed to teachers' incompetency.

Juresaute-Harbison (2005) argues that the identity of the teacher is characterized by the level of teaching qualification and professional growth of an individual teacher. The teacher is considered an effective teacher when that particular teacher is educated and capable to carry out his or her teaching norms (Juresaute-Harbison, 2005). In light of this, Darling-Hammond (1999) comments that the extent to which a teacher fulfils his or her work at school, and the teaching skills which he or she deploys at school, shape his or her identity as a specific teacher.

According to Carrim (2002), there are crucial arguments about whether teachers are workers or professionals or are both workers and professionals. The fact that teachers are employed by the state after obtaining their professional teaching diplomas and degrees, qualifies them to be called both workers and professionals (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001). Teachers are workers because they work for the state and they are also professionals because they obtain professional teaching qualifications before they are employed to commence with the teaching process (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001). In this regard, Adendorff *et al.* (2001) emphasizes that it is meaningful to call teachers professional workers.

According to Adendorff *et al.* (2001) teachers are employees of the state and they have to obey the rules of the state that are set up to guide them. Teachers as employees of the state should adhere to the rules and regulations which are set up by the state to regulate teachers' norms and behaviour at schools (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001). In addition, Adendorff *et al.* (2001) posit that the teacher as an employee of the state should fulfil his or her duties adequately, according to the code of conduct stipulated by the employer. In this regard, teachers should recognize an employer as a partner in education and they should acknowledge the responsibilities and authorities of the employer (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001). Teachers need to serve their employers competently as expected and required by the employer (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001). The state as the employer of the teachers has the right to regulate all employment conditions with regard to transfers, appointments, promotions, resignations, qualifications and misconduct of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Carrim, 2002). Therefore, the role of the state as an employer of teachers is to ensure that all teachers are fulfilling their teaching norms at schools successfully. As professional workers of the state, teachers are expected to bring about improvements with regard to learners' achievement levels in schools (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001).

According to Darling-Hammond (1999), teachers are expected to teach according to standards set by the state. These standards are meant for improving academic achievements of learners in schools (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Policies are set by the state for teachers, to guide them about what is expected from them as teachers and to improve learners' learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 1999). In this regard, Adendorff *et al.* (2001) strongly confirm that teachers as workers for the state are central to the transformation of education and improving the



achievement levels of learners in schools. Therefore, teachers need to consider themselves as the agents responsible to transform education into quality academic performance in schools (Moore and Quin, 1994). In addition, Moore and Quin (1994) emphasize that the performance and achievement levels of learners in schools are strongly influenced by teachers' actions. In this regard, if the teacher is committed to his or her teaching norms, learners will be able to attain good learning outcomes of the subject content (Lindeque, 2001).

Research conducted in South Africa about teachers' attitudes towards Curriculum 2005 indicates that teachers lack the competence to fulfil what is expected of them by the employer (Aderndorff *et al.*, 2001). In other words, teachers are required to implement reforms introduced by the state. In certain instances teachers may have the ability but lack the resources. This is shown in the case of the Curriculum 2005 reform in South Africa (Aderndorff *et al.*, 2001). Some teachers do not attend all of their lessons which they are supposed to teach at school, and these actions can have a negative influence on the achievement levels of the learners (Aderndorff *et al.*, 2001).

Aderndorff *et al.* (2001) further state that some teachers do not perform their duties effectively as expected by the employer and the parents. For example, it is mentioned that some teachers miss lessons which means that there is reduced contact time between teachers and learners. In the same study, it was noted that there is inadequate lesson preparation on the part of certain teachers. There are indications to suggest that where teachers do not fulfil their tasks effectively, this may lead to low performance levels of learners in schools (Aderndorff *et al.*, 2001).

### **2.3.2 TEACHER'S PERSONAL IDENTITY**

Olsen (2008) highlights that every teacher has a unique personality which reflects his or her specific identity. According to Moore and Quinn (1994), teachers are normal human beings who possess different attitudes, personalities and individualities at school. The personality of the teacher is characterized by his or her attitudes and behaviours at school (Gulosino and Xu, 2006). In this regard, Olsen (2008) clarifies that "Identity is who we are". Moore and Quinn (1994) explain that the personal attitudes of the teacher have an influence on learners' learning

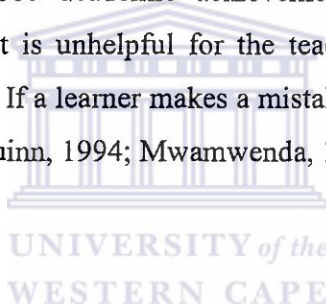
outcomes at school. Some teachers create good interactions between themselves and learners, and this has a positive influence on learners' achievement levels at school (Moore and Quinn, 1994). Some teachers have attitudes of discouraging learners from schooling, in particular, if the teacher disrespects learners, if the teacher treats learners unfairly, if the teacher does not assess the learners properly, if the teacher does not motivate the learners to work hard at school, and if the teacher is not committed to his or her teaching norms (Moore and Quinn, 1994; Mwamwenda, 1996). An effective teacher motivates learners to achieve good learning outcomes in his or her subject when that particular teacher plans and presents, "interesting, stimulating and relevant classroom activities" for the learners (Moore and Quinn, 1994:416).

Gulosino and Xu (2006) state that teachers are shaped and characterized by the ways they carry out their responsibilities as teachers in schools. Some teachers are known as competent teachers and some are considered as incompetent teachers because of their different personalities, attitudes and the way they perform at their respective schools (Gulosino and Xu, 2006). Gulosino and Xu, (2006) reinforce that the personality of any individual teacher is crucial in influencing the academic achievements of the learners.

According to Majasan (1995), teachers who do not listen to their learners and behave in a bureaucratic manner, are ineffective teachers who may not improve the achievement gains of their learners at schools. Majasan (1995) further indicates that the teacher as an educator needs to maintain good interactions between learners and him or her. If there are no good interactions between the teacher and the learners, effective teaching and learning will not be possible because learners will develop negative feelings towards the teacher and his or her subject (Majasan, 1995). In addition, Safakli and San (2007) emphasize that teachers must maintain good relationships between themselves and their learners, and they should be able to accept criticisms. In light of this, Safakli and San (2007) caution that teachers should evaluate their teaching practices and actions on a regular basis. Eggen and Kauchak (1988:2) posit that teachers' effectiveness is strongly influenced by their "personal traits" or characteristics such as "warmth and humour". Some teachers are charismatic and have abilities to influence learners to take their studies more seriously than others (Eggen and Kauchak, 1988). Therefore, Laursen (2005)

strongly emphasizes that the teacher's personal characteristics and behaviour in the classroom have significant influence on learners' achievement levels at school.

Kennedy (2009) posits that it is questionable why some teachers are more effective in performing their work than others. Asscher, Beishuizen, Bouwmeester and Van (2001:186) inform us that the good teacher is in possession of a mature personality and can always be considered as "kind, serious, enthusiastic, and possibly attractive and charismatic". In the light of this, Kennedy (2009) emphasizes that good teaching is determined by teachers' personalities and the way teachers control classroom learning environments. The teacher has to motivate all learners, get them to feel good about themselves as learners, and help them to believe that they all can succeed in school (Moore and Quinn, 1994). If learners perform poorly at school, some teachers tend to insult these particular learners, rather than encouraging them to study hard (Moore and Quinn, 1994, Mwamwenda, 1996). Learners need to be consistently encouraged to work hard in order to achieve good academic achievement levels (Mwamwenda, 1996). Mwamwenda, (1996) advises that it is unhelpful for the teacher to insult a learner for poor performance levels or wrong doings. If a learner makes a mistake, the teacher should correct that learner constructively (Moore and Quinn, 1994; Mwamwenda, 1996).



### **2.3.3 TEACHER COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION**

Teacher commitment is the most important factor with regard to the achievement levels of learners at school. In this respect, Leanne and Robert (2004) tell us that teacher commitment to work has been one of the most significant factors for the success of education and schools. This means teachers who lack commitment to their teaching norms will not teach their learners effectively. In light of this, Day, Elliot and Kington (2005) state that the commitment of the teacher towards the teaching norms has an important influence on learners' motivation, achievement levels, and attitudes towards fulfilling their school work. Park (2005) emphasizes that teacher commitment to the teaching norms determines the levels of learners' achievement at school. Hence, Learners who are taught by a less committed teacher will also become less

committed to their school work, and this may result in low achievement levels at school (Park, 2005).

According to Leanne and Robert (2004), teacher commitment to the teaching norms involves the level of the teacher's work performance and ability to innovate new ideas for improving the achievement levels of learners. It is the responsibility of the teacher to find effective measures to improve the achievement levels of his or her learners. In this regard, Leanne and Robert (2004) describe the committed teacher as a teacher who is always willing to teach and meet the learning needs of his or her learners. In addition, Day *et al.* (2005) state that a teacher who is dedicated to his or her teaching norms finds some appropriate teaching strategies which can meet the learning needs of his or her learners even after school hours.

According to Park (2005), research reveals that an individual teacher at a certain school has a specific level of motivation and commitment to the teaching norms. In this respect, Barkker, Hakanen and Schufeli (2006) inform us that teachers have individual differences, e.g. intrinsic motivation or strong desire to work as a teacher. This means, a teacher who is committed to teaching will always be willing to attend all of his or her lessons and can teach more effectively than a teacher who has low morale about the teaching norms. Furthermore, teachers who have low levels of commitment to their teaching norms may not attend some of their lessons at school (Park, 2005). In this regard, Barkker *et al.* (2006) inform us that the achievement levels of learners at school are significantly influenced by the level of teacher commitment and dedication to the teaching norms. This view is supported by Adendorff *et al.* (2001) who emphasize that teachers are the keys for learners' academic success at school.

Research reveals that there are a variety of factors which influence the commitment of the teacher to the teaching norms (Barkker *et al.*, 2006). Some of these factors are the availability of teaching resources at school, good working atmosphere at school, and learners' commitments to their school work. Teachers tend to be committed to their teaching norms if there is a good working atmosphere at school, if there are adequate teaching resources at school, and if their learners are committed to their school work (Barkker *et al.*, 2006; Day *et al.*, 2005).

### 2.3.4 TEACHERS' EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The preparation of students to teach in schools is a difficult activity, involving training students in the theory and practice of teaching. The nature of the in-service teacher training programmes to which students are exposed, influences the content and form of their teaching in the school (Thompson, 2004).

Some of the important factors that determine an effective and quality teacher are the type of educational preparation programmes and degrees attained, the type of certification, and the course work undertaken in preparation programmes for teachers (Thompson, 2004). Thompson (2004) explains that teachers who have undergone quality training programmes are better prepared to teach than teachers who were not adequately trained about teaching methods and learners' learning processes. Therefore, Brownell, Sindelar and Kiely (2010) comment that academic performance levels of learners are determined by teachers' levels of education in subject content as well as in teaching methods. Exstrom (2003) emphasizes that teachers' qualification levels have significant influence on the role of the teacher and learners' learning outcomes at school. Exstrom (2003) further explains that teachers who are qualified at degree levels are more effective in teaching their subject matter in the classrooms. The availability of highly qualified teachers in schools is the key requirement for improving achievement levels of all learners with different learning abilities in schools (Exstrom, 2003). Hence, recent research confirms that learners who are taught by highly qualified teachers do achieve high academic attainments in schools, compared with learners whose teachers are poorly qualified (Burke, 1987; Pascopella, 2006). Thus, Pascopella, (2006) highlights that there is a difference between the knowledge that a highly qualified teacher passes on to learners, and the knowledge that is passed on to learners by a poorly qualified teacher. In this regard, learners who are taught by highly qualified teachers are motivated, and enriched with more skills and knowledge than learners who are exposed to poorly qualified teachers (Pascopella, 2006).

According to Haycock and Crawford (2008), the expertise of teachers are varied, being linked to their qualification levels as mentioned earlier; some teachers would also not have undergone any teacher training and hence would be unqualified. Then, there are also those teachers who are

classified as being novice teachers. The latter refers to the beginner teacher who has been in the classroom for the first time after his or her professional training (Haycock and Crawford, 2008).

These teachers with different expertise have different influences on the achievement levels of the learners too (Haycock and Crawford, 2008). For example, teachers who have high levels of education may be more knowledgeable in their subjects than teachers who have low educational levels (Haycock and Crawford, 2008). In addition, Darling-Hammond (1999) emphasizes that qualified and experienced teachers consistently produce much larger numbers of learners with good academic performance levels, as compared with unqualified and novice teachers. Pascopella (2006) clarifies that expert teachers are those who are qualified and have adequate methods of teaching. Berliner (2001) posits that most schools that have more finance do employ highly qualified teachers for their learners to attain quality learning outcomes. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that schools should employ highly qualified teachers who are competent enough to impart quality knowledge among learners (Berliner, 2001; Pascopella, 2006).

According to Jones, Jenkin and Lord (2006), teachers must be trained with subject knowledge and teaching skills so as to make the difference in the lives of learners they teach. Jones *et al.* (2006) further highlight that if the training institutions that train teachers are not providing proper training courses, teachers will be ineffective because they would lack necessary methods of teaching. The training institutions that train teachers have an influence on learners' achievement levels because teachers teach the way they were trained (Jones *et al.*, 2006). In this regard, Omoregie (2007) emphasizes that teachers who have adequate methods of teaching would be able to motivate and encourage learners to excel in schools. Therefore, what is expected from the teacher is the acquisition of adequate teaching methods and good subject content knowledge (Mwamwenda, 1996).

Darling-Hammond and Young (2002) argue that research has proven that the level of the teacher's qualification is not related to teacher effectiveness and learners' performance levels. Darling-Hammond and Young (2002) further comment that researchers have found that some teachers are more effective and hard working than others despite the fact that they are all in possession of the same teaching qualifications. Highly qualified teachers are not automatically more effective and competent than under-qualified teachers, because what matters in learners'

performance are the teachers' commitment and subject matter knowledge, whether they are either highly qualified or under qualified (Darling-Hammond and Young, 2002). In addition, Darling-Hammond and Young (2002) highlight that an under qualified teacher who is dedicated to his or her work can produce quality academic results with his or her learners, compared with a highly qualified teacher who is lazy and not dedicated to his or her teaching norms. Brown *et al.* (2008) reinforce that teachers' levels of teaching qualifications and experience influence the learning outcomes of learners more significantly. Thus, some scholars indicate that recent studies have proved that a teacher who is in possession of bachelor's degree is more academically productive and competent than a teacher who has a mere teaching diploma (Connol, Hindman, Morison and Son, 2005; Papert, 1999; Dunn and Rakes, 2010; Jones *et al.*, 2006; Omoregie, 2007). A teacher's qualification level in the field that he or she teaches is positively correlated with the learning outcomes of his or her learners at school (Brickman, 2010). Indeed, a teacher who is highly qualified and lacks commitment to his or her teaching norms will not produce learners with a good pass rate at school because incompetent teachers do not address the learning needs of learners adequately (Darling-Hammond and Young, 2002).

There is an argument that a teacher who is not highly qualified but committed to his or her teaching norms can improve the achievement levels of the learners better (Darling-Hammond and Young, 2002). On the other hand, other scholars argue that high qualification level of the teacher influences good academic attainment of the learners at school (Connol, Hindman, Morison and Son, 2005; Papert, 1999; Dunn and Rakes, 2010; Jones *et al.*, 2006; Omoregie, 2007). In this regard, Darling-Hammond and Young (2002) strongly argue that what determines the achievement levels of learners in schools is the teacher's commitment to the teaching norms, not the teacher's qualification.

## **2.4 ORGANISATIONAL PROCESS IN THE CLASSROOM**

This section outlines the factors that influence teaching and learning in the classroom. These factors are teachers' expectations of learners, teaching methods, classroom management, teaching resources, English as a medium of instruction in the classroom, school promotion practices, subject choice, and learner motivation and commitment.

### **2.4.1 TEACHING METHODS AND APPROACHES**

The particular teaching method a teacher employs during the lesson presentation has a significant influence on learners' learning outcomes. In this respect, there is a correlation between teaching methods and learners' achievement levels (Mahaye, 2001).

A "teaching method is a way of carrying out actual teaching in the classroom" (Kasambira, 1999:40). Examples of teaching methods would be "a lecture method, discovery-learning teaching method, questioning method, read-review-recite method, role-playing method", and so on (Kasambira, 1999:41). Teaching methods are many and different, and they serve different purposes to teach different topics and learners with different characteristics. According to Mahaye (2001), a teaching method is an approach that a teacher uses to facilitate teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Mahaye (2001) further explains that a teaching method is a particular teaching technique a teacher uses to help learners gain knowledge which they need to achieve certain desired learning outcomes.

According to Mahaye (1996), the effective teacher needs often to integrate teaching methods that allow all learners to be active and participative in the process of learning during the lesson presentation. Participative teaching methods are many and are significant instructional approaches in constructivism (Mahaye, 1996). Killen (2010) cautions that teachers have to master the principles of participative and co-operative learning because, in co-operative learning, learners work together to achieve a shared goal that leads to quality learning outcomes for all the learners in the classroom. Effective learning takes place in the classroom whereby learners are



working together co-operatively in pairs or in groups (Hoffmann, 2010; Killen, 2010; Mahaye, 1996).

In the variety of teaching approaches, research reveals that constructivism is one of the approaches to teaching and learning in schools (Moore, 2009). In this respect, learners tend to learn better by means of the constructivist teaching approach because they (learners) learn cooperatively (Moore, 2009). Floden and Prawat (1994) advocate this approach, arguing that, according to constructivist learning theory, knowledge is actively constructed by the learner. Floden and Prawat (1994) explain that there are two major types of approaches to a constructivist teaching method in most classrooms such as cognitive constructivism and social constructivism theory. In cognitive constructivism learners manage to construct ideas by using their own critical thinking, while in social constructivism ideas are constructed through interaction between teacher and learner (Kalin and Powell, 2009). In addition, cooperative learning and scaffolding are some of the significant teaching methods of constructivism approach. In cooperative learning, learners learn by assisting one another at school (Moore, 2009). In scaffolding, the teacher assists the learners and gradually reduces the assistance once the learners are able to do the learning tasks on their own (Moore, 2009).

The teaching methods of the teacher determine the learning outcomes of learners in every lesson that a teacher presents in the classroom (Petty, 2009a, 2009b). Petty (2009a, 2009b) further highlights that if a teacher employs effective teaching methods for particular learners during the lesson presentation, learners will learn effectively. But, if the teacher uses poor teaching strategies which do not meet the learning needs of all learners in the classroom, learners will learn poorly, and will not achieve the desired learning outcomes (Petty, 2009a, 2009b). In addition, Joyce *et al.* (2002) highlight that it is the responsibility of the teacher to provide conditions which would maximize learners' learning opportunities in the classroom. Teachers need to use various teaching methods in each of their lesson presentations in order to meet the learning needs of many learners in the classroom (Killen, 2010). Killen (2010) emphasizes that a teacher is expected to use a number of different teaching methods in one lesson so that he or she can meet the learning needs of most of the learners in the classroom. In this regard, scholars inform us that learners learn better when the teacher employs different teaching methods during

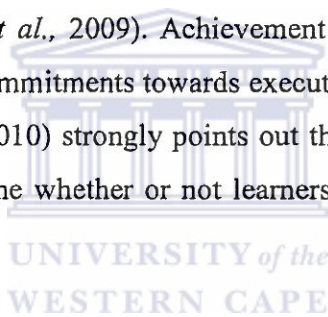
the lesson presentation because learners do not learn by the same learning methods (Kasambira, 1999; Killen, 2010; Mwamwenda, 1996).

According to Moore (2009), effective teaching requires more skills and the ability to use these skills in different situations and teaching environments. Research shows that good teachers always improvise to employ various teaching methods in their lesson presentations (Moore, 2009). In this regard, Moore (2009) further highlights that there is no single teaching method which is perceived to be the best and applicable in all lesson presentations than other methods. The application of a certain teaching method depends on subject, topic, learners' abilities and environmental conditions (Killen, 2010; Moore, 2009). All teaching methods are effective if they are used appropriately (Moore, 2009). Hence, Moore (2009) reinforces the point that different topics and lessons require the application of different teaching methods so that the teacher can meet the teaching objectives and improve learners' learning outcomes. Petty (2009a, 2009b) advises that when a teacher is preparing and planning a lesson, he or she needs to make an informed choice of teaching methods which may lead to effective teaching and learning processes.

According to Mills (2009), learning to teach wisely and well takes time. Hence, learning to teach effectively is often a challenging experience (Mills, 2009). Mills (2009) further highlights that teachers who have been in the teaching field for many years tend to be more effective than teachers who have got few years of teaching experience. Mills (2009) further informs us that experienced teachers teach their learners expertly, and learners are always kept engaged in learning tasks by hearing, seeing, touching, discussing in pairs, and so on. In this regard, Petty (2009) comments that teaching is too difficult to get perfect, and the only way of improving teaching is to change it consistently in order to achieve better learning outcomes of the learners. Teachers should be flexible and careful when choosing particular teaching methods which might be effective in a particular lesson for a specific group of learners (Petty, 2009).

Mahaye (2001) posits that the teacher should be able to select appropriate teaching methods which can enhance effective learning. The success of a specific teaching method during a lesson presentation is determined by the teacher's motivation, the efforts that the teacher puts into his or her teaching tasks, the motivation of the learners and the teacher's abilities to create conducive

learning environments for the learners (Mahaye, 2001). In this regard, Hoffmann (2010) advises that the teacher needs to be able to care for all learners in the classroom, create active learning among the learners during the lesson, employ cooperative learning and empowering all learners to be confident and be able to participate in the process of learning in the classroom. This would enhance motivation among learners so that they would develop commitment towards executing their learning tasks (Hoffmann, 2010). Minn, Moon and McCormick (2009) posit that the more effective teachers often try to create natural critical learning environments for their learners. In those learning environments, learners are engaged in well-prepared learning tasks that challenge them to think critically and become critical thinkers, and problem solvers (Minn *et al.*, 2009). The effective teachers make their learners critical thinkers and mould them as problem solvers (Mwamwenda, 1996). Thus, Minn *et al.* (2009) reinforce that if learners are not achieving the quality and desired learning outcomes at schools, teachers are not teaching. In particular, if learners are achieving low academic attainments at a particular school, teachers at that particular school are teaching poorly (Minn *et al.*, 2009). Achievement levels of learners in schools are attributed to teachers' actions and commitments towards executing their teaching norms (Minn *et al.*, 2009). In light of this, Killen (2010) strongly points out that it is the teacher at school who controls the conditions that determine whether or not learners will be able to succeed through their learning processes at school.



#### **2.4.2 SIZE OF CLASS AND TEACHING RESOURCES**

Learners need adequate school resources such as enough text books and computers for them to study effectively and attain the desired academic gains (Chapman, 2010). In this regard, the availability of such resources at school has a positive influence on the achievement levels of the learners. Legotlo *et al.* (2002) state that the availability of school resources such as computers and sufficient text books are the key to successful academic achievement levels of learners at school. Chapman (2010) highlights that teachers who are teaching in schools that have adequate teaching resources tend to strengthen the academic performance levels of their learners. Hence, if teachers use computers as a teaching aid for their subjects, learners will learn better and improve

their academic performance levels in schools (Chapman, 2010). Means (2010) emphasizes that teachers should use software in schools in order to enhance the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes. Means (2010) further comments that even learners who do not ask questions in the classroom tend to ask questions when they are exposed to working with computers in a laboratory.

According to Legotlo *et al.* (2002), the lack of text books in developing countries is one of the major problems which promote failure among learners. Learners cannot study effectively if they do not have sufficient text books from school (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). In light of this, Glewwe, Kremer and Moulin (2009) emphasize that the availability of textbooks in school increases the scores of learners. If learners are in possession of relevant and sufficient text books, they can learn better and achieve good academic gains (Glewwe *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, Hans (2008) informs us that all learners have a better chance of attaining the desired learning outcomes with their peers if they attend a school with well-equipped and adequate resources. Schools which have inadequate resources and overcrowded classrooms are at risk of low academic performance for the learners (Hans, 2008). In this regard, Kapenda *et al.* (2011) highlight that overcrowded classrooms in Namibian schools hinder the creation of conducive learning environments, and this results in low academic achievement levels of learners. This means that size of class seems to have an important influence on learners' learning and achievement levels.

Pretorius (2007) highlights that if learners are taught in schools whereby there is a lack of textbooks and other significant teaching and learning resources, they will be unable to study, and this is just like training somebody how to play football without the ball. The quality of an education system depends strongly on access to books (Pretorius, 2007).

One of the most important sources of teaching resource at school is the library. Farrant (1999) posits that the library is the important source of learning materials for learners at school because it provides learners with different references. Furthermore, Farrant (1999:376) states that the library "contains films, tapes, pictures, charts, models" in addition to the printed books to which learners are accustomed. Using the library trains learners to get the skills of finding out information about their learning tasks at school (Farrant, 1999).

### 2.4.3 ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN THE CLASSROOM

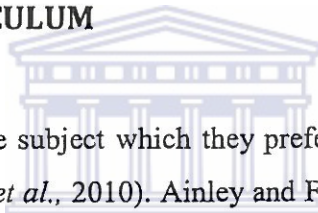
Research reveals that the language used as a medium of instructing learners may have a strong influence on learners' achievement levels at school (Napier, 2011). In this respect, learners who are taught through foreign languages seem to have difficulty in understanding their school subjects effectively (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). Hence, Legotlo *et al.* (2002) add that English as a second language contributes to low learning outcomes of learners at some school because learners do not easily understand the subject content when it is not presented in their mother tongue. In many developing countries in Africa many learners are taught through a foreign medium of instruction (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). As a result, this makes it difficult for the learners to understand the complex subject concepts, and learners cannot understand the subject matter properly (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). In the light of this, Napier (2011) reinforces that the language as a medium of instruction at school is one of the crucial factors which determine the academic achievement levels of learners in education. It happens in most schools that some learners do not understand their teachers due to the fact that English as a second language is used as a medium of instruction (Napier, 2011:70). In this regard, English as the second language which is used as a medium of instruction at school may have an influence in learners' academic performance levels at school (Lopez, Vazquez, Vazquez, 1997). Learners who are proficient in English as a second language which is used as a medium of instruction at school do perform well academically because they can understand questions and all educational instructions well during their courses of studies (Lopez *et al.*, 1997). There is a correlation between a learner's performance level and his or her level of proficiency in the language used as a medium of instruction at school (Napier, 2011).

A study conducted in the United States of America revealed that English as a second language is an important factor in influencing learners' achievement levels at school (Abedi, 2004). The study indicated that learners who are classified as limited English proficiency learners (LEP) tend to achieve low academic gains at school. Abedi (2004) explains that learners who are considered as limited English proficiency learners are those who either were not born in the United States or who speak a language other than English at home and thus have difficulty in speaking, reading, writing or understanding English. In this respect, Callahan (2005) informs us

that learners who use English as a second language at school need to be fluent in English in order to attain good academic gains. In addition, according to Callahan (2005), fluency in the English language is the primary requirement for learners' academic success.

Another study was conducted in South Africa by Howie (2003) to investigate the relationship between English proficiency of learners and achievement levels of learners in Mathematics. The study revealed that learners who were fluent in English language attained higher scores in Mathematics than learners who were not proficient in English language. In this respect, Howie (2003) stresses that learners' proficiency in the English language is a strong predictor of their academic success. Additionally, Abedi (2004) tells us that schools that have high numbers of limited English proficiency learners tend to attain low performance levels of learners.

#### **2.4.4 SUBJECT CHOICE-CURRICULUM**



Learners need the right to choose the subject which they prefer to do at Grade 12 level so that they can study effectively (Bangpan *et al.*, 2010). Ainley and Fullarton (2000) posit that learners tend to perform better in subjects which they consider important to them with regard to their individual academic abilities and their intended choice of career after Grade 12. Research conducted in Australia revealed that each individual Grade 12 learner has the right to choose the best subjects which he or she prefers to do in Grade 12 (Ainley and Fullarton, 2000). Ainley and Fullarton (2000) further highlight that Grade 12 learners in Australia choose school subjects which they prefer to study in Grade 12 according to their individual abilities and aspirations. Subject choices which learners make at senior secondary schools have significant influence on learners' performance levels, access to tertiary education, and to the labour market (Ainley and Fullarton, 2000). Hence, Bangpan *et al.* (2010) comment that if Grade 12 learners are compelled to do subjects which they do not value and do not match with their intended career choices after Grade 12, this tends to lower their academic morale with regards to taking their studies seriously. Learners tend to perform better in subjects which they enjoy studying and consider as easier and important to them (Bangpan *et al.*, 2010). Bangpan *et al.* (2010) further state that learners in

England at the age of 14 are asked to choose school subjects which they would prefer to pursue at the high school education level. The choice of subjects is based on the area of employment which individual learner prefers to choose (Bangpan *et al.*, 2010).

There is a view that learners feel demoralized towards studying when they are compelled to study school subjects which they do not prefer doing at school (Ainley and Fullarton, 2000; Bangpan *et al.*, 2010). For example, if a Grade 12 learner who wishes to become a medical doctor is compelled to do social science subjects instead of science subjects at Grade 12 level, this learner will not be able to be accepted to do his medical studies at a tertiary institution (Ainley and Fullarton, 2000). In addition, Ainley and Fullarton (2000) explain that the learner will not be motivated to towards doing a field of study which is not of his or her choice. In the light of this, Bangpan *et al.* (2010) reinforce the point that learners should have the right to choose the subjects which meet their own abilities, future employment opportunities and aspirations.



#### 2.4.5 SCHOOL PROMOTION PRACTICES

School promotion refers to the standards set for promoting learners from the previous grade to the next grade (Kapenda, Nambira, Sichombe and Tjipueya, 2011). Research reveals that in some education systems of certain countries learners are promoted automatically to the next grade even though they did not pass examinations (Brophy, 2006; Kapenda *et al.*, 2011). In this regard, there are views that the actions of promoting learners to the next grade without attaining specific basic competencies would promote low achievement levels of learners at school (Kapenda *et al.*, 2011; Legotlo *et al.*, 2002).

The application of automatic promotion in schools encourages learners to pursue schooling from Grade 1 up to Grade 12 without dropping out of school (Kapenda *et al.*, 2011). If learners are retained in the same grade due to the fact that they are low achievers, they will easily drop out of school (Brophy, 2006). In light of this, Brophy (2006) highlights that if learners are repeating the same grade, they will develop negative attitudes towards schooling, and this would lead to

increased risks of school drop outs among grade repeaters. Hence, low achievers in schools should be promoted to the next grade and they should be provided with remedial academic support (Brophy, 2006). Additionally, Brophy (2006) comments that an automatic promotion policy in schools helps learners to develop high self-esteem about confronting their academic tasks with consistent effort. Successful countries such as Denmark, Japan, Korea, Norway and Sweden employ automatic promotion for learners in schools (Brophy, 2006).

Scholars argue that automatic promotion contributes to poor academic performance levels of learners in schools (Kapenda *et al.*; 2011; Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). Additionally, Brophy (2006) emphasizes that learners who are promoted to the next grade without attaining the basic competencies from the previous grade tend to perform poorly at the next grade. Most learners who fail in schools are low achievers who were promoted to the next grade without attaining the basic competencies (Brophy, 2006; Kapenda *et al.*, 2011).

Legotlo *et al.* (2002:117) comment that “promotion criteria could be seen as automatic promotion” which is promoting the high failure rate of Grade 12 learners in South Africa. Grade 11 learners are promoted to Grade 12 even though they did not pass the final examination (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). Legotlo *et al.* (2002) further indicate that learners from schools in South Africa are promoted to the next grade even though they did not master the basic competencies of the subject areas. As a result, candidates in Grade 12 fail to carry out examination instructions because understanding of instructions seems to be difficult to these learners (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). The process of promoting learners to the next grade without passing the specific standard could result in low academic performance levels of many Grade 12 learners in schools (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). Similarly, Kapenda *et al.* (2011) highlight that automatic promotion is practiced in Namibian schools and this is one of the main factors which contribute to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners. Kapenda *et al.* (2011) inform us that most of the learners who are promoted to the next Grade without mastering the basic competencies from Grade 11 fail to pass Grade 12.



## 2.4.6 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Classroom management is the process of organizing and presenting the teaching and learning activities of the classroom relatively free from learners' 'problematic' behaviour that might erupt during the lesson presentation (Mwamwenda, 1996). Effective teaching and learning takes place when the teacher monitors all learners during the lesson presentation and when the teacher engages all learners in the learning tasks in the classroom (Visser, 2000). Visser (2000) further explains that a high standard of organizing classroom activities and maintaining good classroom management ensures effective learning in the classroom. Poor classroom management contributes to poor learning outcomes of the learners (Mwamwenda, 1996).

Mwamwenda (1996) explains that effective teaching and learning would only take place if the teacher maintains good classroom management so that none of the learners disturbs others during the lesson presentation. Classroom management involves the establishment and maintenance of a conducive learning environment in the classroom so that the teacher can accomplish educational goals successfully (Mwamwenda, 1996).

Maphumulo and Vakalis (2001) highlight that classroom management involves the teacher's skills and abilities to provide and maintain the teaching and learning environment that is favourable to all learners to learn effectively in the classroom. A good classroom management approach prevents any lesson disruptions and distractions from learners (Mwamwenda, 1996). The literature shows that the core events of the teaching and learning processes actually take place in the classroom where there is a favourable learning atmosphere. It is the task of the teacher always to maintain good classroom management during the lesson presentation in order to achieve effective teaching and learning among learners (Kruger and Van Schalkwyk, 1997). Kruger *et al.* (1997) confirm that classroom management is an important determining factor for the academic achievement levels of the learners. A teacher who maintains good classroom management during the lesson presentation manages to engage all learners in effective learning (Kruger *et al.*, 1997). In contrast, a teacher who lacks abilities to maintain good classroom management among learners during the lesson presentation, results in poor academic performance levels of his or her learners (Killen, 2010; Kruger *et al.*, 1997). Kruger *et al.* (1997)

reinforce the view that effective learning does not take place in a classroom which lacks proper classroom management of the teacher. In this regard, there is a strong correlation between classroom management of the teacher and learners' academic achievement levels at school (Killen, 2010; Kruger *et al*, 1997; Mwamwenda, 1996).

Kruger *et al.* (1997) highlight that effective classroom management leads to effective learning where learners are constantly motivated and inspired to achieve quality learning outcomes of their learning tasks. Thus, Balson (1995) strongly recommends that teachers must always appreciate and acknowledge learners' achievements, and empower them to take responsibility for their own learning. The teacher needs always to reinforce the good behaviour of learners, so that learners will keep on repeating that desired behaviour (Balson, 1995). The teacher may also discourage any unacceptable behaviour that learners may display in the classroom during the lesson presentation (Balson, 1995; Killen, 2010).

Visser (2000) highlights that teachers need to be aware that learners come into the classroom from different backgrounds. Some learners are eager to learn and others are less interested in schooling and studying (Visser, 2000). In the light of the latter, Visser (2000) further comments that some learners lack self-esteem to take their school tasks seriously. Some learners attend school but they do not understand why they should go to school, and why they should focus on school work (Visser, 2000). Hence, Balson (1995) posits that some learners can be indifferent, irresponsible, passive and so on. But teachers need to be skilful to handle and discourage any unacceptable behaviour from the learners during the lesson presentation (Balson, 1995). If teachers always praise and encourage all learners who are working hard academically, this would influence other learners to work hard at school and become self-motivated, too (Balson, 1995; Mwamwenda, 1996). In the light of this, Killen (2010) strongly emphasizes that motivated learners are the most successful learners in schools. This means that motivation is the key element to academic success of learners at any school. Killen (2010) adds that effective teachers are those who keep on motivating their learners consistently during the processes of teaching and learning in the classroom. Consistent motivation of the learners by the teachers ensures consistent quality learning outcomes of the learners at a particular school (Moore, 2007).

According to Visser (2000), effective learning can be hindered by the poor classroom management of the teacher. On the flipside, when classrooms are perceived to be 'disorganized', this could provide the conditions for ineffective teaching and learning to occur (Mwamwenda, 1996). Learners cannot learn effectively if the teacher does not maintain a positive learning environment in the classroom (Mwamwenda, 1996).

The way the teacher manages his or her classroom determines whether teaching and learning would be effective or ineffective in that particular classroom (Mwamwenda, 1996). There is a view that it is the responsibility of the teacher to act skilfully and maintain proper classroom management, organized in such a manner that effective teaching and learning are taking place (Mwamwenda, 1996). In light of this, Digiulio (2000) comments that good classroom management means that the teacher is capable of getting things going smoothly, making learning happen and maintaining a quality learning environment in the classroom so that all learners can get the chance to do their learning tasks successfully.

Edwards (2000) posits that, to maintain good classroom management, the teacher uses a firm tone and voice, and maintains eye contact when communicating with learners. The teacher often responds to learners assertively too (Edwards, 2000). Edwards (2000) reinforces that the teacher needs to communicate his or her wants and feelings to the learners clearly and in an assertive manner. In the light of this, Curwin (1988) says that managing the behaviour of learners in the classroom is not a simple task. Curwin (1988) further cautions that, while maintaining good classroom management and preventing misbehaviour from learners, the teacher does not need to act in a manner that can discourage learners from learning. Good classroom management enhances effective learning and minimizes the chances of disciplinary problems occurring during the teaching and learning process (Curwin, 1988). Digiulio (2000) comments that teachers should take cognizance of the fact that the learners they teach are from families with different values and different educational backgrounds. In this regard, Edwards (2000) informs us with caution that teachers should be aware that there are a variety of factors that impact on the learning environment. Examples cited include and are not limited to: emotional disorder, biological heredity, ignorance, poor parenting, or other causes (Digiulio, 2000). In light of this, learners with these types of problems would disturb teachers and other learners during lesson

presentations (Edwards, 2000). Therefore, teachers need high-level teaching skills that may potentially enhance teaching, more especially among diverse groups of learners in the classroom (Curwin, 1988).

According to Emmer, Evertson and Anderson (1982), each academic year the classroom management and administration of teachers at their respective school determine the levels of academic performance of the learners at that particular school. This means, the way teachers manage classroom discipline and learning activities at school, determines the extent to which learners will learn and attain academic gains at their respective school (Edwards, 2000). Quardino and Fullerton (2010) confirm that teachers' classroom management has a significant influence on learners' achievement levels.

#### **2.4.7 TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS OF LEARNERS**

Another area that is important in terms of shaping the achievement levels of learners is the expectations that teachers have about what it is their learners can achieve (Rist, 2007). Teachers' expectations of their learners' achievement levels have a crucial influence on the learners' academic performance levels (Kyriacou, 1993). Lindeque (2001) states that some teachers have negative or positive attitudes towards some of their learners and stereotype them as slow or gifted learners. In this regard, Rist (2007) confirms that teachers hold certain expectations of the learners in the classroom. Teacher expectations of what it is that learners can achieve are "based on diverse variables such as test scores, language issues, school records", among others (Rist, 2007:74). For example, if the test scores of learners are low, or learners have a poor understanding of the language of medium of instruction used at school, teachers tend to accept that "those particular learners are slow learners" (Rist, 2007:74). Teachers have a tendency to label learners as "bright", "slow", or "incompetent". Rist (2007:74) further highlights that the actions of teachers labelling learners at school are based on learners' prior performance, present performance, physical attractiveness, and so on. The teacher expects specific behaviour and achievement levels from particular learners, and these different expectations lead the teacher to behave differently toward the different learners (Rist, 2007). Rist (2007) explains that teachers

tend to be committed to work hard towards supporting learners whom they consider as bright learners, but less so when it comes to assisting and teaching learners whom they perceive as slow learners. Hence, Moore and Quinn (1994:355) comment that learners tend to perform better when the teacher sets “high expectations and holds them to these expectations”. This “self-fulfilling prophecy” holds important implications for teachers and learners insofar as learners will behave and achieve in accordance with teachers’ expectations (Moore and Quinn, 1994:355). The stereotyping of learners by teachers is also an important factor in influencing the achievement levels of learners (Rist, 2007). Stereotype refers to teachers labelling learners as slow learners, incapable, and so on (Moore and Quinn, 1994).

Lindeque (2001) strongly advises that teachers are not supposed to stereotype learners on the basis of their behaviour or previous academic performance levels. All learners can learn and succeed at school, provided that their learning needs are sufficiently met by the teacher (Lindeque, 2001; Killen, 2010; Mwamwenda, 1996). It is very common among many teachers that they label and stereotype learners, calling them names, some of which include being dull learners, indifferent, incompetent, incorrigible, demotivated, discouraged, and so on (Lindeque, 2001). In the light of this, Lindeque (2001) cautions that teachers can motivate, encourage and counsel their learners to study very hard, rather than having low esteem towards them. In challenging the ways that teachers stereotype learners, there is a view that learners with their varying learning abilities can attain the desired learning outcomes of the subject syllabus competently provided that they are taught, assessed, and motivated properly by their teacher (Lindeque, 2001; Mwamwenda, 1996).

Cruickshank and Jenkin (2009) comment that what teachers believe about themselves, about their learners, and what they teach will have an impact on the learning process of their learners in the classroom. Teachers have the tendency of believing that high-ability learners are easier to teach and manage, while slow learners are incapable of improving on their academic results (Cruickshank and Jenkin, 2009). In light of this, Cooper (1983) reinforces the view that it is a habit (or a norm) that some teachers do not put more effort into helping learners whom they view as slow learners. As a result, these learners remain helpless in school, and consequently they

attain low academic gains or fail final examinations (Cooper, 1983). This is where the 'self-fulfilling prophecy' argument (Rist, 2007) is important, as noted earlier.

Another significant factor that influences the achievement levels of learners is motivation. Motivation is very significant to the improvement of academic performance levels for both slow and gifted learners in schools (Killen, 2010). Thus, Cooper (1983) cautions that teachers should take cognizance of the possibility that even gifted learners can fail if they are lacking motivation. In this regard, Cooper (1983) further comments that teachers tend to praise and motivate high-ability learners more for any correct answer or good achievement and they (teachers) tend to criticize slow learners more per wrong answer or low achievement gain in a certain learning task. All learners, irrespective of differences in their learning abilities, need to be motivated and treated with respect by their teachers in order to enhance quality academic performance levels among learners (Killen, 2010; Mwamwenda, 1996; Rubie-Davies, 2010).

According to Jacobs (1996), the success of the lesson depends on teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards learners. Teachers tend to teach effectively when they believe that their learners are gifted learners (Rist, 2007). In addition, Rist (2007) indicates that teachers tend to pay less attention to learners whom they believe are slow learners. Teachers need to be positive towards all of their learners and help them succeed competently. In cases whereby learners do not perform well academically, teachers need to avoid demoralizing remarks towards their learners (Jacobs, 1996). In this regard, Cooper (1983) advises that learners need consistent motivation in order to develop self-esteem and self-efficacy towards carrying out their academic activities at school.

Kennedy (2005) comments that in some schools learners are categorized in classrooms according to their learning abilities. Kennedy (2005) further indicates that slow learners are categorized in the same classroom, and high-ability learners are also classed in another classroom. In this regard, Mwamwenda (1996) advises that learners need to be placed in a classroom with a mixture of high-ability learners, average and slow learners so that these learners will be able to learn cooperatively. Slow learners can be assisted to learn better by high-ability and average learners in the same classroom (Killen, 2010; Mahaye, 1996; Mwamwenda, 1996).

Kember and Lam (2006) claim that teachers' actions are guided by their expectations and what they believe are their conceptions about teaching in a particular school and these shape their actions. For example, if the school is a high achieving school, teachers at that specific school tend to work very hard towards that goal and expectation (Kember and Lam, 2006). In addition, Kember and Lam (2006) explain that if the school historically performs poorly in terms of learners' academic achievement levels, teachers tend to have the perception that learners will consistently attain low academic achievements in all following academic years (Kember and Lam, 2006). As a result, teachers lose the commitment to take their teaching norms seriously (Kember and Lam, 2006). Therefore, the historical performance levels of the learners at a particular school may have significant influence on the performance of teachers (Kember and Lam, 2006).

Moore and Quinn (1994) posit that teachers tend to provide more academic support to those learners they view as capable. As a result, the interactions between capable learners and their teachers tend to be more positive (Moore and Quinn, 1994). These positive interactions between the teacher and learners boost learners' motivation, aspiration and self-concept towards doing their academic work conscientiously (Moore and Quinn, 1994). Moore and Quinn (1994) indicate that if the teacher expects learners to do poorly, the teacher may unconsciously give them less encouragement, less time to answer questions, and less attention. Teachers favour learners whom they view as capable and ignore learners whom they view as slow learner (Rist, 2007).

#### **2.4.8 LEARNER MOTIVATION AND COMMITMENT**

Learners who are successful at school are those who are motivated and committed to carry out their academic tasks (Fraser, 2008). Curwin and Mendler (1988) comment that if teachers are constantly motivating learners, learners will be motivated to work hard at school because some learners who tend to perform poorly at school are those who have low self esteem about their own academic performance, and some believe that they are 'losers' and cannot be successful. In

this regard, Moore (2007) states that researches have repeatedly shown that even the most discouraged learners can be transformed to become enthusiastic and high achieving learners who are eager to learn.

According to, Fraser (2008: 19) there are two types of motivations which may have a positive impact on learners' academic achievement levels. These types of motivations are "intrinsic and extrinsic motivations". "Intrinsic motivation comes from inside the person and it acts as the force that gives confidence to a person to confront a certain task with courage" (Fraser, 2008: 19).

Fraser (2008) informs us that learners who are intrinsically motivated are responsible for their own studies and are confident to achieve well (Fraser, 2008). Additionally, Fraser (2008:19) explains that "extrinsic motivation means that a person is motivated by a source outside himself, for example, by incentives like awards, praise marks and encouragement". Learners who are extrinsically motivated tend to attain improved academic gains (Fraser, 2008). This means that if the teacher provides awards to learners who perform well at school and praises them, learners will become extrinsically motivated to take their own studies seriously. As a result, learners will achieve good academic gains (Fraser, 2008).

Pienaar (2008) advises that teachers should take note that motivation is the most significant factor contributing to effective learning of the learner. Teachers need to motivate their learners because a large number of learners in schools have emotional and learning needs (Pienaar (2008). Pienaar (2008) further indicates that all learners need to have a positive frame of mind about their learning tasks and motivation, and have a supportive learning environment in the classroom. As a result, even learners who seem to have lost motivation to learn can regain it and study hard in order to achieve high academic results (Pienaar, 2008).

According to Hsieh and Kang (2010) teachers should be aware that the self-esteem of learners towards their academic performance has a strong impact on their learning outcomes. Learners who have low self-esteem about their academic success tend to attain poor academic achievement levels at school (Hsieh and Kang, 2010). McCabe and Margolis (2004) state that learners with low self-esteem towards their academic work try by all means to avoid engaging in their learning tasks.



Margolis (2005) comments that high self-esteem of the learner towards his or her studies has a positive influence on the academic achievement level of the learner. Learners who have high self-esteem about their academic performance tend to perform better academically than learners who have low self-esteem towards their academic performance (Hsieh and Kang, 2010; Margolis, 2005). Margolis (2005) comments that teachers need to understand the importance and impact of learners' self-esteem and how to build and strengthen it among their learners.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, academic achievement levels of learners can be influenced by many different factors, positively or negatively. Specifically, some of the factors which influence the achievement levels of learners are: school environment, rural schools and study time, the role and function of the teacher, teachers' professional identities, the teacher's personal identity, teacher commitment and dedication, teachers' education and training, teaching methods and approaches, teaching resources, English as a medium of instruction in the classroom, subject choice-curriculum, school promotion practices, classroom management, teachers' expectations of learners, and learner motivation and commitment

Chapter three will outline the methods and techniques used to conduct the study.

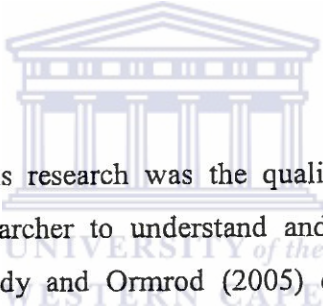
## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to understand how certain factors could contribute to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners in schools A and B.

Chapter three outlines the process of collecting data for this study. This includes the description of the research methodology and design, the sample, the instruments, the area of study and the data collection methods. Data analysis, ethical considerations and the limitations of the study are also presented in this chapter.

### 3.2 METHODOLOGY



The approach that was used in this research was the qualitative research design approach. Qualitative research helps the researcher to understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena (Merriam, 2001). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) describe the qualitative research approach as that which is typically used to answer questions about the complex nature of a certain phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participant's point of view. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) further indicate that qualitative research always seeks a wide understanding of the entire situation under investigation. Hence, qualitative research produces more in-depth and comprehensive information. In this regard, Henning *et al.* (2004) confirm that a qualitative study usually aims for in-depth understanding of the phenomena which are under investigation. Moreover, Curtin and Fossey (2007) comment that qualitative research provides a valuable source of evidence to address any occupational challenges which might weaken its productivity. Qualitative research helps researchers to understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena in their own natural settings and finding solutions to problems (Merriam, 1992). Therefore, this research approach was an effort to understand and explain situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context. In this

regard, the qualitative approach was an appropriate way to find reliable data for this study because this research approach was relevant to collecting the type of data that would provide an answer to my research question. In this regard, Lareau, Ranis and Walters (2009) emphatically advise that the researcher must use a research approach which is appropriate to the research question posed. Merriam (1992) adds that in qualitative studies the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in order to understand the research topic under investigation.

### 3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Rammala (2009:31) describes a research design as “a guideline within which a choice about data collection methods has to be made”. Research design links data to be collected and conclusions to be drawn to the initial research question (Yin, 1994). This means that the key aspects of the research design include research methodology, sample, data collection procedures and instruments. The research data to be collected is entirely embedded on the type of research design the researcher employs in the study. This study adopted a qualitative research design approach and a case study design analysis. Brown and Dowling (2010) state that qualitative researchers apply a type of research design which will be methodologically acceptable in terms of studying and investigating a certain phenomenon within its natural setting. Since learners’ achievement levels were investigated in the natural settings of the learners, it was convenient to me using the qualitative research design in this study. In the light of this, Lareau *et al.* (2009) advise that the researcher must employ the research design which is appropriate to the research topic under investigation.

Brown and Dowling (2010) state that qualitative research designs share the features such as selecting a small number of cases to be studied and employing multiple sources of data for the study. This study also used the case study design approach. Yin (2003) describes a case study design as a particularistic, descriptive and heuristic and it focuses on a particular phenomenon, such as a situation or event. This study was based on the performance levels of the two senior

secondary schools in the Oshikoto educational region of Namibia. The phenomenon of concern here was the achievement levels at Grade 12 levels for the two schools. Therefore, this research design was suitable for this study.

One of the two senior secondary schools selected for this study was a boarding school and is named as School A in this study. The other school was a day school and is named as School B in this study. The purpose of focusing this study on two schools was to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data of the study (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005; Yin, 2003). In this regard, Leedy and Ormrod (2005) strongly state that qualitative researchers collect valid and reliable data when they are investigating two or more cases rather than one case because, in these more than one cases, comparisons of the data can be made and reliable conclusion can be drawn.

The data for this study was collected from multiple participants. I employed the following instruments: questionnaires, observation schedules, structured interviews, group interviews and document analysis. The application of many instruments in this study was to ensure triangulation that serves the purpose of overcoming the shortcomings incurred if a single data collection tool is used. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:99) describe triangulation as multiple sources of data collected with the hope that they will all converge to support a particular hypothesis or theory. In this regard, Nieuwenhuis (2011) emphasizes that the application of triangulation in the study facilitates the validity and trustworthiness of the data collected from different participants. The researcher can compare the data from various participants and find the meaning of the data which might easily answer the research question (Nieuwenhuis, 2011; Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). Nieuwenhuis (2011) further emphasizes that triangulation secures reliability and validity of the findings of the study. Therefore, the application of various instruments to collect data from multiples of participants was meaningful in this study.

### 3.3.1 AREA OF STUDY

This study was conducted at two senior secondary schools in the Oshikoto region of Namibia. As outlined earlier, these senior secondary schools are named as School A and School B in this study. Both schools are located in the northern part of the Oshikoto region. The distance between these schools is approximately 30 km.

These two secondary schools are located in the rural area of the Oshikoto region. Most of the community in the rural area in this region practice subsistence farming. Their living depends mainly on growing crops and looking after live stock. Most of the communities in the Oshikoto region are middle class.

The age groups of learners from both schools A and B appeared to be nearly the same because the age groups of the learners at these schools start from 14 year old learners. In particular, the youngest learner at School A was 14 years old and was in Grade 8. The oldest learner at School A was 24 years old and was in Grade 12. The youngest learner at School B was 14 years old, similar to the age of the youngest learner at School A. The oldest learner at School B was 25 years old, a bit older than the oldest learner at School A. According to the Namibia Education Act (Act No.16 of 2001) each learner in Namibia is expected to start Grade one at the age of six years. As a result, learners in Namibia are expected to complete their Grade 12 by the age of 18 years (National Curriculum for Basic Education, 2009). Although some learners from schools A and B were older than a learner in Grade 12 was expected to be, they had the right to complete their matriculation.

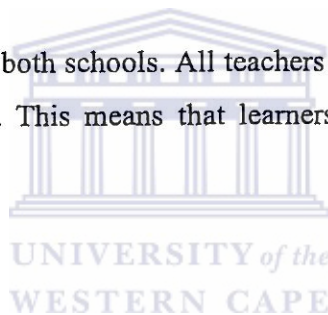
Both schools A and B provide five years of educational opportunities for Grades 8 to 12 learners. These two schools are designed to offer formal education. Grades 8, 9 and 10 form the junior secondary education phase while Grades 11 and 12 make up the senior secondary education phase at both schools (National Curriculum for Basic Education, 2009). In addition, the social profiles of the learners at both schools were similar. For example, in terms of the genders of the learners, both schools A and B had male and female learners in all classrooms.

The infrastructures for these two schools are different, and there is a slight difference between the academic performance levels for Grade 12 learners at these schools too. School A has a hostel for learners. All learners who are boarding at this school are provided with breakfast, tea, lunch and supper every day.

School B does not have a hostel for learners. All learners from School B are day learners. In this regard, most learners travel long distances to and from school every school day. Both day learners from schools A and B travel approximately 90m-15km from their residences to school on daily basis. This means that learners who resided in residences that were closer to their school travelled shorter distances to school. Learners who travelled the longest distance to schools A and B could walk approximately one hour up to one hour thirty minutes.

Both schools A and B do not have any computer labs. This means that learners at these schools were not exposed to important sources of information like the internet.

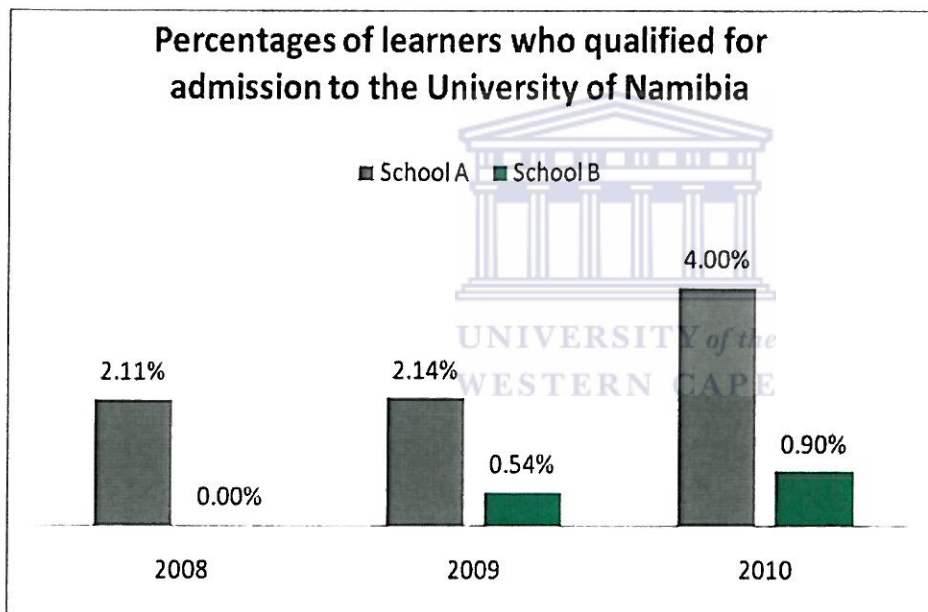
There are no unqualified teachers at both schools. All teachers at these two schools are qualified with degree teaching qualifications. This means that learners at both schools are exposed to qualified teachers.



### 3.3.2 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE FOR GRADE 12 LEARNERS AT SCHOOLS A AND B

Since this study aimed to identify social and environmental factors that contributed to the low levels of academic performance in the two schools, it is important to outline how these schools have performed in Grade 12. The following illustration (Figure 1) provides us with the performance of Grade 12 learners at both schools A and B between 2008 and 2010.

**Figure 1: schools A and B: Grade 12 performance 2008-2010**



**Source: Oshikoto Regional Education Office (Ministry of Education, 2008-2010)**

As you will observe from the above graph, the academic performance for Grade 12 learners from School A is better than the performance of Grade 12 learners at School B, but both schools A and B have low academic achievement levels of Grade 12 learners for the last three consecutive academic years. At these schools less than 5% of learners have met the requisite entry criteria for the University of Namibia from 2008 to 2010.

The data from the bar graph indicates that from 2008 until 2010 the percentage of learners from School A who qualified for admission to the University of Namibia varied from 2% to 4%. This means that for the last three consecutive academic years School A has passed less than 5% of learners who have met the requisite entry criteria for the University of Namibia. On the other hand, from 2008 to 2010, School B passed from 0, 00% to 0, 9% of learners who qualified for entry to the University of Namibia. In this regard, none of these two schools achieved 5% or above in terms of learners who met the entry criteria for the University of Namibia.

### **3.3.3 SCHOOL A**

This school is a boarding school situated in rural area in the Oshikoto region. Approximately 80% of learners are accommodated in the hostel at the school. There are some shops and bars near the school. There are also some informal settlements near the school. Some of the learners who are not admitted in the hostel, or who are suspended from the hostel, used to rent accommodation in these informal settlements located near the school. There are bars which sell alcohol at these informal settlements.

During my observation at the school, I noticed that there was a church building near the school and a grave yard. The distance from the school to each of these two sites could be approximately 100m.

There are 35 teachers at this school. There are also two heads of department and one principal at School A. All teachers at this school are qualified at a degree level. Most teachers are accommodated in teachers' houses at school. There are enough houses for teachers at this senior secondary school. All of the teachers' houses at the school have been constructed by the government in order to address the shortage of accommodation for teachers in the region.

Learners at this school wear their school uniforms every day. Boys wear white shirts and black trousers. Girls put on white shirts and grey skirts. There are over 800 learners at this school every academic year. Grades that are offered at this school are from Grade 8-12. Many learners at this school are mainly in Grades 11 and 12. There are 9 classrooms for Grade 11 learners at this



school, while there are 8 classrooms for Grade 12 learners. This means that classrooms for Grades 11 and 12 at the school are many compared with the classrooms for Grades 8, 9 and 10. Grades 8, 9 and 10 have only two classrooms each. Grades 11 and 12 classrooms at this school are overcrowded with a class average of 40-45 learners in each classroom.

This school is equipped with a school library, a sport field for soccer and a netball court, and a boys' and a girls' hostel. Furthermore, the school is fenced with diamond wire mesh. The majority of learners at this school reside in the hostel. Some learners at the school are day learners, because the capacity of the hostel cannot accommodate all learners who are enrolled at this school. Due to lack of enough space in the hostel, boarding learners who fail their final examinations in any academic year are not allowed to return to the hostel during the following academic year. In this regard, boarding learners who fail their grades lose their hostel accommodation during the following academic year.

Some of the learners who fail to get spaces in the hostel reside in some houses of the community, some of which are far from the school. Most of the learners who do their Grade 11 and 12 at this school are from various schools in the Oshikoto region where they completed their Grade 10. This means that the majority of learners who complete their Grade 10 from various combined and junior secondary schools apply for Grade 11 and 12 at this school. In the light of this, most these learners need hostel accommodation.

Boarding learners at this school are not allowed to go for outings during weekends. They only go outside of the school yard when they are going for home weekends. All learners who are boarding at this school are served with meals - breakfast, tea and lunch - every day.

Day learners at this school are not provided with food at school. Most of them (day learners) reside in the villages which are far from the school. As a result, most of the day learners travel long distances to the school.

### 3.3.4 SCHOOL B

School B is a senior secondary school which is situated in the Oshikoto education region of Namibia. This school does not have a hostel. As stated earlier in section 3.4, this school is situated in a rural area, and it is nearby an informal settlement where there are some bars. This means that the school is in an environment where there are bars which sell alcohol. There are also some supermarkets nearby the school which sell different goods such as food, clothes, etc. There is also a church building and a grave yard near this school. The distance from the school to the church and the grave yard is approximately 100m.

Classes offered at this school go from Grade 8 to 12. Many of the learners who attend Grade 11 and 12 at this school do complete their Grade 10 at various combined and junior secondary schools which are far from this school. This means that schools that offer Grade 11 and 12 are very scarce in the Oshikoto region.

Many learners once they get admitted for Grade 11 and 12 at this school, they look for accommodation in the houses that are nearby the school. Some learners get accommodation in shacks which are close to the bars located nearby the school. Some learners travel long distances to school because the school does not have a hostel. Some of these learners rent rooms at the informal settlements around the school. There are bars which sell alcohol in these settlements.

Learners at this school wear school uniforms every day. Boys wear white shirts and grey trousers. Girls wear white shirts and grey skirts. The number of learners is almost over 800 every academic year.

Classes for Grade 8, 9 and 10 learners at the school are very few compared with classes for Grades 11 and 12 learners. Classrooms for Grades 8, 9 and 10 learners at this school are two per grade, while classrooms for Grade 11 learners at this school are eight. The classrooms for Grade 12 learners are also eight at this school. Classrooms for Grades 11 and 12 learners at School B are many and they are overcrowded with an average of 40-45 learners.

There are 31 teachers, two heads of departments and one principal at this school. All teachers at this school are qualified at a degree level. Most of the teachers who teach at this school reside in the small town which is 5km from the school. There is one house for teachers at the school. This house accommodates only four teachers.

There is a sport field for soccer and a netball court at this school. Moreover the school has got a library. The library is equipped with a few books and one big television. There is no librarian at the school. Teachers sometimes help learners to borrow books from the library. The lack of a librarian for this school makes it difficult for the library to be opened every day.

### **3.3.5 SAMPLE**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:145), in qualitative studies the researcher purposefully selects “individuals or objects that will yield the most information about the topic under investigation”. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) further emphasize that sampling is purposeful in qualitative studies whereby the researcher selects data sources for the study. The selection of data sources must depend on the research question which the researcher wants to answer (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). Babbie and Mouton (2001) confirm that in a qualitative study the researcher deliberately selects a sample from which the data will be collected and studied. In the light of this, I deliberately drew samples from two senior secondary schools in the Oshikoto region of Namibia. These two schools were low performing schools in terms of the achievement levels of Grade 12 learners.

The data collected from School A was from research participants such as the principal (PA), the Head of Department (HOD A), teachers (TA), and learners (LA) (see appendix A1, A2 and A6). Some of the data was also collected through classroom observation in School A (CO A) (see appendix A4).

The other school where data for this study was collected was School B. The participants were the principal (PB), the Head of Department (HOD B), teachers (TB), and learners (LB) (see

appendix A1, A3 and A7). The other data was collected through classroom observation in School B (CO B) (see appendix A5).

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) highlight that qualitative researchers purposefully select research participants who would provide valid and reliable data for the research topic under investigation. In this regard, I deliberately selected school principals, heads of departments, teachers and Learner Representative Council (LRC) members from schools A and B to become participants for this study. These participants mentioned above were appropriate to provide relevant data for this study. Yin (2003) states that the use of many sources of information for a study leads to the drawing of accurate and convincing conclusions from the research findings. In addition, Nieuwenhuis (2011) strongly emphasizes that the research findings would be valid and reliable if the researcher has collected the data from many different participants for the research. I thus collected data for this study from different participants (see Table 1, Chapter 3).

As stated above, I collected the data for this study from one head of department and one principal from each of the two schools (see Table 1, Chapter 3). The school principals and heads of departments are the supervisors for teachers and learners at the schools. In this regard, they were appropriate to provide relevant information about the factors that contributed to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners at their respective schools. The principals and heads of departments expressed their views about what factors were influencing the low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners at schools A and B.

I also selected 5 Grade 12 teachers from each school to become participants for this study. Grade 12 teachers were in a good position to provide relevant data for this research because they were the ones who taught Grade 12 learners at schools A and B. All of those selected teachers had teaching experience of at least 3 years as Grade 12 teachers at their respective schools. This enabled me to collect relevant and reliable data for this study from those experienced Grade 12 teachers. It was worthwhile to select teachers as participants for this study because teachers are more involved in the teaching and learning processes of learners. Teachers provided relevant data for this study as they were able to explain factors that influenced the performance levels of Grade 12 learners at their respective schools.

I selected a group of 5 learners from the Learner Representative Councils (LRCs) from each of the two senior secondary schools (schools A and B) as participants for this study. I collected data from LRCs because they are the leaders of the other learners at schools A and B. LRCs are also members of school management bodies. As a result, LRCs provided relevant data for this study (see appendix A2 and A3).

### **3.3.6 INSTRUMENTS**

A number of instruments were employed for data collection in this study. They included questionnaires, structured interviews, group interviews, observations and documentary data. Yin (2003) recommends that it is very important to use multiple sources of evidence in a case study. The advantage of using more than one research instrument is for the research findings to be more convincing and accurate (Nieuwenhuis, 2011; Yin, 2003). Nieuwenhuis, (2011) insists that the findings of the research become more reliable and trustworthy when the researcher applies many research instruments to collect data from different participants. In the light of this, I applied various instruments which were appropriate for collecting relevant data from various participants of this study.

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### **3.3.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

This study drew on a variety of research techniques to glean data that was appropriate to answer the research question. As stated earlier in section 3.6, the data for this study was collected by means of using instruments such as questionnaires, structured interviews, group interviews, observations and documentary data. Questionnaires were the instruments employed to collect data from principals, heads of departments and teachers.

A structured interview was employed to gather data from teachers. A group interview was also used to collect data from learners. I also conducted classroom observations in order to gather the

data about teaching and learning processes at both schools. Documentary data were also used to gather examination results of Grade 12 learners at both schools A and B.

Most of the questions in the questionnaires for three groups of respondents and those that were posed to the two groups of respondents during interviews, had only one common aspect: they were around the factors which contributed to the low achievement levels for Grade 12 learners at schools A and B (see appendices, B1, B2, B3, B4 and B5).

The following Table 1 presents a summary of the total number of research participants, categories of the participants, instruments and techniques used to gather data for this study.



**Table 1: Number of research participants, categories of the participants, instruments and techniques used to gather data for the study**

<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>CATEGORIES OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>INSTRUMENTS</b>	<b>TECHNIQUES USED TO GATHER DATA</b>
2	Principals	Questionnaires	The principals filled in the questionnaires provided.
2	Head of departments	Questionnaires	The Heads of Departments completed the questionnaires provided.
6	Teachers	Questionnaires	Teachers completed the questionnaires.
4	Teachers	Structured interviews	Teachers were interviewed and responded to the interview questions.
10	Learners	Group interview	Learners were interviewed in a group and responded to the interview questions.
		Observation form	Two classroom observations were conducted.
		Documentary data	Examination statistics were collected from the Oshikoto education office. The number of learners in the classrooms and their age groups were also collected from admission registers.

The table above provides information to show that the questionnaire instruments were mostly used in this research rather than other instruments. Most instruments used for collecting data for this research were appropriate (see appendices A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6 and A7).

### 3.3.7.1 QUESTIONNAIRES

Oyedele (2003) describes a questionnaire as a series of questions to be answered by the research participant. I collected much of the data for this study by means of using questionnaires. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), questionnaires are useful and can be employed in research by researchers in order to collect data from many respondents. Nieuwenhuis (2011) emphasizes that questionnaires are research instruments which are appropriate for collecting data from many participants. In addition, Anderson (2007) emphasizes that questionnaires can be employed as devices which can gather much data about peoples' opinions. Oyedele (2003) highlights the point that questionnaire may be mailed or handed to the participant and the participant fills in the questionnaire in his or her own time. I thus used questionnaires to gather data from school principals, heads of departments and teachers (see appendices B1, B2, and B4).

I personally handed one questionnaire to each of the participants from schools A and B. The questions in the questionnaires were open-ended. Oyedele (2003) states that, in open-ended questionnaires, responses are not specified. The questions are presented and a space is provided for written responses by the participant. The questions on the questionnaires to the school principals, heads of department and teachers were mainly meant for collecting data about possible factors that had a negative impact on Grade 12 learners' achievement levels at schools A and B.

Being the leaders and supervisors of teachers and learners in schools, the school principals answered all the questions in the questionnaires (see appendix A6 and A7). The principals' responses to the questions are presented in appendices A6 and A7.

The heads of departments from schools A and B were provided with the questionnaires (see appendix B4). The heads of department answered all the questions on the questionnaires (see appendices A6 and A7). Some teachers from schools A and B were also provided with questionnaires (see appendix B1). The teachers answered all the questions on the questionnaires too (see appendices A6 and A7).



Bell (1999) states that there are advantages in being able to give questionnaires to participants personally because you can explain the purpose of the study, and you are likely to create better cooperation with participants if you can establish personal contact with them. For these reasons I personally took the questionnaires to all the participants at their respective schools. This enabled me to identify Grade 12 teachers who had at least three years of teaching experience at the Grade 12 level at schools A and B. I was also able to explain clearly to the participants what the purpose of the research was. Moreover, I was able to answer any possible questions that the participants had about the questionnaires. For example, some teachers asked me about the closing date for them to complete filling in the questionnaires. All the targeted participants for this study managed to complete all of the questionnaires for this study, despite the fact that some of the teachers indicated to me that they were very busy with their school work. In this regard, I concur with Oyedele's (2003) view that questionnaires are very useful for the researcher to collect information from participants. Hence, I managed to collect much data from many participants from schools A and B.



### **3.3.7.2 INTERVIEWS**

The other method of gathering data for this study was by means of interviews (see appendix B3 and B5). Interviews help the researcher to understand the nature of the world's phenomena from the respondents' point of view in order to get the meaning of people's experiences (Greef, 2002). Street (2001) comments that interviews are useful in research because they help the researcher to engage with the respondents in the environments in which they live and capture their views and experiences. Yin (2003) confirms that the interview is the most important source of case study information and can yield a great deal of useful information about a particular case under investigation. In this regard, Leedy and Ormrod (2005) emphasize that interviews can produce a great deal of quality information that a researcher needs about a case under investigation. Hence, I employed two types of interviews in this study. These interviews were structured interviews and group interviews. I used structured interviews to interview individual teachers at schools A

and B. I also used group interview to interview Grade 12 learners. These interview methods employed in this study are explained below.

### **3.3.7.3 STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

I used the structured interview method to interview teachers in this study. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:184), “in a structured interview, the researcher asks a standard of set questions and nothing more”. Oyedele (2003) confirms that in a structured interview, the researcher uses a questionnaire which he or she reads to participants. A structured interview has a better response rate because “many people feel more confident over their speaking ability than their writing ability” (Oyedele, 2003:139). In the light of this, I employed a structured interview in this study.

I spent two weeks at each school during the process of interviewing teachers. During the first week I managed to identify teachers whom I would interview and could provide me with reliable data. I made an appointment with teachers during the first week at each school to interview them during the second week of my data collection. All of these respondents were informed about the purpose of this study (see appendix B5). Some of the teachers from schools A and B agreed to be interviewed during their free periods and some agreed to be interviewed after classes because they did not have free periods. I interviewed each of these teachers individually at schools A and B. Most of the questions which were asked to all teachers during interviews were mainly to collect data about the factors which contributed to low educational attainment levels of Grade 12 learners (see appendix B5). Most teachers from schools A and B responded to all interview questions during the interview sessions I held with them at their respective schools (see appendix A1).

I interviewed two teachers who taught at the Grade 12 level from each of the two schools (schools A and B). I interviewed Grade 12 teachers because they were more involved in the teaching processes of the learners in the classrooms. I did not interview the school principals because they were not very much involved in the teaching process of Grade 12 learners

compared with the Grade 12 teachers. The teachers gave their responses to all the interview questions I posed. These interviews did not yield more data because I did not probe during interview sessions. In particular, during interview sessions with the teachers I posed all the questions which I set in advance and nothing more. Nieuwenhuis (2011) states that if the questions for structured interview are “overly structured they inhibit probing”.

Most teachers responded to all the questions during all interview sessions. I recorded teachers’ responses on my interview schedules. Bell (1999) states that, during structured interviews, the researcher jots down the responses from the interviewees.

The data which I collected from teachers during the structured interview sessions corresponds with the data which I collected from other teachers by means of questionnaires.

#### **3.3.7.4 GROUP INTERVIEW**

A group interview was also employed in this study. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) state that a group interview can be structured or unstructured. In this regard, I used a structured group interview with Grade 12 learners at schools A and B. Nieuwenhuis (2011:90) explains that during group interviews, the researcher asks “a set of structured questions to a group of participants without debating or arguing about responses being generated during the interview”. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:161) advise that a researcher should make a small grouping of up to six learners for group interview because a small group of learners “appear to be most productive”. In the light of this, I interviewed a group of 5 Grade 12 learners from the Learner Representative Council (LRC) at each school (schools A and B).

I made an appointment with all LRCs before conducting an interview with them. Before commencing with the group interview sessions with the learners from schools A and B, I explained the aim of the research to them. Then, I interviewed these learners as a group in a classroom at each of these schools. I conducted all these group interview sessions after classes.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) state that participants respond to interview questions better and confidently when they are in a group. In addition, Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) comment that a group interview with learners is more practicable than individual interviews. For this reason, I interviewed a group of 5 learners from schools A and B. The questions I asked during group interviews with Grade 12 learners at schools A and B are presented in appendix B3.

All the learners from schools A and B participated actively to answer my questions during the interview sessions. Some of the learners I interviewed from schools A and B were the learners I taught from Grade 8-10. After passing their Grade 10 from the school where I taught them, they were admitted to do their Grades 11 and 12 at schools A and B. These learners were happy to see me at their respective schools. Some learners from these schools asked me if I came to teach at their school. Then I explained to them that I was conducting my research. Most of these learners were eager to interact with me during the process of group interviews. As a result, they responded to all interview questions confidently and I recorded their responses on the interview schedules during the interview sessions (see appendices A2 and A3). Cohen and Manion (1998) comment that group interviews bring together people with different opinions which the researcher may find useful for his study. I interviewed LRCs so that they could inform me about what they experienced in their respective schools regarding the factors which were contributing negatively to the low academic performance levels of their fellow Grade 12 learners. As leaders of their fellow learners at schools A and B, the LRC members provided relevant data to this study.

### **3.3.7.5 OBSERVATION**

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) state that observation is one of the methods of collecting data in qualitative studies. In addition, Oyedele (2003) highlights that the major advantages of observation is that it helps the researcher to watch and describe behaviour the way it occurs in the natural setting, and things are seen the way they are in reality. Hence, I used observation as an instrument for collecting data for this study.

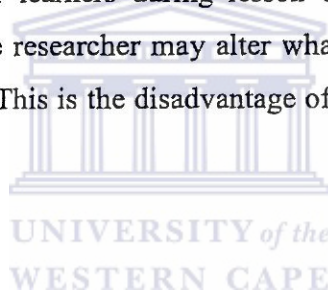
Before conducting classroom observations at each school, I asked permissions from teachers to conduct classroom observations during their lesson presentations. When the teachers agreed, they all introduced me to their learners before they start teaching during the lessons. I sat in front of the classroom so that I could see learners and the teacher well during the observations. While sitting I was able to take some notes on the observation form. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:145) caution that during observation the observer should “remain relatively quiet and inconspicuous”. In addition, Oyedele (2003) emphasizes that the researcher should not try to interfere with the setting in which the observation is taking place. As an observer during classroom observations, I personally adhered to the principles of observations as Oyedele (2003) pointed out that the observer should not interfere with observation settings in order to collect reliable data. Hence, I sat quietly and recorded the information about events that were taking place in the classrooms.

I conducted one classroom observation at each of the two senior secondary schools under this study. I conducted all classroom observations in Grade 12 classes from schools A and B so that I could get an understanding about how the teaching and learning processes were proceeding practically. In this regard, Bell (1999) informs us that during observation researchers decide exactly what information they need to know and record. I was interested in investigating teachers’ teaching methods and the learning environments in the classrooms during classroom observations at both schools. In this regard, the information I recorded during classroom observations was about teachers’ teaching methods and learners’ learning processes in the classroom (see appendix A4 and A5). I answered all the questions on the observation forms during the classroom observations at schools A and B.

I conducted one classroom observation at School A during a science lesson. Furthermore, I conducted another classroom observation at School B also during a science lesson. Observing science lessons helped me to understand teachers’ teaching methods better because I, personally, teach science subjects and have a better understanding about science subjects than other subjects. I did not observe lessons in subjects where I do not have a good understanding because this would have made it difficult for me to evaluate the teachers’ knowledge of the subject content and the learners’ understanding of the subject during the lesson presentations.

After classroom observations at schools A and B, I observed that all teachers from schools A and B used appropriate teaching methods during their lesson presentations (see appendices A4 and A5). All the teachers from schools A and B used learner-centred and teacher-centred teaching approaches appropriately. In addition, during classroom observations at schools A and B, the teachers demonstrated good interactions with learners during the lessons and learners were engaged in the learning tasks. I recorded the data for this research on observation forms during classroom observations at schools A and B (see appendices A4 and A5). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) comment that, during observations, the researcher observes events quietly and records them as they present themselves during the observations. Oyedele (2003) adds that during classroom observations the researcher behaves as a non-participative observer whose task is just to jot down the activities observed.

Despite the fact that teachers from schools A and B demonstrated good teaching methods and having good interactions with their learners during lesson observations, Leedy and Ormrod (2005) state that the presence of the researcher may alter what people usually say, behave and how events are supposed to unfold. This is the disadvantage of observation (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005).



### **3.3.7.6 DOCUMENTARY DATA**

According to Oyedele (2003), documentary study is the analysis of any written material that contains important information about certain phenomena being studied. In addition, Oyedele (2003) state that documentary studies allow the researcher access to primary documents written by people who have experienced the particular event. Bell (1999:106) emphasizes that “most of educational researches will require the analysis of documentary evidence”. Documentary study was, therefore, significant as an instrument for collecting data for this study.

I collected data about examination statistics for 2008, 2009, and 2010 for each of the schools (schools A and B). All this data was collected from the Oshikoto examination office because this data was not available at the schools where I collected the other data for this study. I analyzed

the data for the schools' performance levels and recorded it in the form of a bar graph (see graph 1, Chapter three). The aim of collecting examination statistics was to analyze the academic performance levels of schools A and B and find the achievement levels of Grade 12 learners for three consecutive years. Documentary data was very useful for this study because this data revealed that, during the years 2008-2010, schools A and B produced less than 5% of Grade 12 learners who met the entry criteria for the University of Namibia.

I also collected data from admission registers from both schools. The data was about the number of learners in Grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. The purpose of collecting the data from admission registers was to determine the number of learners in the classrooms and teacher-learner ratios for both schools. I also collected data about the age groups of learners from register of school attendance.

### 3.4 DATA ANALYSIS



The aim and objectives of this study were to determine how the role of the teacher influences academic attainments of learners, and to identify the main social and educational factors that could potentially contribute to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners from schools A and B. I used different methods for collecting data from various participants in this study in order to secure validity and trustworthiness of the data (Nieuwenhuis, 2011). Hence, to collect reliable data for this study, I used instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, observation notes and documentary data. Indeed, the application of the research instruments in the study depends on the research question which the researcher wants to answer (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). In this regard, Leedy and Ormrod (2005) advise us that qualitative researchers should always use triangulation (multiple data sources) in the search for common themes, thus ensuring the validity of the research findings. Nieuwenhuis (2011) also claims that a qualitative researcher has to collect data by using multiple sources so as to ensure trustworthy data for the study.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:150), in qualitative research, “the researcher begins with a large body of information and must, through inductive reasoning, sort and categorize it and

gradually boil it down to a small set of abstract, underlying themes”. In this regard, Nieuwenhuis (2011:100) confirms that the goal of qualitative data analysis is to summarize what the researcher has “seen or heard in terms of common words, phrases, themes and patterns” in order to understand and interpret what is emerging from the data. I categorized, coded and summarized all data that I collected from different participants in tables. For example, I coded and categorized all responses of teachers from School A in one table, separately from the responses of teachers from School B (see appendix A1-A7). The data collected from teachers at School A were summarized and categorized in the same table. The other data collected from teachers at School B were also summarized and categorized in its table. This means that the data collected from different participants was categorized and summarized in different cells of the tables. For example, the data collected from the principals, HODs, teachers and learners were clearly separated in the tables.

I further presented the data for this study in the findings section (see Chapter four). A summary of the teachers’ responses to the interview questions administered in schools A and B are attached in appendix A1. I analyzed and interpreted the data which I collected from documents by means of a bar graph and I summarized it too (see Chapter three). I used a computer micro software programme in the process of categorizing and summarizing the data for this study. All the data that I collected for this research, I stored in a computer and I also filed it as a hard copy so as to secure it from unnecessary loss (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005).

I also used a hard copy during the process of analyzing and identifying the common themes from the data for this study because it was easier for me to analyze the data by using a hard copy during this process. I compared and contrasted the data in order to interpret it. I then managed to identify common themes that underlie the interpretation of the data for this study (see Chapters four and five). The themes that emerged in the process of data analysis then formed part of the discussion in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis. After interpretation and discussion of the data for this research, I was able to draw conclusions about the potential factors which were identified as some of the main contributors to the low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners in schools A and B.



### 3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) inform us that ethical issues provide guidance for researchers when conducting research in the social sciences or education whereby human beings are the focus of investigation. I conducted the whole research process under the guidelines of research ethics. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), most ethical issues in research are: protection from harm, informed consent, right to privacy and honesty with professional colleagues. Nieuwenhuis (2011) highlights the point that researchers must ensure confidentiality of the findings of the study and protection of the participants' identity. This may include obtaining letters of consent and so on (Nieuwenhuis, 2011).

Before conducting my research at schools A and B in Namibia, I received research ethics clearance from the University of the Western Cape. I then sought permission from the Namibian Education Department to go and conduct my research at the two senior secondary schools in the Oshikoto region of Namibia. I sought permission in the form of writing a formal letter to the director of education for the Oshikoto educational region (see appendix B8). When the permission to conduct the research was approved by the Director of Education in the Oshikoto region, I then took the letters of approval in person to the principals of the schools where I conducted my research. I handed the approval letters to the school principals of schools A and B. The school principals welcomed me and introduced me to the teachers and learners during the morning assemblies. Both teachers and learners from schools A and B displayed their approval of my presence in their schools by clapping their hands after I was introduced to them by the principals during the morning assemblies.

### **3.6 INFORMED CONSENT**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), research participants should be informed about the nature of the study and be given a choice of either participating or not participating. In addition, research participants should be told that if they agree to participate in the study, they have the right to withdraw at any time (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). I informed all participants in this study that their participation in this research is voluntarily. I gave all participants a consent form in which they indicated whether or not they chose to participate (see appendix B7). I also informed all participants in this research about the aims of the research and that their participation would enable me to complete my research successfully. I encouraged all participants to participate in this study. As a result, all targeted participants voluntarily took part in this research.

### **3.7 RIGHT TO WITHDRAW**

According to research ethics, all participants in the research have the right to withdraw from the research at any time they wish to do so (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). The participants thus had the right to withdraw from this research without seeking permission to do so. Despite the right of participants to withdraw from this research, I personally encouraged the participants to take part so that I would be able to collect more data for the study.

### **3.8 PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:102) highlight that the researcher “must keep the nature and quality of the research participants’ performance strictly confidential”. In addition, Leedy and Ormrod (2005) strongly emphasize that each research study must strictly respect the privacy of research participants. I respected and assured the participants’ right to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. Anonymity and confidentiality were carefully and consistently maintained at every

stage of this study. I clearly informed the participants that I would not mention any names of the participants or the names of their schools. Furthermore, I informed the participants that the information that they provided to me would only be known to them and me. Therefore, participants were clearly informed that any researcher has to strictly maintain the privacy and confidentiality of all participants taking part in his or her study. All respondents were able to provide information for this study because they were aware that their information for this study was confidential.

### **3.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

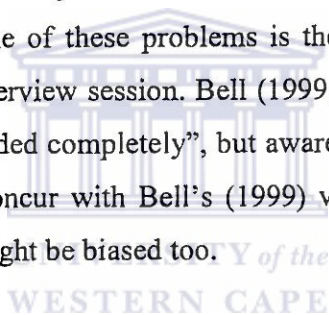
According to Nieuwenhuis (2011) every study has its specific limitations. In the light of this, I also experienced some challenges during the process of collecting data for this study. I collected it during the first term when teachers were busy with their teaching tasks. When I approached individual teachers during this time and requested them to fill in the questionnaires, some of the teachers claimed that they were too busy with school work. Thus, some teachers indicated to me that they would fill in my research questionnaires once they had time. I agreed with some of these individual teachers to collect the questionnaires once they completed them later after the duration of two weeks at their schools. Even though, I kept on reminding teachers to fill in my questionnaires right until the last days of conducting research at their respective schools, only some teachers managed to complete filling in the questionnaires and submitted them to me on time. It seems two weeks was not enough for the teachers to divide their time adequately between teaching work and completing my questionnaires. This seems to have led to limited responses from teachers because some of the teachers rushed to fill in the questionnaires during the last day when I reminded them that it was my last day at their schools, and that I needed the questionnaires from them.

I conducted group interviews at both schools A and B in a classroom. Participants were the Learners' Representative Councils (LRCs). The other learners who were neither LRCs nor participants of this study were eager to enter the classrooms in order to see what I was doing with the other learners whom I selected as participants. Some knocked on the door in order to enter

the classrooms in which I was busy conducting group interviews with the selected learners at both schools. Though this behaviour of the learners disturbed my interview sessions at both schools A and B, I managed to convince the learners not to be part of the interview sessions in order to avoid many participants during group interviews. Nieuwenhuis (2011) advises that the number of participants in group interviews should be between 5 and 12 in order to gather useful information.

Another limitation of this study was the use of structured interview methods whereby I could not probe during the interview sessions. Lack of probing could limit additional information from being provided by the interviewees. In this regard, Leedy and Ormrod (2005) inform us that during structured interviews the researcher asks questions which he or she sets in advance and this may inhibit probing.

According to Bell (1999), there are some problems that might lead to the data generated from the interview sessions being biased. One of these problems is the eagerness of the respondent to please the interviewer during the interview session. Bell (1999:128) further highlights that “it is difficult to see how bias can be avoided completely”, but awareness of the problem can help the researcher to interpret the data. I concur with Bell’s (1999) views that some of the responses from the participants of this study might be biased too.



### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the data collection process for this study. The area of study where the data was collected is also described in this chapter. Moreover, the research methodology and design were described. The research methodology and design were appropriate for gathering relevant data for this research. All the data was collected by means of data triangulation because I used various instruments for collecting the data. Instruments used for collecting data for this research were questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations and documentary data. All the data that was collected for this study was stored on a computer and filed in the form of a hard copy. I analyzed the data for this study and identified common themes which underlie this study. I

conducted the whole data collection process under the principles of research ethics. Thus, I assured and maintained confidentiality and anonymity during the whole process of data collection at both schools A and B. The limitations of this study are also presented in this chapter.

The next chapter will present the data from this research.

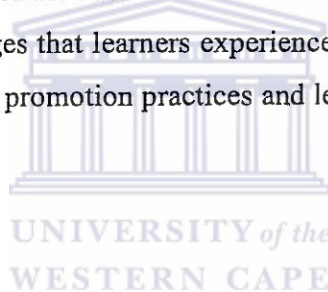


## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF DATA**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study was to understand how certain factors could contribute to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners from schools A and B in the Oshikoto region of Namibia. In this respect, this chapter, in a thematic way, presents aspects of research data separately (see Appendix A1-A7) for the two schools.

These themes are: school environment; size of classes and availability of resources; teacher professional identity, including their commitment, dedication, and their roles in terms of motivating learners, as well as their expectations of learners. Towards the end of this chapter, I present data that tells us about some of the difficulties associated with using English as a medium of instruction as well as the challenges that learners experience when they choose their subjects. It ends with a brief outline of school promotion practices and learners' behaviour and motivation as evident from the data.



### **4.2 SCHOOL A**

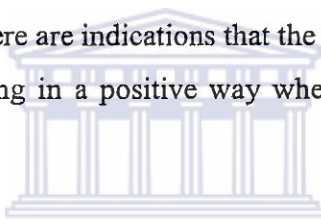
By way of setting up the context for the presentation of the data, I need to briefly alert you to the school's physical profile. The school is located in a rural area of the Oshikoto region. It is situated approximately four hundred metres from the main road which runs from the south to the northern part of the country. The school is situated near an informal settlement where there are many bars which sell alcohol (see Chapter three).

This school has a hostel for learners. Even though most learners at the school are accommodated in the hostel, the school hostel does not have the capacity to accommodate all the learners who are admitted to the school. Thus, some learners at the school are day scholars.

I observed that learners at this school are both boys and girls. All classes at the school consist of both boys and girls. The age group of learners at the school ranges from 14 to 24 years. Most learners at this school are Oshiwambo speaking. As a public school, School A is open to admit all Namibian children irrespective of the language they speak.

#### **4.2.1 SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND STUDY TIME**

As outlined in Chapter two, the two schools that form the focus of this study are located in remote rural settlement areas. Given the importance of the physical environment and the fact that where the school is located, may contribute in a positive and/or a negative way to healthy and dynamic learning (Berry, 2002; Mwamwenda, 1996), I would like to reflect on this aspect. During my observations at the different schools, as well as in perusing the data gathered during my interviews (see appendix A4), there are indications that the physical environment is such that, on the one hand, it advances learning in a positive way whereas, on the other hand, it is not conducive to learning.



As a boarding school, School A consists of different building infrastructures which create the teaching and learning space (classrooms) as well as the boarding section of the school. All buildings of the school are painted white. Some of these building infrastructures of School A are: the kitchen, the dining hall, dormitories for learners' accommodation, a library, and teachers' houses. The school has one kitchen where the food for the learners is prepared. All boarding school learners are provided with meals in the dining hall. The division of hostel blocks at the school is as follows: there are two blocks for boys and four blocks for girls. In each block there are dormitories with beds for learners. There are eight learners in each dormitory of boys and girls.

Most teachers at the school are provided with accommodation in government houses.

Learners who live in a boarding school seem to have more learning advantages. In addition, teachers at the boarding school seem to be more accessible to learners and get more time to

provide some learning support to learners because they stay closer to the learners most of the time. In the case of those learners who are living in the hostel on the school grounds, they are able to attend extra curricula and study sessions in the afternoons and evenings. This was mentioned by many of the learners during the focus group interview (see appendix A3). It was further revealed that residing at the school provides an enabling environment for the learners' studies. The boarding learners indicated that staying in the hostel provided them with a good opportunity to study. They were quoted as saying: "We really get more time to study" (LA).

On the other hand, learners not living in the boarding school are unable to attend evening studies at the school, possibly due to long distances between their residences and the school. This could have a negative impact on their learning activities and academic results, too. I further observed that most of those learners not residing at the school residences leave the school premises immediately after classes. During my observations, as well as from the interview data gleaned, extra mural study classes were mainly attended by boarding school learners. In this regard, some respondents stressed that "learners who do not stay in the hostel do not attend afternoon and evening study sessions" (LA). By assessing some of the data of this research, it is evident that day scholars at School A do not have more time to engage in their learning activities at school as do boarding learners. Furthermore, it seems that non-resident learners spend little time in the school premises compared with resident learners. When learners do spend more time within the school premises, they seem to get ample time for studying. Due to lack of enough accommodation in the hostel for all learners, it seems that after school some non-resident learners focus on walking extremely long distances to their homesteads. This means that these learners seem to spend most of their time walking to and from school and this might reduce their time to study.

During my observation at the school A, I noticed that some learners who were not full time boarders spent most of their time travelling long distances to and from school. The distances travelled from the homestead to school were outlined earlier (see Chapter three). In this respect, transport was one important factor which was not available to learners, especially those who are required to travel long distances from their homesteads to school. Given the long distances in the



region as well as the transport difficulties, travelling to school on a daily basis leads to the late arrival of learners at school. This influences their learning negatively. For example, learners may be very tired after travelling a long distance which would then affect their attention spans in the classroom (Abane *et al.*, 2011). By contrast, where learners were resident in the hostel designated for them, both their transport and accommodation needs were addressed which then meant that they could optimize the time on their studies.

While some of the learners' accommodation and subsistence needs are taken care of, others are not. As stated earlier in this chapter, the school environment does not have the capacity to accommodate all the learners who attend the school. It was mentioned that some learners who were not accommodated in the hostel had to find alternative accommodation. For example, some learners rent rooms at bars which are in the informal settlement located nearby the school. The area that surrounds the school is not healthy (conducive to learning) given that its primary aim is that of entertainment and leisure. In this regard, the data for this research seems to suggest that some learners live in environments that are not directly designed for learning activities but, instead, provide a recreation space for the public. During an interview with learners, it was mentioned that some learners do not have enough time to engage in their learning tasks, particularly learners (day learners) who reside outside of the school premises (see appendix A3).

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Being in rural areas where the school is located, some of the learners at School A are likely to have routines of fulfilling daily household chores after school. Some of these household chores performed in rural areas are cultivating, looking after livestock, fetching water, cooking and so on. The literature tells us that many learners who attend schools in rural areas in developing countries in Africa do not have enough time to study because they are obliged to fulfil household chores on a daily basis (Agbor, 2012). These household tasks are land-based. In this study the data shows that most of the communities in the Oshikoto region are peasants whose living depends mainly on subsistence farming (see Chapter three). I noticed that both parents and their children from the rural areas in the Oshikoto region play a role in terms of growing crops and looking after large and small stock. They spend a lot of time on the land and in the village homesteads which then means that day learners do not have the same amount of study time as

those learners who are living at the boarding school. When learners are performing these farming practices in rural areas, their time for studying is negatively influenced (Agbor, 2012).

The data for this study reveals that School A has set up some study programmes which are meant to improve learners' learning and lead to academic gains. In response to the question as to whether the school has any programs meant for supporting and improving the performance of Grade 12 learners, the PA mentioned a variety of study programmes in place for Grade 12 learners at School A. He mentioned that "There are afternoon study sessions and evening study sessions, and remedial teaching at school" (PA). The views of the PA inform us that the school environment seems to be conducive to learners' learning needs. For example, it was noted that learners have afternoon and evening study sessions (PA) where they engage in activities such as attending remedial teaching programmes and extra lessons for English. This was corroborated by the HOD A who mentioned that some English teachers provide extra English lessons for learners. Since most learners are staying in the hostel this means that they do not have to travel and can dedicate their time to studying. When these learners were asked if there are study sessions at their school, they said, "Yes, we do have study sessions at our school". When probed further about the importance of study sessions at the school, LA stated that, "They are helpful because we get time to do our homework and study".

As I tried to show above, it is evident from some of the data that in some instances the school environment tends to be conducive to learners' learning. The data shows that most learners at this school have sufficient time to engage in extra study time, doing activities such as homework and attending extra lessons with some of their teachers (HOD A). Though the learning environment at the school seems to be conducive to learners' learning, I observed that day learners at the school do not have the same amount of time to study compared with boarding learners, simply because day learners do not reside in the school premises during the afternoon or evening.

A further observation of mine was around the overall size and shape of the classroom environment which will now be addressed.

#### 4.2.2 SIZE OF CLASSES AND TEACHING RESOURCES

As was outlined in Chapter three, there are over 800 learners and 35 teachers in the school. An important part of the research was to understand the relationship between the number of learners and how learners and teachers utilize the allocated physical spaces and teaching resources at the school. The teacher-learner ratio at School A is 1:23. This means that there are almost twenty three learners for every one teacher at the school. The ratio of learners per teacher does not seem to be very high at the school but the classes for certain learners are overcrowded which then make learning difficult. In comparison, the data revealed that certain classes for Grades 8, 9 and 10 were small and not overcrowded with learners like the Grade 11 and 12 classrooms at the school (see Chapter three). But, classrooms for Grades 11 and 12 learners were overcrowded. Specifically, it was mentioned that:

*Learners in grades eleven and twelve are above forty in each classroom while learners in Grades 8, 9 and 10 are less than thirty in each classroom (TA).*

It seems that the workload of teachers who teach Grade 11 and 12 is high due to the high numbers of learners in these classes. This means that when the classes are filled with many learners this affects learning negatively. For example, I witnessed that the seating space in the classroom could not provide an opportunity for learners to sit in groups in order to do their group work during the lesson. Furthermore, it was also difficult for the teacher to move around the classroom during the lesson presentation. For example, during classroom observation I noticed that the teacher remained teaching in front of the classroom without moving to the middle or back of the classroom, possibly because most of the classroom space was almost occupied by the seats of learners during the lesson. This means that the teacher was unable to familiarize herself with the total number of learners in the classroom. Yet, as the literature tells us, this is an important factor in raising achievement levels (Moore and Quinn, 1994). Furthermore, the literature informs us that the distance between the teacher and learner is important during interactions in the classroom (Moore and Quinn, 1994). In other words, the physical distance between learner and teacher has to be reduced so as to enhance effective communication between

the teacher and learner. This means that the teacher cannot engage all learners in the lesson and learning tasks when he or she remains distant from them.

According to Christie (2008), learners who attend school at under-resourced and poverty stricken schools tend to achieve low academic gains. It emanated from this study that the size of classes and teaching resources seem to be important factors which have an influence on the learning and achievement levels of learners at School A. Some of the data of this study shows that the school does not appear to be able to accommodate the increasing number of learners. It was mentioned that, "Too many learners in the classrooms make teaching and learning difficult". There is a need of additional classrooms at the school" (TA). Thus, there is insufficient building space. Where classrooms are overcrowded with an average of 40-45 learners, the teacher cannot give all the learners equal attention. For example, during my classroom observation, there were indications that, if the teacher gave a class work during the lesson, he or she was not able to walk around the classroom in order to check how far learners were progressing with their learning tasks. Visser (2000) advises that effective teaching and learning takes place when the teacher monitors all learners during the lesson presentation and when the teacher engages all learners in the learning tasks in the classroom. In this regard, I observed that learners were not properly monitored during the lesson presentation, too.

Lack of resources was also mentioned as one of the factors which contribute to poor achievement levels of Grade 12 learners. Specifically, some teachers raised concerns that some learners do not have enough textbooks for some subjects. Teachers noted that:

*There is a shortage of textbooks. For example, four learners share one book in some subjects. The inadequacies of resources such as text books, and overcrowded classrooms have negatively influenced learners' performance. Classes are overcrowded. Learners are 40-45 in classes (TA).*

The situation of overcrowded classrooms combined with lack of resources is significant in terms of learners' learning at the school. In this respect, some teachers felt that learners would not be able to learn effectively (deepen their understanding of the topics) when they are taught in an

overcrowded classroom. Lack of access to texts was cited as another factor that impacts on learning.

Participants felt that the work load for teachers was one of the factors which may have negative influences on learners' learning. When asked the question about what factors are contributing to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners at the school, teachers mentioned that:

*Some teachers are overloaded with school work, especially teachers who teach at Grade 11 and 12 levels. This makes it difficult for the teachers to mark learners' assessment work and finish on time (TA).*

The text from the quotation above informs us that the workload of teachers at the school is enormous. The data shows that teachers are spending more time on marking learners' assessment work which, in turn, overburdens their duties. When teachers are overloaded with work, they seem not to be able to carry out their assessment tasks effectively. Yet, the assessment tasks are an important part of the learning activity at school (Moore and Quinn, 1994).

The provision and preparation of teaching aids were cited as factors that impact negatively on the learners' performance. More specifically, there was a focus on the nature of the assessment materials which were considered significant in terms of improving the learning outcomes of the learners. Hence, some teachers believed that learners' performance can be improved when teachers are "providing necessary materials for learning such as past exam question papers, notes and handouts" (TA). The indication here is that when teachers provide learners with examples of question papers from previous examinations learners tend to develop a better understanding about how to answer the questions during the examination. The provision of notes and handouts to the learners seems to equip learners with necessary subject content which can meet their learning needs better. Research reveals that learners have a better chance of attaining the desired learning outcomes of a subject area when they are supported with adequate resources at school (Hans, 2008). Some teachers perceived that good academic performance of learners can be achieved by "giving subject syllabuses to all learners" (TA). Since the subject syllabus indicates specifically all themes and topics to be covered by the learner, and what basic competencies the learner should be able to demonstrate, learners seem to benefit when they have subject syllabuses

as references for their studies. The views of the teachers inform us that teachers need to use various teaching resources in order to achieve good learner achievement levels at school. The quality of teaching resources which teachers use at school is significant in terms of learners' learning and achievement levels (Killen, 2010).

#### **4.2.3 TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY**

As outlined earlier (see Chapter two), teachers have their professional identities as manifested through various factors, including their qualification levels and their commitment to their teaching tasks at school (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001). This means that a teacher who satisfactorily completes his or her work, fulfilling the teaching norms, is identified as a committed teacher. In contrast, a teacher who is not committed to his or her teaching norms would be considered as an ineffective teacher. This means that teachers are not the same in terms of teaching expertise and work delivery at school (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001). In this regard, the PA held the perception that teachers at School A have different professional identities. He indicated in this regard that "Some teachers are committed to their teaching norms more than others". Being the leader of teachers at the school, the principal can easily observe teachers' levels of commitments through the academic performance levels of learners in their subjects. In this respect, the PA's view seems to inform us that some teachers carry out their teaching tasks with commitment, while others do not fulfil their teaching responsibilities as is expected from them at school.

One informant also highlighted that some teachers prepare their lessons well and use different teaching methods (TA). This means that some teachers use different teaching approaches to help their learners to learn effectively. The data shows that the way teachers carry out their teaching tasks at school is not the same. Some teachers seem to be perceived as more effective than others towards helping their learners to learn in an optimal way.

This study reveals that different actions of teachers with regard to their teaching duties shape their professional identities such as being considered as a 'committed' or as an 'incompetent' teacher. One of the teachers stated that:

*The majority of teachers encourage learners to work hard and to help learners about their academic work. Teachers do coach learners to work hard (TA).*

Two points emerge from the above quotation. First, it seems that some teachers actively encourage and support learners in ways that make them approach their studies in more serious ways which then shows commitment. TA felt that when a certain teacher encourages and coaches learners to study hard, this individual support enhances learners' learning and achievement levels at school. In response to the question about how teachers help their learners to learn effectively, one teacher highlighted that:

*Yes, some teachers conduct extra classes in the afternoon and evening in order to help learners to master the basic competencies of the subjects. Science learners are given syllabuses for science subjects. As a result they do well academically (TA).*

The text from the quotation above tells us that some teachers make an effort to help their learners to learn better. In this respect, the views of some teachers seem to suggest that learners tend to learn effectively when the teacher extends the time of teaching, like teaching them during extra classes in the afternoons, evenings, weekends, and so on. The views of the respondents seem to suggest that learners are able to prepare themselves well for examination and pass with good results when they are provided with subject syllabuses. It was mentioned, however, that "learners seem to perform poorly in other subjects because they are not provided with subject syllabuses, except in science subjects" (TA). It seems that when teachers provide subject syllabuses to their learners, learners seem to be guided well about what they have to study. In other words, learners have the opportunity to practice the basic competencies of the subject syllabus. In this regard, the data of this study suggests that teachers from the school carry out their teaching norms differently, and this shapes their individual professional identities.

There is some evidence from the data of this study to suggest that the professional identity of the teacher has an influence on the achievement levels of his or her learners. In other words, the data tells us that teachers carry out their teaching tasks differently. Thus, it was highlighted that:

*Teachers are managers of classrooms and disciplines in their classrooms. Thus, they can influence learners' performance. If the teacher does not prepare his lesson presentations well, learners will be bored and they will not learn anything during that particular lesson (HOD A).*

As stated in the above quotation, the HOD A perceives that teachers who are able to maintain good classroom management during their lesson presentations are also able to enhance discipline and learning among their learners. Scholars tell us that teachers' classroom management is an important determining factor for learning and the academic achievement levels of the learners (Kruger *et al.*, 1997). On the other hand, the HOD A perceives that a teacher who does not prepare his or her lessons well seems to be an ineffective teacher because an unprepared lesson does not help learners to attain the learning outcomes of the lesson and achieve high academic gains. Teachers' professional identity seems to be shaped by their actions towards teaching, and this is significant regarding the achievement levels of learners at school.

In response to the question about what type of effective teaching methods teachers use at the school, one teacher highlighted that:

*Learner-centred approach because it engages learners in the learning process. Teachers should use various teaching methods so that they can meet the learning needs for all learners. I do use both teacher-centred and learner-centred approaches depending on the lesson topic. If learners are engaged in the learning process, they will learn effectively (TA).*

From the quotation above it is evident that the learner-centred teaching approach is considered as the most effective teaching method. Informants believe that various teaching methods should be integrated into the lesson because learners do not learn effectively by means of applying only one teaching method during the lesson presentation.

In response to the question about which teaching methods are effective, the HOD A emphasized those ones that focused on the learners. He stated that:



*Learner-centred approach, because it engages learners in the learning process. Hence, I can be able to see whether learners understand or I have to repeat that lesson again (HOD A).*

The HOD A believes that the learner-centred teaching approach is helpful to learners' learning. Furthermore, the data indicates that when learners are engaged in the lesson, they tend to learn better. The literature tells us that the learner-centred teaching approach helps learners to learn better because they assist each other during the learning process (Moore, 2009).

There are some indications from the data that some TA and the HOD A have similar professional identities with high levels of commitment and motivation. The professional identities of teachers at the school seem to be reflected by their perceptions about applications of teaching methods and learners' learning.

#### **4.2.4 TEACHERS' COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION**

Teacher commitment to their teaching task is one of the most significant factors which impacts on learners' attainment levels at school (Leanne & Robert, 2004). Similarly, it is evident from the data that teachers' level of commitment and dedication to their teaching task is an important factor which can influence learners' achievement levels. It was mentioned that teachers' levels of commitment towards their teaching tasks differs at school (PA). Specifically, it was mentioned that:

*Some teachers are more committed than others. All teachers should be committed to their work. Some teachers do not take their teaching role seriously. Thus, if a particular teacher is not dedicated to his or her teaching work, most of his or her learners tend not to perform well in his or her subject. Hence, the scores of learners' performance levels in different subjects vary. You can find most learners passed a certain subject well. On the one hand, you can find most learners achieved only very low in another certain subject (PA).*

The above quotation tells us that committed and dedicated teachers are indicated by the performance levels of their learners in their subjects. This seems to suggest that one cannot be called a dedicated teacher at school while the learners tend to attain poor results in one's subjects. In this respect, committed and dedicated teachers are determined by high achievement levels of learners in their subjects. The views of PA tell us that all teachers are supposed to be committed to their teaching tasks.

The HOD A raised a concern that, "The commitment levels of teachers towards fulfilling their teaching tasks are not the same, and this has a significant influence on the achievement gains of learners". There are further indications from the data to suggest that as supervisors of teachers, the principal and the head of department identified that some of their teachers whom they supervise are not committed to their teaching norms. This means that some teachers at the school do produce a high number of learners who pass their subjects with good achievement levels. On the one hand, the views of the PA and HOD A seem to suggest that the performance levels of some teachers at School A are 'not pleasing' because their learners tend to achieve low achievement levels in their subjects.

It was not only the PA and HOD A who raised concerns about the levels of certain teachers' commitment; the views of certain LA also pointed in this direction. When responding to the question about how teachers carry out their teaching work at school, LA highlighted that "some teachers are not serious with their work". When probed further, it was mentioned that there is a perception that some of the teachers do not attend all the classes. Learners stated that:

*They miss lessons. Some teachers do not give us home work. Some teachers take very long time to mark our test books. Teachers must be serious with their work because they are failing us (LA).*

From the above quotation, a few points are important. The first one is the perception that teachers are not attending all the classes. The second point is the perception of some learners that they do not receive homework which means that they cannot practice, or revise the work that has been done during the day. The third point is about the length of time taken by the teachers to mark tests.

Hence, there are some indications from the data to suggest that Grade 12 learners perform poorly academically because certain teachers do not seem to show much effort in their work to teach the learners and meet their learning needs. For example, learners who were informants in this study mentioned that it takes too long for some teachers to mark the test books of learners. In other words, the length of time from submitting an assignment to having it returned is very long. In this respect, learners are not given the opportunity to get timely feedback that could be used when they write their tests. In the light of this, learners felt that some teachers are failing them because they lack dedication and commitment to attend their lessons and conduct continuous assessments effectively. This study shows that most of the informants, such as the PA, HOD A and LA, have similar views with regard to some teachers' low commitment to their teaching responsibilities. On the other hand, I also had some positive observations that I will now outline.

By conducting one classroom observation at the school, I observed that the teacher demonstrated commitment and dedication towards his teaching task during the lesson presentation. The teacher employed a learner-centred approach more than a teacher-centred approach during the lesson. It emerged during observation that the teacher used various teaching methods, such as group work, explaining and demonstrating, and giving practical work.

During classroom observation I was able to see how the lesson was presented and the way in which the learners engaged with the teacher. The teacher posed questions during the lesson and most learners put up their hands in order to answer the questions. The teacher gave chances to various learners to give their answers to different questions asked during the lesson. Learners were then given a task work to answer some questions in pairs on a question paper. From my observation it appeared that learners were best engaged in the lesson when they were given pair work. My observation of the process suggests that the learners were very engaged in learning, busy discussing the answers and writing them on the answer sheets. Killen (2010) tells us that learners tend to learn better when they are practically engaged in the learning activities during the lesson.

Learners were also working well when the teacher drew on a variety of teaching methods. The data shows that the teacher used various teaching methods in order to meet the learning needs of

most of the learners in the classroom (see appendix A4). The way the teacher presented the lesson shows that the teacher seemed to be dedicated and committed to his teaching duties.

From observation in the classroom I noticed that all learners were well engaged in the learning activities and there was a good interaction between teachers and learners, and learners themselves. For example, all learners followed the teacher's instructions and were communicating to one another when they were discussing the learning task in pairs (see appendix A4).

From the data there is an indication that dedication by the teachers is also shown through the extra curricula support provided to English second language learners. In this respect, teachers used different teaching methods in order to improve the level of understanding of the English language among learners at the school. The HOD A indicated that there are some extra curricula classes for English language at the school. In particular, he stated that:

*We give some extra classes for English during weekends and vacation lessons. All of these learning programmes were established in order to improve academic performance for Grade 12 learners (HOD A).*

As indicated in the quotation above, the establishment of extra classes in the English language for learners means that teachers at this school are willing to help their learners to acquire a better understanding of the English language that then enables them to achieve good academic gains. In this way, teachers from this school demonstrated some commitments towards providing learners with academic support. Napier (2011) informs us that the language of instruction at school has a significant influence on the academic achievement levels of learners. It is important to note that teachers at the school realize the significance of providing extra classes in the English language for their learners. In addition to extra classes for English, it was mentioned that:

*The school has a programme in place whereby teachers provide extra classes on Saturdays and some holidays. Every subject teacher gets a chance to use these teaching programmes (TA).*

The text from the quotation above reveals that the school has established learning programmes which are meant to assist learners to learn and improve their achievement levels in various

subject areas which are being offered at the school. It was mentioned that English is not the only subject which is taught on Saturdays and during holidays. The fact that teachers commit themselves to teaching during weekends and some holidays shows us that these teachers are dedicated towards fulfilling their teaching tasks.

#### 4.2.5 TEACHER'S ROLE IN TERMS OF MOTIVATING LEARNERS

The role of the teacher is significant in terms of motivating learners to work hard towards attaining the desired learning outcomes at school (Moore and Quinn, 1994). Curwin and Mendler (1988) tell us that if teachers are constantly motivating learners to work hard at school, learners will be able to take their school work seriously in order to achieve quality and pleasing academic results. This means that the extent to which the teacher is able to motivate the learners to study hard at school significantly determines the levels of those learners' academic achievements. In this respect, Eggen and Kauchak (1988) tell us that some teachers are charismatic and have the ability to influence learners to take their studies more seriously than others are able to do. The HOD A from the school indicated, then, that "The role of the teacher is important in terms of motivating learners to take their studies seriously". Furthermore, the HOD A believes that the role of motivating learners to study is supposed to be a task of both teachers and the parents. In particular, he mentioned that:

*Both teachers and parents should play the same role of motivating the learners to study hard and be prepared for examination adequately. Learners will only take their school work seriously if they are encouraged to do so (HOD A).*

The above quotation shows us that teachers and parents are significant in any education sector in terms of motivating learners to take their studies seriously. The HOD A seems to suggest that teachers and parents need to work together in order to motivate learners to become more responsible for their own learning tasks and attain good academic gains. There are indications to suggest, therefore, that if the teachers are not cooperating with the parents of their learners, learners' academic performance levels seem to be low at the school.

The HOD A further commented that:

*If the teacher does not prepare his lesson presentations well, learners will be bored and they will not learn anything during that particular lesson. The teacher should prepare the lesson and use any relevant teaching aids which can attract learners' attention to concentrate during the lesson presentation (HOD A).*

Based on the information from the quotation above, it is evident that the way the lesson presentation is prepared can influence learners' motivational level towards their studies. The suggestion from the text above is that, if the teacher has prepared the lesson presentation adequately, learners seem to be interested in the lesson and can learn effectively during the lesson. The HOD A tells us that learning seems to be ineffective when the lesson presentation is not prepared in such a way that it can attract learners' attention in the classroom. One of the informants highlighted that "Teachers should use various teaching methods so that they can meet the learning needs for most of learners. If learners are engaged in the learning process, they will learn better" (TA). TA felt that learners tend to learn best when the teacher applies more than one teaching method during the lesson presentation. In other words, there are perceptions that a multiplicity of teaching methods should be utilized. These views seem to suggest that if the teacher applies only one type of a teaching method, most learners will not benefit because learners tend to learn by means of different teaching methods. Killen (2010) confirms that a teacher is expected to use a variety of teaching methods in a lesson presentation in order to meet the learning needs of most of the learners in the classroom.

#### 4.2.6 TEACHER EXPECTATIONS OF LEARNERS

The aspect of teacher expectations plays an important part in learners' learning processes and performance levels too (Rist, 2007). Teachers might have negative or positive attitudes towards some of their learners and stereotype them as slow or gifted learners (Lindeque, 2001). Some of the data revealed that teachers in School A tend to have low expectations of their learners. For example, some teachers from the school expressed concern that:

*Many learners will not pass well because they lack good understanding in English. Most learners fail to understand the questions from the question papers during the examinations due to poor level of understanding English language (TA).*

The quotation above shows us that TA expect most of the learners to attain low achievement levels because those learners lack understanding of the English language. In other words, they have already stereotyped the learners as being incapable of passing the examination. This means that these teachers from School A do not seem to have any hope of teaching these learners with commitment because they have low expectations of them. In this respect, it was further stressed that "Many learners will not pass well" (TA). This may contribute to low esteem and morale on the part of the learners which, in turn, could potentially impact negatively on their achievement levels.

There are some indications from the data to show that the practice of teachers' negative stereotyping of learners tends to be quite high. It was also highlighted that "Learners will not be able to pass well because they do not take their learning tasks seriously" (TA). In addition, it was mentioned that, "Some learners lack commitments towards their academic work" (TA). The data shows that TAs perceive that when learners are not serious about their studies and do not show commitments towards their school work, they tend to fail or else attain low academic results at school. Scholars inform us that where teachers have high expectations towards learners the learners tend to take their studies more seriously (Moore & Quinn, 1994; Rist, 2007). In this respect, Moore & Quinn (1994:355) reinforce the point that learners tend to perform better when the teacher sets "high expectations and holds them to these expectations". The data from this

study suggests that learners' behaviour towards their school work seems to have an influence on teachers' negative and positive expectations of learners' academic performance levels. Specifically, this means that teachers stereotype learners as "capable learners" when learners are serious with their academic work, and as "incapable learners" when learners perform poorly at school or they are not showing any commitment towards their school work (Rist, 2007).

#### 4.2.7 ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

In the literature it is mentioned that the language used as a medium of instructing learners may have a strong influence on learners' achievement levels at school (Napier, 2011). This study revealed that English as a medium of instruction at School A is considered one of the main contributors to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners. Most teachers emphasized that low achievement levels in Grade 12 are caused by "a poor understanding of English language among learners". For example, it was mentioned that:

*One of the main factors which leads to low performance among grade twelve learners is poor English language among learners. Many learners do not perform well in English subject at our school. Learners need to be motivated to improve on English language e.g. they need to practice speaking more in English language (TA).*

As stated in the quotation above, it is evident from the data that TA have a serious concern that lack of understanding of the English language among Grade 12 learners is the main barrier to learners' effective learning and high achievement levels at the school. The literature tells us that English as a second language contributes to low learning outcomes of learners at school because learners do not easily understand the subject content not presented in their mother tongue (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). In this regard, the views of the TA in the quotation above suggest that learners do not learn well when they do not have a good understanding in the language which is used as a medium of instruction at school. As a way to improve their English language skills, teachers felt that learners need to start communicating and speaking more in English. During my



observation at the school, I learnt that even though the English language is the main medium of instruction at the school, most learners at the school are Oshiwambo speaking and they tend to communicate to one another mostly in the Oshiwambo language rather than the English language within the school premises. This means, that learners tend to communicate in their mother tongue most of the time, possibly because it is easier than English which is a second language. For example, learners tend to communicate in Oshiwambo during the breaks and after school. What this means is that these learners have to switch to English when they are in the classroom during lessons. Learners seem to have a narrow opportunity to speak in English due to the influence of the Oshiwambo language which is commonly spoken in the region, and at school as the first language. The literature informs us that learners can perform well academically if they are fluent in the English language which is used as a medium of instruction at school (Napier, 2011).

#### 4.2.8 SUBJECT CHOICE-CURRICULUM

As outlined in the literature review chapter (Chapter two), subject choice is an important factor which influences learners' achievement levels at school (Ainley & Fullarton, 2000; Bangpan *et al.*, 2010). Some of the data from this study reveals that some learners who pass Grade 10 do not have any personal choice in terms of choosing school subjects which they would prefer to study in Grades 11 and 12. In this regard, it was mentioned that "Some learners are forced to do fields of studies that they did not do at Grade 10" (TA). This means that they enter Grades 11 and 12 without any prior knowledge of important subjects. In other words, they have no basic foundation or subject grounding which could potentially then deepen their understanding of subject areas and, in turn, contribute to good learning outcomes at school (Bangpan *et al.*, 2010).

In addition, one respondent raised the following concern:

*Learners just join our school in Grade 11 and some of them are placed at fields of studies which are very new to them e.g. Accounting and so on. Most of the fields of studies are full at our school (HOD A).*

It is evident from the above quotation that some learners are not allowed to study subjects which they prefer to do in the Grades 11 and 12 levels at the school. This is perceived as contributing to ineffective learning as well as low academic results of learners at School A. It seems that learners do not have the motivation to study new subjects which they are compelled to do without making their own choices. For example, it was mentioned that some Grade 12 learners who did not study an accounting subject from Grade 10 can be forced to do such a subject at Grade 11 and 12 levels. This means that they do not have any prior knowledge for Accounting at Grade 11 and 12 levels. The literature supports the views of the informants that the learner will not be motivated towards studying a field of study which is not of his or her choice (Ainley and Fullarton, 2000). In this regard, the data of this study suggests that learners need to be allowed to choose fields of studies which they wish to do in Grade 11 and 12 in order to attain good academic gains at school.

#### 4.2.9 SCHOOL PROMOTION PRACTICES

School promotion refers to the process by which learners are promoted from a previous grade to the next grade (Kapenda *et al.*, 2011). Research shows that schools in some countries have educational policies which allow learners to be promoted to the next grade even though they have not passed the previous grade (Kapenda *et al.*, 2011; Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). This research revealed that some Grade 11 learners from School A are promoted to Grade 12 without actually passing Grade 11. In this regard, the HOD A felt that “Automatic promotion is one of the factors that promotes poor high failure rate” at the school. It was highlighted that:

*Some learners are promoted to Grade 12 even though they have not passed from Grade 11. The policy of automatic promotion is one of the main factors that promotes high failure rate in schools (HODA).*

The data from the quotation above reveals that it is not a requirement for the learner to pass Grade 11 in order to be promoted to Grade 12. It is evident that grade eleven learners are promoted automatically to the Grade 12 level. Hence, the views of HOD A seem to suggest that

learners do not see the significance of studying very hard because they know that they will be promoted to Grade 12 even without passing Grade 11. Due to negative influence of the automatic promotion policy on learners' achievement levels, the HODA appears to be against the policy of automatic promotion that is practiced in Namibian public schools. Research reveals that automatic promotion which is practiced in Namibian schools has a negative influence on the achievement levels of Grade 12 learners (Kapenda *et al.*, 2011).

#### 4.2.10 LEARNERS' BEHAVIOUR AND MOTIVATION

The behaviour and motivation of learners at school are very important in influencing learners' achievement levels (Moore, 2007). Fraser (2008) tells us that learners who are successful at school are those who are motivated. One respondent for this study commented that:

*Some learners are not just committed, even during examinations they need somebody to tell them to study. Some learners assume that Grade 12 is difficult. Thus, they do panic during examinations (HOD A).*

There are several aspects raised from the above quotation. First, there is a perception that learners lack motivation and commitment in terms of their studies. The view is that learners actually need to be 'told to study'. A further aspect from the quotation is that learners believe that Grade 12 subjects are 'difficult'. There is thus a fear on the part of the learners which then leads them to panic. There is also a perception that some of the learners "do not care about their studies".

It was further mentioned that, "Some learners also lack commitment towards their academic work" (TA). The views of both HOD A and TA from the quotations above inform us that some of the learners lack self-discipline about managing their own learning activities, and this seems to be one of the factors contributing to their low achievement levels at school. In response to the question why learners fail, some learners had this to say:

*Many learners are not serious with their studies during Grade 11. Some learners who do not stay in the hostel tend to consume alcohol at bars. Some get stressed during examination (LA).*

There is some evidence from the quotation above which tell us that some learners at School A tend to behave in a way that contributes to a negative influence on their learning and academic performance. Hence, LA felt that some of their fellow learners do not take their learning tasks seriously by the time they are in Grade 11. Some learners are believed to have a tendency of spending time at bars and consuming alcohol. It seems that some learners waste their time for studying when they go to bars. Some learners tend to be stressed during examinations.

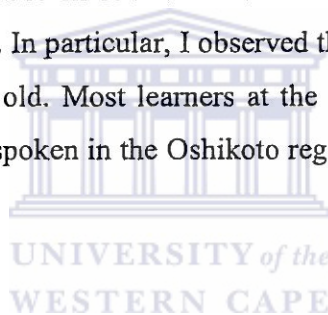
The next section presents a discussion about School B.



### **4.3 SCHOOL B**

This section presents the data collected from school B that is situated in the Oshikoto region of Namibia, as outlined in Chapter three. In my observation at the school, I noticed that this school is situated in a rural area (see Chapter three). The school does not have a hostel for learners. Most of the learners live in the rural area, and some of them travel long distances to school on foot. Classes offered at this school are Grades 8-12. Through observation of the physical environment, I noted that there are some recreation bars scattered near the surroundings of the school. Most of these bars sell alcohol. The distance between the school and bars is approximately 90 meters. This means that the distance from the school to the nearby bars is short, and this would easily enable some learners to walk to consume alcohol to those bars.

During my observation, I noticed that learners at the school are boys and girls. Their age ranges from 14 years to above twenty years. In particular, I observed that the oldest learner at the school was in Grade 12 and was 25 years old. Most learners at the school are Oshiwambo speaking. Oshiwambo language is commonly spoken in the Oshikoto region and the entire northern part of Namibia.



#### **4.3.1 SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND STUDY TIME**

School B is a day-school without a hostel for learners. Learners at the school are day learners. The school is fenced with diamond wire mesh. Both the school yard and classrooms look very clean. The classroom buildings are painted in green and are in good shape. There is one library equipped with one television and few books at the school but there is no a librarian. There is also a soccer field and a netball court for the learners (see Chapter three).

The school's physical environment is very important in terms of learners' learning and achievement levels (Mwamwenda, 1996). In this respect, Berry (2002) also informs us that there is a link between school's physical environment and learners' academic performance levels (see Chapter two). The data from this study revealed that most of the informants felt that the

environment of School B was not conducive to effective learning, and this was considered as contributing to the low achievement levels of learners at the school. In this regard, it was noted that:

*Our school gets learners who completed Grade 10 with low points (23 points), because we do not have a hostel. We need a hostel at our school (PB).*

From the above, it is apparent that most learners who pass Grade 10 with good points do not apply for admission for Grades 11 and 12 at the school. The PB believes that most capable learners tend to apply for schooling at boarding schools rather than schools without hostels. The principal believes that the school environment is not conducive to good teaching and learning. He points to the need for a hostel for the school.

The views of the PB suggest that most learners who are high achievers seem not to apply for admission at this school due to the poor learning environment of the school itself. For example, learners do not have accommodation at the school, and they are not provided with meals. In addition to what the PB stated earlier on, the HOD B also expressed concern that the physical environment of this school is not conducive to learners' learning. Specifically, he pointed out that:

*The school environment is not conducive. Many learners spend time at bars. As a result, many learners do not have time to study. Our school does not have a hostel. Thus, we cannot control our learners to study well (HOD B).*

It emerges from the quotation above that the school environment does not seem to have a positive influence on learners' learning. In addition, the data inform us that some learners lack the skills to manage their time for studying because they spend their time at bars. The perception from HOD B is that effective learning seems not to take place at a school that does not have a hostel.

The views of the HOD B seem to suggest that if learners are kept in the hostel, they will have enough time to engage in their learning tasks, unlike day learners.

Some other informants at the school raised a concern that most of the “learners at the school live in the villages whereby they are likely to be kept engaged in doing household activities” (TB). They argued as follows:

*Lack of hostel makes it difficult for the school to control the learners. Most of our learners stay in villages and are occupied by household activities. Some involve in drug abuse. Some travel long distances to school (TB).*

There are some views from the above quotation to suggest that some TBs have a perception that teachers cannot supervise their day learners so as to enable them to learn better at school because the school does not have a hostel for learners. As a result, TB felt that some learners consume drugs simply because they are not in a hostel. The data from the above quotation seems to suggest that the living condition of learners residing in the villages seem not to be conducive to their learning and good achievement levels. Some of these learners also do not seem to get sufficient time to do their learning tasks due to the fact that they tend to fulfil some household activities at home and walk long distances to school, too.

During my observation I learnt that most houses in the region where the school is located belong to peasants who practice subsistence farming. The living of most of these peasants depends on growing crops and keeping large and small stock. Most of the communities in the Oshikoto region have some cattle and goats, and they used to look after them more, especially during the rainy season, so that they do not destroy their crops in the fields. In this respect, I also learnt that learners tend to be engaged in performing some household activities such as cultivating and looking after livestock after school and during weekends too. It was further mentioned that “Most learners do not have time to study because they are kept cultivating and harvesting at homes” (TB).

I also observed that the houses in the rural area in the Oshikoto region are scattered and this makes some learners travel long distances to the school. During my observation I noted that some learners who walk long distances to school do not manage to attend the morning assembly which starts at 07h45 every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Research reveals that most learners

in rural areas in developing African countries spend more time walking to and from school (Abane *et al.*, 2011).

It was also mentioned that learners do not study during study time in the afternoons because they are always hungry (LB). This means that learners do not bring their lunches to school. Nutrition is an important factor in the daily lives of the learners (Farrant, 1999). Specifically, one learner complained as follows:

*We are always hungry during study and do not have energy to study. Study sessions start from 14h00 up to 15h30, from Monday to Friday. We do not need to attend study sessions hungry (LB).*

As indicated in the quotation above, it seems that learners spend much time at school without eating any food. These low levels of nutrition have been cited by scholars who have argued that learners tend to be emotionally disturbed when they feel hungry at school (Farrant, 1999). As normal human beings, learners need nutrition in order to be able to concentrate on their academic tasks at school. Nutrition is one of the significant basic needs of the learner (Farrant, 1999). Based on the information from the quotation above, it seems that when learners are hungry, they do not have sufficient energy to cope with study sessions in the afternoons.

During my observation at the school I noted that learners start attending their first classes (lessons) from 08h00 and end at 13h40. Learners get a break of twenty minutes which starts at 13h40 and ends at 14h00. Thereafter, learners start with the afternoon study session which starts at 14h00 and ends at 15h30. This means that they are at school for approximately eight hours and thirty minutes without any lunch. I observed that some learners who have money tend to buy cakes and bread during the break within the school premises, while some other learners do not buy any food possibly because they do not have money. Thus, the data from this study inform us that the environment of this school seems to be not conducive to learners' learning because learners are not provided with meals at school. As a result, some LB revealed that they are not able to concentrate on studying during study sessions because they are always hungry during that time of the day. It seems that some learners spend almost the whole day without eating anything at school. This means that they were only likely to eat anything until they go back home after



study sessions which end at 15h30. The data shows that hunger seems to be one of the factors which contribute to poor learning outcomes of learners at the school.

#### **4.3.2 SIZE OF CLASSES AND TEACHING RESOURCES**

As was outlined in Chapter three, there are approximately 800 learners at the school. There are 31 teachers. The teacher-learner ratio at the school is 1:26. The data shows that the teacher-learner ratio is not very high. This means that there are almost twenty six learners for every one teacher at the school. Even though the learner-teacher ratio was found not high at the school, classrooms for Grades 11 and 12 learners were found to be overcrowded at the school. Classrooms for Grades 8, 9 and 10 were not overcrowded.

Research shows that every school needs to be equipped with all the necessary resources in order to achieve increased academic productivity in education (Farrant, 1999). The data reveals that some classes at the school were overcrowded. It was mentioned that “Grade 11 and 12 classrooms are overcrowded with 40-45 learners” (TB). This means that there is a need for additional construction of classrooms at the school. Teaching resources are very significant for the learners’ learning and achievement levels at school. In this respect, TB highlighted a few important aspects that are lacking: “We do not have enough text books for our learners”. “We do not have internet” (TB). The data from this study shows us that teaching resources at the school are not adequate. For example, learners do not have the necessary facilities such as enough text books. Scholars tell us that learners cannot study if they do not have text books (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). Text books are important sources of information for learners.

The other important aspect that was mentioned about learners’ learning is the internet. The internet facility was not available at the school. Teachers perceived that the internet facility was significant in terms of facilitating learners’ learning and improving their academic results. Learners’ learning tends to be more enhanced when teachers are using computer software in their lessons (Means, 2010). Hence, the lack of text books and the internet at School B is considered as one of the main factors contributing to the low achievement levels of learners. This means that

when learners have access to internet facilities and adequate text books, they are likely to learn effectively and achieve high educational attainments at school.

### 4.3.3 TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

The professional identity of the teacher is very important in terms of learners' learning outcomes (Adendorff *et al.*, 2001). Soudien (2002) states that teachers' professional identities are shaped by their backgrounds, social profiles, genders, levels of training and general competencies. In response to the question about how teachers provide academic support to learners at the school, the HOD B explained that "some individual teachers arrange to meet some of their learners for remedial teaching during study time". Based on the point raised by the HOD B earlier, it seems that not all teachers at the school were committed to conduct remedial teaching for their learners. This means that teachers' levels of commitment towards their teaching tasks were not the same. In this respect, their professional identities are reflected by their individual commitments and attitudes towards their teaching work. The head of department further stated that:

*Our teachers are committed and are qualified professionals. We are lucky that some of our teachers at our school are dedicated (HOD B).*

The above quotation reveals that most teachers at the school are qualified and have the capabilities to teach at a senior secondary school. The views of the HOD B inform us that the school has teachers with a quality professional identity. For example, it was highlighted that teachers at School B were qualified and dedicated. This means that there is not a shortage of qualified teachers at the school. This means that teachers' qualification and dedication levels at School B show us their professional identities as capable teachers.

Responding to the question about what type of teaching methods can help learners to learn better, some teachers mentioned good understanding about teaching methods. Specifically, one teacher stated that:

*Learner-centred approach helps learners to take part in the learning processes of their learning activities. Moreover, learners learn better by discovery method and do not forget things easily (TB).*

There are some indications from the data above to suggest that some teachers at School B seem to have an understanding about how to help learners to learn because they have an understanding about the learner-centred approach. Scholars inform us that most learners in the classroom are likely to achieve the learning outcomes of the lesson when the teacher applies the learner-centred teaching approach (Killen, 2010; Moore, 2009).

Furthermore, the views expressed in the quotation about the teaching and learning process of the learners, show us that some teachers from School B seem to be aware that learners learn by means of “a constructivist teaching method” (Floden and Prawat, 1994). In this approach, learners are always at the centre of their own learning tasks, while the teacher is just facilitating the learning process (Floden and Prawat, 1994). In light of this, one teacher explains how he teaches and supports learners to learn effectively, saying:

*I give a topic test at the end of each topic and do revision for each topic. I teach learners how to answer questions by using question papers of past examinations (TB).*

The views expressed in the quotation above tell us that continuous assessment and revision of topics are important for learners’ learning. The use of a variety of teaching methods was also mentioned as they are helpful to support learners to master the subject content. The data suggests that learners can do well in the examinations provided they are trained how to answer the question papers of their various subjects. In addition, the head of department commented that:

*I use integration and inclusive teaching methods. I give many assessment activities to learners. I mainly use participative teaching approach because, it makes all learners involved in the learning process (HOD B).*

Based on the evidence from the quotation above, the HOD B shows some expertise about how to use various teaching methods in order to teach learners to learn better. This seems to suggest that the HOD B has more knowledge about how learners learn and how teachers are supposed to

teach. Hence, as a supervisor of teachers at the school, the HOD B seems to have the capability to advise teachers how they can support learners to learn and achieve good achievement levels.

#### 4.3.4 TEACHERS' COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION

Teacher commitment and dedication have a significant influence on learners' achievement levels at school (Barker *et al.*, 2006). Some of the data from selected informants at School B revealed that teachers' commitment and dedication to their functions and tasks are very high. In response to the question how committed teachers were in terms of completing their assessment work, the PB stated that "teachers are committed towards completing their assessment work". It may be important to state that this perception was not held by some of the learners.

Lack of teachers' commitment and dedication were mentioned as contributing to poor learning outcomes of learners at the school. In their own words, some learners said that:

*Some teachers do not give activities. They are lazy! Nobody supervises our study. Learners make too much noise during study and we do not concentrate at all*  
(LB).

The views of the LB from the quotation above suggest that some teachers do not approach their teaching functions in a dedicated way because they do not give activities to learners.

There are perceptions among some learners that certain teachers do not take their roles as teachers very responsibly. For example, it was mentioned that some of them do not supervise learners' study sessions. The views of learners from the quotation above inform us that the fact that learners tend to make a noise during study time could be a result of lack of supervision of the study sessions by the teachers at school.

Some informants for this study highlighted that "Giving more work to learners helps them to master the subject and pass with quality marks in the end" (TB). TB seem to have the perception that, when the teacher provides learners with more learning activities such as exercises, tests, and

assignments, learners tend to learn in a way that they master the basic competencies of the subject area. As a result, learners seem to perform well academically.

One respondent mentioned that, “some teachers are overloaded with work and cannot mark learners’ work and give feedback to learners on time” (TB). The heavy workload of teachers was mentioned as making the work of teachers difficult at the school. As a result, it was mentioned that learners’ work is not marked on time. The views from the quotation above imply that learners were many and teachers were few at the school. The TB felt that if learners’ work is marked on time and learners are given feedback on time about their work, learners’ performance would be enhanced.

Teachers’ dedication was mentioned as having an influence on learners’ commitment towards their academic work. More specifically, it was noted that:

*If the teacher is a hard worker, learners will perform well and vice versa. The teacher is the role model and has a strong influence on learners’ performance* (TB).

The data from the above quotation inform us that teachers’ level of commitment towards performing their work at school has a significant influence on learners’ level of commitment towards doing their academic work, too. The respondent believes that, if the teacher is not committed and dedicated towards his or her teaching duties, learners tend to carry out their academic tasks with less commitment and dedication, too. The suggestion made here is that learners who work hard at school tend to emulate their hardworking teachers because teachers are considered as role models at school.

In the process of observing a lesson in the classroom, I learnt that the teacher had prepared her lesson very well in order to meet the learning needs of most of the learners in the classroom. The teacher also employed teacher-centred teaching method such as explaining. Specifically, during classroom observation I noticed that learners were engaged in the lesson when they were given group work. Group work for the learners comprised 3-4 learners working together. The teacher was monitoring all groups of learners by walking around the whole class during the lesson. After doing their group work, one learner from each group presented the work of their group to the rest

of the class. The teacher reinforced good answers presented by learners, and also made corrections about wrong answers presented by the learners.

I observed that the teacher seemed to be committed and dedicated towards her teaching responsibilities in terms of presenting the lesson and applying various teaching methods correctly during the lesson. Some of the data from this study suggests that a teacher's commitment and dedication can be seen through the way the teacher presents the lesson (see appendix A5).

#### **4.3.5 TEACHER'S ROLE IN TERMS OF MOTIVATING LEARNERS.**

As an educator and motivator, the teacher plays a very important role in relation to the achievement levels of learners at school (Moore and Quinn, 1994). Successful teachers are those who keep on motivating their learners to work hard at school (Curwin and Mendler). The way teachers approach their teaching functions at school has an influence on learners' motivation. In this regard, Eggen and Kauchak (1988) inform us that teachers do not teach in the same way; some are more charismatic and have ability to influence learners to take their studies seriously. This means that some teachers at some schools can be effective or ineffective. The data revealed that there was no any special study programme which was meant to provide remedial teaching/learning support to Grade 12 learners at School A. Specifically, it was mentioned that "We do not have any official study programme established at this school" (HOD B). When asked whether there is any special study programme at the school, PB also stated that, "No, we do not have any study programme in place". The views of both HOD B and PB inform us that the school does not have any special teaching programme, e.g. remedial teaching programme, for supporting learners to learn and pass examinations successfully. The absence of any special teaching programme such as afternoon, Saturday or holiday classes for learners at the school seems to symbolize that teachers do not play an important role in terms of providing additional learning support for learners.

One informant felt that learners are able to pass and achieve good academic results provided that they are motivated. He mentioned that:

*Learners need to be motivated. Grade 12 learners need to be given information about entry requirements to high tertiary institutions so that they may study to reach those requirements (TB).*

It was mentioned in the quotation above that there is a need to motivate learners at the school. It seems that learners at School B do not appear to be self-motivated when carrying out their school work. The literature tells us that teachers should take note that learners' motivation is the most significant factor contributing to good learning and quality academic results of learners (Pienaar, 2008). In addition, TB felt that, when learners are provided with information about entry requirements to tertiary institutions, they would study hard in order to attain the required entry requisites for tertiary institutions. It seems that learners at the school are not provided with important information about entry requirements for Grade 12 learners to be admitted to tertiary institutions.

In response to the question about why Grade 12 learners fail at the school, one learner raised a concern that, "Teachers do not invigilate learners during study time" (LB). The failure rate among Grade 12 learners was attributed to teachers' actions. The views of LB seem to suggest that study sessions at the school were not useful to the learners because teachers do not have the commitment to supervise learners during study time. On the other hand, it seems that learners themselves do not have self-motivation to study alone without being supervised by teachers.

#### **4.3.6 TEACHER EXPECTATIONS OF LEARNERS**

Teacher expectation has an influence on the achievement levels of the learners at school because teachers tend to teach towards their expectations (Lindeque, 2001; Rist, 2007). The data for this study reveals that some teachers have low expectations of their learners' achievement levels. In particular, PB commented that, "Our school gets learners who completed Grade 10 with low points". There are some indications from the data to suggest that the principal expects most of the learners at the school to perform poorly academically because he believes that most of these learners were low achievers in terms of their previous academic performances.

When asked about why Grade 12 learners achieve low academic levels at the school, the HOD B mentioned that:

*Many of our learners are those who scored low points from Grade 10. Some of our learners are those who were not in formal education for 2-3 years because, they were improving their points through informal education, Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) (HOD B).*

It is evident from the quotation above that the HOD B has the perception that most Grade 11 and 12 learners at the school are low achievers because they had achieved low points in the previous grade (Grade 10). Furthermore, the HOD B felt that learners who spend some years improving their Grade 10 points through an informal education programme at the Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) are unable to pass Grade 12. This means that some learners are stereotyped as low achievers simply because of their previous low achievement levels from Grade 10. In addition, the data shows us that NAMCOL learners are stereotyped as low achievers. The views of the HOD B seem to suggest that a learner who passed his or her previous grade with low points will also achieve low academic results in the next grade, while a learner who passed his or her previous grade with good results will always pass the next grade as well with similar good results. Research tells us that teachers have the tendency of stereotyping and labelling learners as “bright”, “slow”, or “incompetent” (Rist, 2007:74). In accordance with what the HOD B stated, one teacher commented that:

*Some teachers have negative attitudes towards their subjects and learners' performance. Some teachers are positive towards their subjects and learners' performance. If the teacher is a hard worker, learners will perform well (TB).*

The views expressed above make us to think that not all teachers at School B stereotype learners as slow learners. As stated in the quotation above, some teachers at the school seem to be positive towards their learners' academic capabilities. TB felt that the achievement levels of learners are determined by each teacher's commitment to his or her teaching task at school.



#### 4.3.7 ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

Research reveals that the language being used as a medium of instruction at school may have a strong influence on learners' achievement levels (Napier, 2011). There are some indications from the data of this study to suggest that the English language seems to be one of the main factors which influences the low achievement levels of learners at School B. Hence, it was mentioned that, "our learners have poor understanding in English" (HOD B). The data shows that the HOD B attributes low achievement levels of learners to poor understanding of the English language among learners at school. In response to the question regarding the barriers to Grade 12 learners' performance, the respondent highlighted that:

*Language is the barrier. Most of our learners answer questions out of context. A strong foundation from lower primary is needed among learners (HOD B).*

The data in the quotation above indicates that the English language is crucial with regard to learners' learning and attainments at the school. Specifically, poor understanding of the English language among learners is considered as one of the main barriers to effective learning and good achievement levels of learners at School B.

One informant stated that "Learners need good understanding of English language" (TB). It is evident from the data of this study that some informants felt that low achievement levels of learners are mainly influenced by the poor understanding of the English language among learners themselves. When some other informants were asked about what are the main factors that contribute to the failure of Grade 12 learners, they explained as follows:

*Most learners do not have a good understanding of English language at our school. Thus, they fail to interpret facts and understand questions well. Learners should learn how to spell words correctly. Learners should read questions carefully so as to understand them (TB).*

As stated above, learners cannot learn effectively when they are not able to understand the English language which is used as a medium of instruction at school. Scholars tell us that learners tend to learn more effectively and attain good academic results when they have a good

understanding of the English language which is used as a medium of instruction at school (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). In this regard, TB felt that learners can only attain good achievement levels at school if they are fluent in English. The language as a medium of instruction at school is one of the significant factors which have a serious influence on learners' learning as well as their levels of academic achievement (Napier, 2011).

#### **4.3.8 SUBJECT CHOICE-CURRICULUM**

Scholars tell us that learners are supposed to have the right to choose the subjects that they wish to study at Grade 11 and 12 levels (Ainley and Fullarton, 2000; Bangpan *et al.*, 2010). In the light of this, Bangpan *et al.* (2010) comment that learners tend to perform poorly in Grade 12 when they are not allowed to choose subjects that match their abilities and intended careers. It emanated from some of the data of this study that some learners at the school do not have the right to choose subjects which they can study in Grades 11 and 12. Responding to the question about what are the main barriers to good academic performance of Grade 12 learners, one informant expressed a concern that, "Some of our learners in Grades 11 and 12 are allocated to wrong fields of studies which they did not do in Grade 10" (TB). The views of the teacher tell us that some learners tend to be taught new subjects in Grades 11 to 12 and this seems to have a negative influence on learners' learning'. The data tells us that learners seem to fail at the Grade 12 level because they do not have a good academic foundation (pre-knowledge) of the subject areas which they are doing in Grades 11 and 12.

Lack of making subject choices among Grades 11 and 12 learners contributes to low achievement levels of learners at the school. Specifically, it was further stated that "Some Grade 12 learners are not doing the same subjects which they did from Grade 10" (TB). This means that some Grade 12 learners are not given the chance to study similar subjects which they studied in earlier grades such as Grades 8, 9 and 10. The data reveals that some learners tend to perform poorly in Grade 12 simply because they are not familiar with the current subjects they are being taught in Grades 11 and 12.

#### 4.3.9 SCHOOL PROMOTION PRACTICES

School promotion refers to the process whereby learners are promoted from the previous grade to the next grade in schools (Kapenda *et al.*, 2011). The process of promoting learners to the next grade without mastering the basic competencies from the previous grade contributes to the high failure rates of Grade 12 learners (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002:117). This study reveals that the process of promoting Grade 11 learners to Grade 12 seems to have a negative influence on the achievement levels of learners at School B. The data from this study shows that “Learners are automatically promoted to Grade 12 even though they did not meet any specific basic requirements to be promoted to Grade 12” (TB). In response to the question about what are the main factors which influence low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners, teachers explained that:

*Many learners are not serious with their studies while in Grade 11 because they are promoted to Grade 12 despite the fact that they did not pass Grade 11. Learners waste time in Grade 11 and they find it difficult to cope with Grade 12 because many of them are promoted to Grade 12 without passing Grade 11(TB).*

A concern was raised from the above quotation that Grade 11 learners tend not to engage themselves in their academic tasks possibly due to the fact that they are aware that they cannot fail and repeat that grade. Some teachers (TB) have the perception that most Grade 11 learners may not take their studies seriously because most of them are automatically promoted to Grade 12 without actually passing. The data reveals that there is no repetition of Grade 11 by learners at School B.

TB felt that Grade 11 learners seem not to see the significance of studying seriously because they do not have to pass Grade 11 in order to be promoted to Grade 12. Hence, teachers believed that the process of promoting learners to the next grade without them actually passing the examinations does not motivate learners to study very hard in order to attain high achievement levels at school. In addition, the views of TB suggest that most of the learners who are automatically promoted to Grade 12 without actually passing do not have the academic competencies to pass Grade 12 competently. TB seem to have the perception that if learners were

not serious enough about their studies to pass Grade 11 on their own, they would also likely behave in the same way when they are promoted to Grade 12.

Research reveals that learners in public schools of Namibia are promoted to the next grade without actually passing, and this is believed to be the cause of the low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners in schools (Kapenda *et al.*, 2011). In the light of this, it is evident from the data of this study that TB strongly believe that automatic promotion of Grade 11 learners to Grade 12 is one of the main factors which promotes the high failure rate among Grade 12 learners at the school.

#### **4.3.10 LEARNERS' BEHAVIOR AND MOTIVATION**

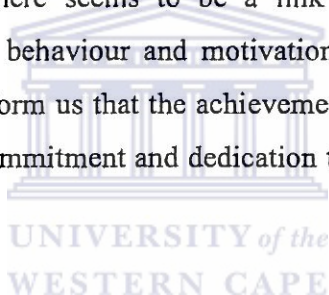
Learners' behaviour and motivation have an influence on their achievement levels (Moore, 2007). Fraser (2008) tells us that learners who are successful at school are those who are motivated and committed to carry out their academic activities. It emanated from the data of this study that some learners do not seem to be motivated towards carrying out their academic tasks. One informant argued that:

*Learners are not self motivated towards their work. Lack of seriousness among some of Grade 12 learners towards their school work, would lead to poor performance levels by end of the year (TB).*

Two points emerge from the quotation above. First, TB perceives that learners lack motivation towards performing their academic tasks and this might have a negative influence on their attainment levels at school. Second, low academic performance levels among learners were attributed to lack of seriousness among learners towards their school work. The data tells us that the levels of commitment and motivation among learners are significant in terms of learners' achievement levels at school. The literature informs us that learners who are successful at school are those who are self-motivated and committed to carry out their academic tasks (Fraser, 2008).

Motivation was stressed in this study as the key to learners' academic performance levels. Informants felt that a good pass rate of learners in school could be promoted, "When teachers reward learners who do well academically, and when teachers are committed at motivating learners" (TB). This means that when learners fail or attain low academic results at school they are not motivated to study.

One informant indicated that "If both teachers and learners are committed to their tasks, the achievement levels of Grade 12 learners will improve at our school this year" (TB). TB seem to suggest that some teachers and learners at the school are not committed to fulfil their school work. This means that when both teachers and learners are not committed towards their school work, learners are not likely to attain the desired learning outcomes in their subject areas. This means that, if teachers are serious and committed towards their teaching responsibilities, learners are likely to emulate their teachers by being serious and committed towards their learning tasks too. Thus, the data reveals that there seems to be a link between the level of teachers' commitment to work and learners' behaviour and motivation towards their school work and achievement levels too. Scholars inform us that the achievement levels of learners at school are influenced by the level of teacher commitment and dedication to the teaching norms (Barkker *et al.*, 2006).



#### 4.4 CONCLUSION

This Chapter presented a summary of the data of this study, which was collected from schools A and B in the Oshikoto education region of Namibia. The data for this study revealed that the achievement levels of learners from both schools A and B were influenced by several factors. Some of these factors which were identified as having an influence on the achievement levels of the learners are: the environment of the school, overcrowding of learners in classrooms and lack of teaching resources, various teacher professional identities, teachers' levels of commitment and dedication to their functions, teachers' role in terms of motivating learners, teacher expectations of learners, English competencies among learners at school, lack of subject choice for learners, learners' ill-behaviour and lack of motivation towards their academic tasks, and automatic promotion of Grade 11 learners to Grade 12. The data of this research shows us that there are various factors which seem to have a negative influence on learners' achievement levels at schools A and B. The data revealed that low achievement levels among Grade 12 learners from schools A and B are not caused by a single factor. It emerged from the data of this research that low achievement levels of learners from these two schools are influenced by many factors, most of which are very common at each of these two schools (see appendices A2, A3, A6 and A7).

The main difference between factors that had an influence on the low achievement levels of learners at schools A and B was that most learners at School A seemed to have enough time to study because they were boarding learners, while most of the learners from School B seemed to have a limited time for study because they were day learners who resided in rural areas whereby they could possibly be engaged in household chores such as farming activities after school and during weekends too. It was also found that most learners from School B travel long distances to school compared with most learners at School A.

Despite the fact that schools A and B were different in terms of location and infrastructures, it was found that the difference in the infrastructures of these schools had different significant influences on learners' achievement levels. The data revealed that some learners from School B claimed that they were not able to study effectively during afternoon study sessions because they were always hungry during that time. In comparison to School B, the majority of the learners

from School A did not seem to experience hunger during study sessions because they were provided with meals at school. Lack of nutrition among learners during study sessions seems to be one of the factors which could have a negative influence on learners' achievement levels at School B. In this regard, the data of this study provides an answer to the research question and objectives of this study.

The following chapter concludes the study. Here I present the discussion of the main data from schools A and B comparatively.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: COMPARISON OF THE SCHOOLS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, I presented the various factors pertaining to learners' learning and achievement levels at the two schools. This chapter seeks to compare the research findings from schools A and B. Consideration will also be given to the similarities and differences in the environmental, social and educational factors at both schools.

### **5.2 SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND STUDY TIME**

As outlined in Chapter four, both schools are located in rural settlements of the Oshikoto region in Namibia with a distance between them of approximately 30 km. While both schools are situated in rural areas, their diverse physical environmental locations have different influences on the processes of learning. In this respect, Mwamwenda (1996) states that the physical environment of the school has a significant influence on learners' learning and achievement levels.

One of the important infrastructural differences between the two schools is that one of the schools has a residential-based structure for the majority of the learners, while at the other school the learners have to commute daily from their various homes. School A has a hostel facility, while School B is a day school without a hostel for learners' accommodation. The hostel structures at School A provide accommodation for approximately 80% of the learners, while the remaining 20% of learners commute to school daily. Even though the hostel at School A is important in terms of providing learners with ample time for studying, its size does not allow it to accommodate all the enrolled learners at the school.

The fact that learners had access to full time accommodation in the hostel facility meant that they were able to spend more time and energy on their learning, unlike the day learners who had to



walk on foot to the school daily. In addition, boarding learners were able to attend extra study sessions in the afternoons and evenings. In this way they should be able to consolidate and deepen their understanding of the curriculum taught during the day.

During my observations, I noticed that most of the boarding learners at School A seemed to have more time to engage in their learning activities because they were not allowed to leave the school premises during all school days, including weekends. The researcher also noted that most of the boarding learners from School A were not allowed to go for leisure outings during weekends or week days. They were only permitted to leave the school premises during exit weekends or school holidays. The Ministry of Education (2009) school calendar for public schools in Namibia states that it is a school policy of the Ministry of Education in Namibia that boarding learners are allowed to remain in the hostel till such time when they are released to go home during exit weekends or school holidays. This means that boarding learners are released from school premises according to the dates stipulated in the school calendar. The aim behind this policy is to provide learners with more study time.

A comparative analysis of study times at schools A and B showed that School B did not seem to have an extended time for learning because day learners had to travel back to their homes. This meant that learners at School B had only one study session in the afternoon, from Monday to Friday, lasting for only one hour and thirty minutes. In contrast, boarding learners at school A had two study sessions from Monday to Friday in the afternoons and evenings. The duration for these study sessions is two hours in the afternoon and one hour in the evening. On the other hand, day learners at both schools A and B did not have evening study time like boarding learners at School A. Boarding learners at School A had more time to study at school than day learners from both schools. The difference in the amount of time assigned to extra tuition classes may have a qualitative and quantitative difference on learners' achievement levels at these two schools.

Another difference in terms of study times between day learners at schools A and B is that day learners from School A did not attend any study sessions at school, unlike day learners at School B. The researcher also observed that day learners at School A were allowed to go home immediately after classes. This meant that lack of study time for day learners from School A

could have a negative influence on their academic achievement levels too. In this regard, the data of this study informs us that School A did not make any arrangements for study time for day learners to study at school after classes. Fraser (2008) states that successful learners need enough time to engage in their learning activities at school.

The data from this research revealed that day learners at School A did not receive the same academic support which was provided to boarding learners by their teachers. It was highlighted earlier in Chapter four that some teachers at School A provided remedial classes to their learners after school. When these teachers conducted remedial lessons in the afternoons and evenings, day learners would have already knocked off and none of them were at the school during that time. This meant that day learners missed out on important academic activities which were given only to boarding learners. When these day learners missed those remedial lessons, this could have a negative impact on their educational attainments.

The availability of teachers' houses and learners' hostels at School A seemed to have a positive influence on learners' academic success. Teachers at School A were all accommodated in teachers' houses which are located near the school's main gate. As a result, teachers at School A seemed to have more time and access to give remedial lessons to their learners in the afternoons or during evening study sessions than teachers from School B. Comparatively, teachers who taught at School B seemed to have a limited time in terms of providing extra learning activities or remedial teaching to their learners because the school did not have a hostel for learners. Responding to the question about what were the main factors influencing low achievement levels of learners at School B, the Head of Department mentioned that "Many learners do not have time to study". Our school does not have a hostel". The existence of the housing infrastructure for teachers and learners' hostel accommodation at School A appeared to have a positive influence on learners' learning and educational attainment. The review of literature revealed that low achievement levels of learners are linked to the quality and type of infrastructures at schools (Agbor, 2012). This means that the lack of a hostel facility for learners at School B could contribute to low achievement levels of the learners.

Most boarding learners at School A were provided with the benefit of meals at school. Farrant (1999) states that the importance of nutrition in the daily life of a learner, more especially the

daily actualizing needs such as food and accommodation, has a direct influence on learning. During the observation process I noticed that learners' meals were well catered for at School A. This meant that most boarding learners at School A were provided with breakfast, tea, lunch and dinner. Hence, boarding learners at School A did not seem to experience hunger at school like day learners at both schools.

It was further revealed in the data findings that boarding learners from School A valued the sessions of study which they attended at school in the afternoons and evenings. On the contrary, day learners from School B seemed not interested in attending afternoon study sessions at their school. In response to the question addressed to respondents at both schools as to whether study sessions were helpful to learners, the following was mentioned: learners from School A stated that "we get time to do our homework". This meant that learners felt that study sessions provided them with opportunities to fulfil their learning tasks at school. In following on the question about the value of study sessions, some learners at School B mentioned that "we are always hungry during study and do not have energy to study". The view of the learners from School B suggests that there was no value in them attending afternoon study sessions while they were hungry. In other words, day learners from School B did not see the importance of attending afternoon study sessions because they felt hunger during study sessions.

From the above, we note that day learners from both schools A and B experienced some challenges such as feeling hungry during afternoon study sessions, and travelling long distances to and from school. Abane *et al.* (2011) highlights that there are various challenges in rural areas that confront learners on a daily basis which stand out as impediments to their academic progress. Day learners from both schools travelled different distances to and from school because houses in the rural areas of the Oshikoto region are sparsely located. In the light of this, the researcher observed that some of the day learners whose houses were located near the schools walked only short distances to and from their schools, while some learners whose houses were located far from their schools walked long distances up to approximately 15 km to and from school each school day.

Day learners who travelled a distance of about 15 km to and from schools A and B would walk that distance in approximately one hour thirty minutes. This means that these learners walked a

distance of about 30km per day. The literature enlightens us that walking long distances to school on a daily basis could be tiresome and might have a negative influence on learners' learning too (Burde and Linden, 2007). This means that when learners are tired, they seem not to concentrate well during the lesson presentations in the classroom (Abane *et al.*, 2011). In this regard, Abane *et al.* (2011) suggests that there is a need to address the long distances travelled by learners to schools because learners are always exposed to exhausting walking distances, robbers, rapists, snakes, and so on. Learners who walk long distances from both schools have a safety risk as compared with those learners who are in school hostels at School A.

A further aspect that has emerged from the study are the household roles that learners perform in their homesteads which impact negatively on performance levels. As was outlined earlier in Chapter four, the data from this study suggests that day learners from both schools seemed to be disturbed by performing household chores, such as cultivating, looking after livestock, and so on. In this regard, it was mentioned earlier that most learners at School B lived in rural areas where they are supposed to perform daily household activities. When teachers were asked about the factors contributing to low achievement levels, one teacher at School B said that "learners stay in villages and are occupied by household activities". In a similar way, day learners from School A also seemed to be engaged in performing household chores because they, too, lived in the rural area just like other day learners from School B. Agbor (2012) states that most of the communities in rural areas of Africa are poor peasants, and their living depends on subsistence farming. As a result, learners in rural areas of Africa do not have enough time to engage in their academic tasks because they are used to performing household chores such as farming activities rather (Abane *et al.*, 2011; Agbor, 2012). Thus, the findings from this study suggest that day learners from both schools A and B had a similar need for accommodation at their respective schools.

Another similarity that emerged from the environmental aspects of schools A and B is that there are informal settlements near each of these schools. At each of these informal settlements there are bars which sell alcoholic drinks. Furthermore, some of the Grade 11 and 12 day learners from these schools experienced a lack of accommodation, as was outlined earlier in Chapter three. In response to a question about what factors influence low performance of learners at the two

schools, the principal for School A highlighted that “Some of our learners rent rooms in the informal settlement where they consume alcohol”. Alcohol was, thus, one of the factors that was mentioned in this study as contributing to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners. Some Grade 11 and 12 learners at School B also resided in the informal settlements located near their school. When asked about the causes of the low achievement levels of learners, the principal at School B commented that “Some of our learners are accommodated in the informal settlement which is not conducive to learning”. This accommodation for learners is not suitable. The researcher also observed that there was loud music at these places and this could distract learners from studying.

The first language which was taught at schools A and B is Oshiwambo. Even though the English language was used as a medium of instruction at both schools, I observed that most learners at both schools had the tendency to communicate with each other during school hours in the Oshiwambo language which is their mother tongue. Callahan (2005) highlights that fluency in the English language is the primary requirement for learners’ academic success. This means that learners’ fluency and proficiency in English, which is used as the medium of instruction at school, has a significant influence on academic achievement levels. The findings from this research suggest that, when learners communicate at school, they prefer to use their mother tongue which is commonly spoken by majority of the learners, rather than communicating in the second language. It seems that when learners at schools A and B were not accustomed to speaking the English language most of the time at school, this could reduce their fluency in speaking and understanding the English language. Learners who lack understanding in the language which is used as a medium of instruction at school tend to achieve low educational attainments (Napier, 2011).

Wearing of school uniform is very important among learners at school. Delong (1998) states that, when learners wear school uniform at school, they tend to concentrate on their studies rather than on what to wear. As was outlined in Chapter three, learners at schools A and B had a dress code. This means that learners at both schools wore their school uniforms every school day. Delong (1998) further states that school uniforms enhance discipline and uniformity among learners at school.

School uniform was compulsory for all learners at both schools. Girls at both schools A and B wore similar school uniforms which are white shirts and grey skirts. The boys at schools A and B wore similar white shirts, but their trousers were different. In particular, learners at School A wore grey trousers while boys from School B wore black trousers. DeLong (1998) emphasizes that schools that do not have school uniforms experience more disciplinary problems among learners than schools that have school uniforms. Learning is likely to happen among learners when they have discipline among themselves at school (Diguilio, 2000). This suggests that the purpose of learners at schools A and B wearing school uniforms was to enhance discipline among them in order to improve their educational attainments.

Another significant aspect that impacts on learners' learning and achievement levels is the teacher-pupil ratio of a particular school. According to Huebler (2008), the teacher-pupil ratio of a particular school determines learners' educational attainments. This suggests that the teacher-pupil ratio of a particular school can be used as an indicator which predicts achievement levels of the learners at that particular school. Teachers who teach overcrowded classes cannot meet the learning needs of each learner in the classroom but teachers who teach small classes of learners are able to meet the learning needs of each learner successfully (Berry, 2002; Huebler, 2008).

As was outlined earlier in Chapter four, the teacher-pupil ratios of the two schools are slightly different. In particular, the teacher-pupil ratio at School A was 1:23 while the learner-teacher ratio at School B was 1:26. This means that there are almost 23 learners per one teacher at School A while at School B there are almost 26 learners per one teacher. Even though the teacher-pupil ratios of schools A and B appeared not to be very high, the findings of this study show that the classrooms for Grades 11 and 12 at both schools were very overcrowded with approximately 40-45 learners. Huebler (2008) states that most classes of learners in developing countries in Africa are overcrowded with an average of 30-40 or more learners per one teacher. Huebler further highlights that the average maximum teacher-pupil ratio for the schools in most developed countries is 13.7 learners per one teacher, which is low. In the light of this, the teacher-pupil ratios of both schools seemed to be a bit high compared with the teacher-pupil ratios of schools in developed countries. Findings of Huebler (2008) seem to suggest that the teacher-pupil ratio of not above 13.7 learners per one teacher seems to be the best for promoting

effective teaching and learning processes at school. Based on these research findings, the overcrowding of Grade 11 and 12 classrooms at both schools could be one of the factors which contributed to the low academic performance levels of these schools.

During my observations at schools A and B, I noted that the majority of the learners at both schools seemed to be concentrated only in Grades 11 and 12 classrooms compared with fewer learners in the classrooms for Grades 8, 9 and 10. In particular, classrooms for Grade 11 learners at School A are nine, while classrooms for Grade 12 learners are eight. The total number of classrooms for Grade 11 at School B is eight, which is equal to the total number of the classrooms for Grade 12 learners at this school. At both schools, there were only two classes for each of Grades 8, 9 and 10. Furthermore, in each of these classrooms for Grades 8, 9 and 10 there about 20-30 learners. In view of this, most classrooms for the lower grades at schools A and B were not overcrowded like classrooms for Grades 11 and 12. This suggests that the process of teaching and learning was better in Grades 8-10 than in Grades 11 and 12. In the light of this, Berry (2002) posits that the situation of overcrowded classrooms at school can contribute to low educational attainments of learners.

According to Farrant(1999), the existence of a library in a school is very important in supporting learners' academic achievements. It was revealed in this study that both schools A and B have libraries. On this note, Farrant (1999) states that the library is the most important source of learning materials because it offers an opportunity to learners to read different books related to their different subject areas at school. Furthermore, Farrant posits that when learners use the library at school, they learn the skills of discovering new things for themselves when studying, and this enhances learning in general and the achievement of good academic results. Even though both schools A and B had libraries, these libraries did not operate in the same way. The library at School A was opened every school day while the library at School B was not opened every day. On the other hand, the library at School A had a librarian who was fully employed by the Ministry of Education. As a result, the library at School A was always open for learners from 08h00-17h00, Monday to Friday. In this regard, learners from School A had more time to utilize the learning aids from the library and this could influence their academic performance positively.

Even though, the library is one of the most important sources of learners' learning resources at school (Farrant, 1999), the library at School B did not have a librarian to serve learners. During my observation at School B, I gathered that some teachers volunteered to open the library when they had time, especially after 1400hours. This means that learners from School B were not able to use the learning resources from the library in the same way as learners at School A. As a result, learners from School B had a limited time to use the library resources for their learning and this could have been one of the contributors to the low learning outcomes of the learners at this school.

Chapman (2010) states that one of the significant resources for learners' learning at school is the availability of a computer laboratory. This is important given the importance of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and learning. Information and Communication Technology is a subject that is integrated across all academic curricula in Namibia because it is "a tool to enhance teaching and learning" in schools (National Curriculum for Basic Education, 2009:4). Despite the significance of ICT in schools, the findings for this research study revealed that both schools A and B did not have computer laboratories. Chapman (2010) posits that learners who have access to the use of computers at school tend to learn better and attain good academic results too. This implies that the unavailability of computer laboratories at schools A and B could have a negative influence on the achievement levels of the learners because learners at these schools did not have access to the internet.

According to Chapman (2010), the internet is very important in the enhancement of learning because it provides necessary information about subject areas of the curriculum being studied at school. When textbooks for certain subjects are not enough or available at school, learners can retrieve important information which is relevant to their subject areas through the internet. Findings from this research study revealed that learners at both schools did not have enough text books. Hence, when learners were asked why Grade 12 learners fail, learners from schools A and B highlighted that low achievement levels among learners was caused by "lack of text books". Lack of text books among learners at these schools could be alleviated if both schools had internet facilities which could be used as text book substitutes by learners.



### 5.3 THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE TEACHER

Teachers perform their teaching tasks in different ways. This study revealed that the way individual teachers carried out their teaching practices at schools A and B was different. For example, Heads of Departments from both schools highlighted that some teachers from schools A and B were serious towards fulfilling their teaching tasks, and some were not. As was outlined earlier in Chapter four, some teachers from both schools made different efforts to use various teaching methods in order to help their learners to learn better. In particular, it was found that some teachers at School A conducted extra classes for their learners as clarified earlier on. These extra classes were meant for remedial teaching in order to help learners to improve their academic achievement levels. Teachers have numerous roles to play at schools in terms of teaching learners to learn and achieve good learning outcomes (Cohen *et al.*, 2010; Wright, 1987).

Joyce *et al.* (2002) highlight that it is the responsibility of the teachers to provide conditions which would maximize learners' learning opportunities and achievement levels at school. Cohen *et al.* (2010) states that teachers play different roles at school and these roles have different impacts on the performance levels of the learners. Findings from this study revealed that some teachers from schools A and B are hard working because they approached their teaching tasks diligently.

Aderndorff *et al.* (2001) states that some teachers lack competence to fulfil their duties as expected by the state. It was found from the research findings of this study that some individual teachers from schools A and B are not committed to their teaching roles because some of them failed to attend some of their lessons assigned to them. This means that some of the teachers at schools A and B were negligent towards their teaching responsibilities. Darling-Hammond (1999) states that teachers are employees of the state who are expected to fulfil their teaching duties competently. The data findings further revealed that low commitment among some teachers towards their teaching tasks seems to be one of the main factors which contributed to poor learning and low academic performance levels of learners at schools A and B. It was also revealed that some teachers in the schools are harder workers than others, despite the fact that

they are all in possession of the same teaching qualifications (Darling-Hammond and Young, 2002). Aderndorff *et al.* (2001) cautions that, as employees of the state, teachers should fulfil their duties adequately and in accordance with the code of conduct stipulated by the state as an employer. Aderndorff *et al.* further state that teachers are the agents of the state who are expected to transform education into quality academic achievement levels for learners in their schools.

Cohen *et al.* (2010) state that the roles that teachers play at schools are different and have significant influences on the achievement levels of their learners. Findings for this study reflected that some teachers at School A conducted extra classes for learners in the afternoons and evenings. Killen (2010) advises that the role of the teacher is to create a conducive learning environment for all learners with different learning abilities. In addition, Moore and Quinn (1994) explain that learners are not the same; as a result, they behave differently at school. This means that some learners can learn on their own, some need a little help in order to learn, and some need a lot of help in order to learn (Killen, 2010; Moore & Quinn, 1994).

### 5.3.1 TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL IDENTITIES

Teachers are unique because they have different qualities and personalities which shape and characterize their identities at their respective schools (Gulosino & Xu, 2006; Soudien, 2002). This study revealed that some teachers from schools A and B have similar qualities and some have different identities too. One of their similar identities is the level of their qualifications. The data of this research revealed that most teachers from schools A and B were qualified at a degree level. In this regard, the Namibian National Curriculum for Basic Education (NCBEN, 2009:37) stipulates that all teachers teaching at senior secondary school level in Namibia should be qualified at a degree level. Juresaute-Harbison (2005) states that teachers' qualification level is one of the most important factors that determine the quality of their products in schools.

Exstrom (2003) states that teachers who are qualified at a degree level are more competent to teach effectively and improve the achievement levels of their learners at school as compared with those with lower level qualifications. The data from this study disapproved of Exstrom's (2003)

findings. It was found that, even though all teachers from schools A and B were professionally qualified at a degree level, the achievement levels of Grade 12 learners at these particular schools were very low for three consecutive academic years. In particular, this study showed that, since 2008-2010, the achievement levels for the learners from schools A and B were very low despite the fact that these learners were exposed to qualified teachers. In the light of this, there are some indications from the data that suggest that qualified teachers can also fail to produce more learners with above-average achievement levels at school. As outlined earlier in 3.4.1, since 2008-2010 less than 5% of Grade 12 learners from schools A and B met the entry criteria for the University of Namibia.

Soudien (2002) states that teachers are different and they have different teaching skills and abilities to perform their teaching at schools. These, in turn, shape and reflect their unique identities and personalities as teachers of a particular school. The data from this research showed that teachers from schools A and B have different teaching qualities which seemed to have an influence on the achievement levels of their learners. In particular, it was found that some teachers from schools A and B were considered to be competent teachers. On the other hand, some teachers from these two schools were found to be incompetent teachers. This means that teachers from these schools approached their teaching functions in different ways. For example, learners from School B mentioned that, "Some teachers do not give activities". In this regard, some other learners from School A also indicated that, "Some teachers do not give us home work".

The data from this study reflected that the personal quality of a particular teacher is reflected by the way he or she performs his or her duties at school. The data further revealed that teachers who were considered to be effective ones at schools A and B are those who demonstrated commitment towards their work and taught with enthusiasm. For example, science teachers at School A were considered to be effective teachers because they provided subject syllabuses to their learners. As a result, it was mentioned that Grade12 learners at School A performed better in science subjects than in other subjects.

During the observations, the researcher noted that some teachers from both schools A and B applied appropriate teaching methods which seemed to provide helpful learning support to their

learners. In view of this, the data from this study suggests that teachers' professional and personal identities at schools A and B are characterized by the ways teachers fulfil their teaching tasks at school. Gulosino and Xu (2006) confirm that teachers' identities are shaped by the ways they carry out their responsibilities at schools. In addition, Soudien (2002) comments that teachers' identities are characterized by their individual behaviours towards carrying out their teaching responsibilities and this might impact on their learners' attainment levels positively or negatively. Soudien's views are corroborated by the findings of this study. Thus, some teachers from both schools A and B were found to have desirable professional and personal identities, while other teachers were considered to have undesirable professional and personal identities, due to their different ways of approaching their teaching. Aderndorff *et al.* (2001) states that teachers' identities are shaped by their commitment towards their teaching work at school.

### 5.3.2 TEACHER COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION

Barkker, Hakanen and Schufeli (2006) state that teachers have different levels of commitment towards their teaching work and this may contribute to different achievement levels of learners in schools too. This means that learners' achievement levels are significantly influenced by the teacher's commitment to his or her teaching task. Additionally, Leane and Robert (2004) emphasize that the level of teacher commitment to teaching is a very significant factor which has an influence on the learning outcomes of learners at school. In this respect, the findings of this study revealed that some teachers from schools A and B had different levels of commitment towards their teaching duties. For example, it was found that some teachers from schools A and B were not dedicated to their teaching.

This study further revealed that some teachers from schools A and B had high levels of commitment and dedication towards their teaching tasks. In view of this, it was found that teachers at School A supervised their learners during study sessions. On the contrary, teachers from School B never supervised their learners during study sessions. In the light of this, lack of supervision of learners during study sessions at School B seemed to reflect that teachers at this

school lacked commitment and dedication to support their learners towards progressive learning. Due to lack of study supervision, learners at School B said that they were not able to study during study sessions because most learners used to make a noise. Park (2005) explains that learners who are exposed to committed teachers tend to perform well academically compared with those learners whose teachers lack commitment and dedication towards their teaching work. There is some evidence from this study, then, to suggest that learners at School A were able to study during study time because teachers were committed to supervise them during study sessions at the school. On the other hand, learners from School B seemed unable to study during study sessions, possibly due to lack of teachers' commitment to supervise them during study sessions.

Furthermore, findings from this research study show that some teachers from schools A and B were committed to their teaching and applied effective teaching strategies. For example, it was found that some teachers from School A used to teach their learners during weekends and some holidays. Moreover, it emanated from this study that some individual teachers at School B were also committed to their teaching work because they established some of their own special remedial teaching programmes. These remedial teachings were aimed at improving the performances of the learners. It seems that most of the teachers from School A were more committed because they used to teach their learners during weekends and holidays. In comparison with teachers from School A, teachers from School B did not teach learners during weekends or holidays. In this regard, the findings from this research suggest that the levels of dedication and commitment of teachers from schools A and B were not the same. Day *et al.* (2005) states that teachers who are committed and dedicated towards their teaching will always try to use various teaching strategies which are appropriate to meet the learning needs of their learners. Leanne & Robert (2004) also describe a committed teacher as an educator who is always willing to teach and meets the learning needs of most of his or her learners.

Teachers' lack of commitment and dedication towards their teaching responsibilities was stressed in this study as one of the factors that contributed to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners at schools A and B. In this regard, Hakanena & Schufeli (2006) state that all individual teachers at a particular school have different levels of motivation towards completing their

teaching duties. Findings from this study revealed that some teachers from schools A and B lacked motivation because they did not show commitment and dedication to perform their teaching tasks. Learners who are taught by less committed teachers tend to develop low commitment towards performing their academic work too (Park, 2005). Barker *et al.* (2006) reinforce the point that teacher commitment and dedication have a significant influence on learners' achievement levels.

### 5.3.3 TEACHER EXPECTATIONS OF LEARNERS

This study also revealed that teacher expectations of learners seemed to have an influence on the achievement levels of learners at schools A and B. Rist (2007) states that teacher expectations of learners are based on diverse variables such as test scores, language issues, school records, and so on. If the test scores or school records are low, or if learners have a poor understanding of the language of medium of instruction used at school, teachers tend to accept that “those learners are slow learners” and incapable of passing (Rist, 2007:74). The study findings further revealed that some teachers from schools A and B had low expectations of their learners. Cruickshank & Jenkin (2009) state that what teachers believe about themselves about their learners, and what they teach will always have an influence on the teaching and learning process of their learners in the classroom, and consequently on learners' academic attainment levels. If the teacher believes that his or her learners are incompetent, he or she tends to teach those particular learners towards such low expectations, and without commitment (Kyriacou, 1993).

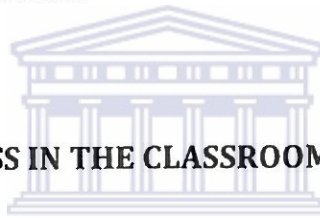
Some of the teachers who were selected as respondents for this study indicated that poor achievement levels among learners at schools A and B were significantly influenced by some factors such as language issues, previous performance levels of learners, motivation levels of learners, and learners' ill-behaviour at school. In particular, some teachers felt that low achievement levels among Grade 12 learners at schools A and B were caused by poor understanding of the English language among learners and learners' lack of motivation, among

other things. Teachers are guided by their beliefs and expectations; as a result, they will always teach towards their expectations (Kyriacou, 1993; Rist, 2007).

According to Kember and Lam (2006), the historical performance levels of learners at a particular school have a negative or positive influence on the performance levels of teachers who teach at that particular school. In this respect, data findings from this study revealed that the historical performance levels of schools A and B were very low. These poor academic performance levels of schools A and B seemed to have a negative influence on the expectations and performance levels of teachers at these schools too. In the light of this, Kyriacou (1993) highlights that those teachers who believe that the learners they teach are able learners will always teach towards that expectation with a pre-conceived perception, and will always put more effort into providing necessary academic support to those particular learners to achieve the desired learning outcomes at school. Similarly, teachers who believe that their learners lack the academic capability to learn and attain high academic gains, tend to teach towards those low expectations too (Kyriacou, 1993). In this respect, Rist (2007) strongly emphasizes that teachers tend to offer more academic support to their learners who they believe are capable learners. In addition, teachers tend to lower their commitment towards teaching learners who they believe are slow learners (Rist, 2007). This means that teachers do not seem to have the needed enthusiasm and patience when they teach learners who they view as slow learners. Hence, teachers seem to have the tendency of being committed towards their teaching work when they teach high achieving learners rather than low achieving ones (Kyriacou, 1993).

It is evident from this study that some teachers from both schools A and B did not have high expectations of their learners' achievement levels. In this regard, Rubie-Davies (2010) states that teachers who believe that some learners can succeed and some cannot are unfair because they have a discriminatory behaviour towards their learners. Teachers' teaching methods are the most crucial factor that determines learners' learning outcomes and achievement levels at school (Eggen and Kauchak, 1988). This means that even low achieving learners can achieve above average academic results provided that the teacher uses appropriate teaching methods which can meet the learning needs of those particular learners.

Safakli and San (2007) argue that teachers always assess their behaviour as ideal but the same teachers assess the behaviour of the learners as bad. In this regard, Anderi and Croll (2009) reinforce the point that most teachers in schools believe that they are effective professionals and do not believe that their actions can impact negatively on learners' academic performance levels. These arguments from the literature are supported by the data from this study. In this respect, some teachers from schools A and B believed that low performance levels of the learners are influenced by other factors, excluding the influence of teachers' actions. As stated earlier in 5.3.1, learners, however, claimed that some teachers from schools A and B did not give them activities or home work. Teachers consider themselves as ideal educators and never attribute low achievement levels of learners to their teaching actions (Anderi and Croll, 2009; Safakli and San, 2007). In the light of this, the data findings from this research study suggest that most teachers at schools A and B did not seem to realize that their own behaviour and actions can also influence the low achievement levels of their learners.



#### **5.4 ORGANISATIONAL PROCESS IN THE CLASSROOM**

The classroom is a very important venue where the teaching and learning process of the learners takes place. Mwamwenda (1996) states that the way in which the classroom is organized determines learners' learning and academic attainment levels at school. In addition, Visser (2000) reinforces that a high standard of organizing classroom activities and maintaining good classroom management ensures learners' effective learning and learning outcomes at school. This study revealed that there are some important factors at school which impact on the teaching and learning process of learners in the classroom. Some of these factors are: size of the class and teaching resources, English as a medium of instruction, subject choice-curriculum, school promotion practices and learner motivation and commitment. A detailed discussion of the aforementioned factors will be done below.



#### 5.4.1 SIZE OF CLASS AND TEACHING RESOURCES

Legotlo *et al.* (2002) state that effective teaching and learning takes place in schools which have adequate classrooms and teaching resources. Findings from this study revealed that classrooms for Grades 11 and 12 learners from schools A and B were overcrowded with learners and this appeared to be one of the main factors that made learning difficult. This was outlined earlier in 5.2. There is sufficient evidence from the data of this study to suggest that schools A and B did not have adequate classroom infrastructures for learners. Mutorwa (2004) claims that most schools in Namibia have poor classroom infrastructures. The findings from this study revealed that some teachers from both schools A and B were overloaded with teaching work and this seemed to make it difficult for them to accomplish their assessment work on time. This means that Grades 11 and 12 learners were too many for the available number of teachers at these schools. In this regard, Kapenda *et al.* (2011) states that overcrowded classroom hinder the creation of a conducive learning environment for learners to learn.

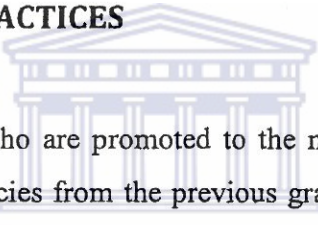
As stated earlier in Chapter four, the classrooms of Grades 11 and 12 learners at both schools were filled with almost 40-45 learners. Most teachers from schools A and B felt that learners were unable to learn better because there were too many learners in the classrooms. At both schools, the researcher observed that when all the spaces in the classrooms were filled with learners' seats, learners did not seem to have enough space to sit in groups or pairs. As a result, this appeared to make group work and cooperative learning difficult. Learners tend to learn better when they are learning cooperatively, e.g. doing their learning tasks in group or in pairs (Moore, 2009).

Chapman (2010) states that schools need to be equipped with adequate teaching resources in order to ensure effective learning and improved academic performance levels of the learners. Lack of teaching resources was found to be one of the main challenges which contributed to low achievement levels of learners at both schools A and B. This research revealed that learners from schools A and B did not have enough textbooks. Mutorwa (2004) highlights that many rural schools in Namibia are confronted by shortages of text books. In this regard, Legotlo *et al.* (2002) states that rural schools in many developing countries are under-resourced with teaching

subjects which the learner takes to study at high school. This means that, if the learner would like to become a medical doctor and then he or she happens to be forced to study commercial subjects, that particular learner will not be able to be accepted to study for his or her intended course or career at tertiary institutions. In this respect, a learner who wishes to study to become a medical doctor is supposed to do science subjects in Grade 12.

Every individual learner in some developed countries such as Australia and England has the right to choose his or her school subjects which he or she prefers to do in high school (Ainley and Fullarton, 2000; Bangpan *et al.*, 2010). As a result, Ainley and Fullarton (2000) and Bangpan *et al.* (2010) state that learners tend to attain good educational attainment levels in those countries mentioned above.

#### 5.4.4 SCHOOL PROMOTION PRACTICES



Brophy (2006) states that learners who are promoted to the next grade (automatic promotion) without attaining the basic competencies from the previous grade tend to perform poorly in the next grade. This study revealed that automatic promotion is practiced among Grade 11 learners at both schools A and B. It was found that it is not a requisite criterion for any learner from Grade 11 at schools A and B to pass examinations in order to be promoted to Grade 12. Learners who passed and failed Grade 11 examinations had the same opportunity to be promoted to Grade 12 at both schools. This means that there was no grade repetition for Grade 11 learners at schools A and B. In this regard Brophy (2006) and Kapenda *et al.* (2011) state that most of the learners who fail in schools are low achievers who are promoted to the next grade without attaining the basic competencies from the previous grade. Data findings from this study revealed that the low achievement levels among learners from schools A and B are a result of automatic promotion practices. Legotlo *et al.* (2002) emphasizes that the application of automatic promotion of learners to the next grade without actually passing promotes high failure rates in schools.

This study revealed that some learners at schools A and B did not take their studies seriously while they were in Grade 11. The data seems to suggest that the practice of automatic promotion

at schools A and B could demoralize even gifted learners from engaging themselves in their learning tasks seriously because most learners did not seem to worry about failing and repeating Grade 11.

Despite the fact that automatic promotion was believed to promote a high failure rate among learners at schools A and B, Kapenda *et al.*, (2011) argue that automatic promotion is important because it reduces school drop-outs among learners. Kapenda *et al.* (2011) further insist that the application of automatic promotion in schools encourages low achieving learners to pursue schooling from Grade 1 to Grade 12 without dropping out of school. In this regard, Brophy (2006) comments that low achievers in schools can be promoted to the next grade and may be provided with remedial academic support. This means that even though some learners in schools are promoted to the next grade without actually passing, they are likely to pass successfully when provided with necessary learning support by teachers. This implies that, if teachers at schools A and B can provide necessary academic support to their learners, they are likely to attain better achievement levels despite the fact that they were automatically promoted to Grade 12. In this respect, Brophy (2006) states that teachers need to employ remedial teaching in order to help low achievers to learn and achieve good academic achievement levels. If low achievers are kept to repeat the same grade, they will be demoralized by being in the same grade and can drop out of school as a result (Brophy, 2006).

Legotlo *et al.* (2002) argue that the application of automatic promotion in schools does not have advantages for learners' learning processes. Research reveals that Grade 11 learners in South Africa who are automatically promoted to Grade 12 tend to perform poorly during their final examinations because they lack the proper academic competencies to carry out examination instructions (Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). In this regard, the data findings from this study highlight that most of the Grade 12 learners at schools A and B did not demonstrate academic capability towards their school work due to the fact that some of these learners were promoted to Grade 12 without passing Grade 11.

#### 5.4.5 LEARNERS' BEHAVIOUR AND MOTIVATION

This study revealed that some Grades 11 and 12 learners at schools A and B lacked motivation towards their academic tasks. Some teachers at both schools raised the concern that some of the learners were not even able to study on their own without the supervision of the teacher. For example, it was mentioned that learners from these schools did not take their studies seriously by the time they were in Grade 11. Yet again, most learners at schools A and B did not study on their own during study sessions without being supervised. Montgomery (1999) states that effective learning occurs in schools when learners are eager to learn. This means that learners are expected to learn and achieve good educational attainment levels when they are willing to engage themselves in their learning tasks.

Fraser (2008) states that learners who are high achievers at school are those who are motivated and committed to perform their learning tasks. Curwin and Mendler (1988) add that learners who tend to perform poorly at school are those who lack self-esteem and motivation to confront their learning tasks on their own. The data from this study suggests that some of the learners from schools A and B lacked self-esteem towards performing their school work and could not study without teachers' presence in the classroom.

As outlined in Chapter four, some Grade 11 learners from both schools A and B lacked commitment towards their studies and this is believed to be one of the factors which might have influenced their achievement levels in Grade 12. Grades 11 and 12 constitute a two-year course whereby the learner will be assessed at the end of this period on the learning activities covered in these grades (Ministry of Education, 2009). If the learner does not take his or her studies seriously by the time he or she is in Grade 11, this seems to influence his or her Grade 12 achievement levels negatively. Montgomery (1999) states that effective learning occurs when learners are willing to learn. In the light of this, Digiulio (2000) advises that teachers should realize that the learners they teach are from families with different values and different educational backgrounds. This means that, if the child comes from a family that does not understand the value of education, that particular learner seems not to take his or her studies seriously without the teacher's care and motivation. The teacher must be able to help all learners

## 5.5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study was to understand how certain factors could contribute to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners from schools A and B. Various instruments were employed to collect the data for this study. These included questionnaires, structured interviews, group interviews, observations and documentary analysis.

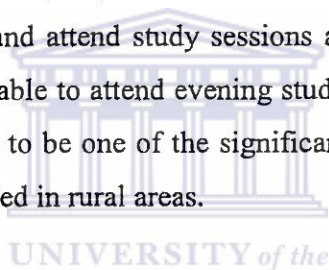
The data from this study indicate that there are various contributors to the low academic achievement levels of most Grade 12 learners at schools A and B. Some of these factors revealed in this study are: the physical environment of the school and study time, teachers' professional and personal identities, the role of the teachers at school, teacher commitment and dedication to their school work, teacher expectations of learners, size of classes and availability of resources, English as a medium of instruction, lack of subject choice, automatic promotion of learners to the next grade, and learners' behaviour and motivation. The study further revealed that learners' learning was affected negatively by hunger at school, lack of accommodation for learners, and long distances travelled by learners to and from schools. Apart from that, this study also revealed that some learners were engaged in performing household chores in rural areas and this might have negative consequences in terms of their time to study and, ultimately, in their educational attainments too.

It is evident from this study that there are many influential factors contributing towards the low achievement levels of learners at schools A and B respectively. Factors which influence learners' achievement levels at school are varied and, in some instances, they are intertwined (Killen, 2010, Legotlo *et al.*, 2006; Oluwatoyin, 2006).

For three consecutive years (2008-2010), schools A and B passed only 0%-5% of Grade 12 learners who met the requisite criteria of the University of Namibia respectively (See bar graph 1, Chapter 3). Poor academic achievement levels among learners in a particular school are caused by lack of qualified teachers who teach without teaching qualifications (Connol *et al.*, 2005; Dunn & Rakes, 2010; Jones *et al.*, 2007; Papert, 1999). On the contrary, this research revealed that the low academic performance levels of Grade 12 learners at schools A and B were

not influenced by lack of qualified teachers. Even though most of the teachers from schools A and B were qualified at a degree level, learners' academic results at these schools were still very low.

Even though schools A and B have different infrastructural set ups, they share some similar factors which were considered to have more influence on low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners. For example, it was found that learners from schools A and B did not have a good understanding of the English language which is used as the medium of instruction at the schools. It was also revealed in the findings for this study that some of the factors which influenced the low achievement levels of learners from schools A and B were different because these schools had different infrastructures, resources and environmental differences. For example, learners from school B did not have any evening study sessions because their school does not have a hostel. Due to long distances travelled by day learners, most of these learners could not travel at night from their homesteads to go and attend study sessions at their respective schools but all boarding learners at School A were able to attend evening study sessions. This suggests that the hostel availability at a school seems to be one of the significant facilities required by Grade 12 learners, particularly those who resided in rural areas.



Most informants for this study felt that Grade 11 and 12 learners seemed to get enough time to do their learning tasks at school whenever they are accommodated in a hostel. In addition, the data of this study revealed that Grade 12 learners who resided in villages as day learners at schools A and B, did not seem to get enough time for studying like their counterparts accommodated in the hostel at School A. Despite the fact that the majority of learners at School A were accommodated in the hostel and seemed to have more time to study, the academic achievement levels of most of these learners were still low.

## 5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section I make some recommendations about possible solutions towards addressing low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners at schools A and B in the Oshikoto region in the future. The study reveals various factors which seem to have a negative impact on learners' educational attainment levels. These recommendations follow below:

### **School environment and study time**

It emerged from the study that some of the day learners at schools A and B travelled long distances to schools and used to be engaged in performing household chores at home. The study also revealed that day learners from both schools had little time for study because they did not attend evening and afternoon study sessions as compared with boarding learners at School A. Some of these day learners felt hunger during the afternoon study time at school. Furthermore, some learners at School A were not accommodated in the hostel due to lack of accommodation space. In view of this, there is a need for the Ministry of Education to extend the hostel facilities at School A so that all learners at the school can get equal opportunities for studying. More boarding infrastructures need to be built at day schools that offer Grade 12, e.g. School B, in order to prevent learners from walking long distances to and from school, and being preoccupied with household activities. This may allow learners to get more time to engage themselves in their learning tasks too. The other recommendation is that the Ministry of Education needs to provide day learners with meals at senior secondary schools which do not have hostels, particularly in rural areas, so that learners can get energy to study during afternoon study sessions.

## **The role and function of the teacher**

The data findings for this study also showed that some teachers from schools A and B were not committed to their teaching work because they do not attend all of their lessons. Some of them did not give activities to the learners. The school principals need to supervise their teachers on a daily basis in order to ensure that all teachers are performing their responsibilities.

It was found that some learners were not serious about their studies, and they appeared to be lacking motivation. The Life Skills teachers and members of management of the schools need to find appropriate ways to motivate the learners to take their studies seriously, e.g. invite some role models from the community to come and talk to the learners, and so on. Each of the schools needs to elect and establish a special team of teachers who would provide counselling for learners who lack motivation towards their school work.



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## **Size of class and teaching resources**

It emerged from the data of this study that classrooms for Grades 11 and 12 are overcrowded with learners, and this was found to have contributed to teachers' high work load at both schools. The study also revealed that some teachers did not provide feedback to learners on time because they were overloaded with assessment work. In this respect, I recommend that the Ministry of Education needs to add adequate classroom blocks at the schools. An additional number of teachers are also needed at the schools in order to reduce the workload of teachers for them to be able to manage learners' assessment activities on time.

The study further revealed that there were shortages of textbooks at the schools. Moreover, there were no internet facilities at the schools. Since textbooks and the internet are important sources of information for learners (Glewwe *et al.*, 2009; Means, 2010), there is a need for the Ministry of Education to provide adequate textbooks and internet facilities for the learners at schools in order to enhance learning.



## **English as a medium of instruction**

The findings for this research revealed that one of the main factors contributing to low achievement levels of learners is lack of understanding of the English language among learners. The researcher recommends that English teachers and members of school management need to consult regional advisory teachers for the English subject to discuss how to help those learners to improve on acquiring English language skills.

## **Subject choice-curriculum**

This study also revealed that some learners at schools A and B were not allowed to choose subjects which they preferred to study in Grades 11 and 12. As a result, some of these learners were forced to study whatever subjects were available at schools A and B, without considering their career choices after Grade 12. The Ministry of Education needs to ensure that learners who pass Grade 10 are allocated to the right fields of study which they may choose themselves to do in Grades 11 and 12. In other words, the Ministry of Education needs to set up a policy that stipulates that all schools in Namibia must allow all learners to choose their own subjects which they want to pursue in Grades 11 and 12. Learners' individual preferences of subject areas need to be considered in order to motivate them to learn (Ainley & Fullarton, 2000).

## **School promotion practices**

The data further revealed that automatic promotion is one of the factors which contributed to the high failure among Grade 12 learners at schools A and B. The Ministry of Education needs to revise the policy of automatic promotion in Namibian schools. It was found that learners at both schools A and B do not take their studies seriously while they are in Grade 11, possibly because they are just promoted to Grade 12 without passing the final examinations. In this regard, the

researcher recommends that the Ministry of Education needs to introduce a grade repetition policy for Grade 11 learners. This would make Grade 11 learners take their studies seriously.

### **Aspects that need further research**

Even though the aims and objectives of this study have been met, the data from this study suggests that there are some aspects that need further research in order to understand the causes of the low attainment levels of Grade 12 learners in more coherent ways. Academic success could be achieved in schools when teachers investigate and discover the main problems that contribute to the negative impact on learners' learning and attainments (Hargreaves, 2003). Some respondents from both schools had the perception that learners who passed Grade 10 with low academic attainment levels do not pass Grades 11 and 12 with good achievement levels. On the other hand, boarding learners who seemed to have enough time to study at School A, did not perform well academically. The data from this study revealed that there was no big gap between the academic performance levels of School B and School A, despite their difference in terms of the hostel facility. There are various factors which contribute to low educational attainment levels of learners in schools (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000; Legotlo *et al.*, 2002). Based on the data of this study, the suggested possible areas of further research could focus on:

- whether learners who pass Grade 10 with low academic results are capable of attaining good academic performance levels in Grades 11 and 12.

Another research area could focus on a more in-depth investigation about:

- what aspects of hostel life hamper or facilitate learners' learning and good academic performance

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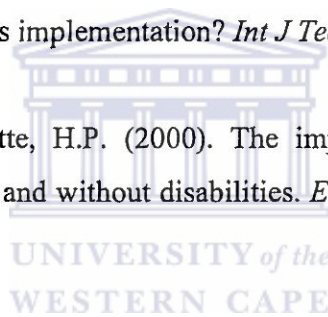
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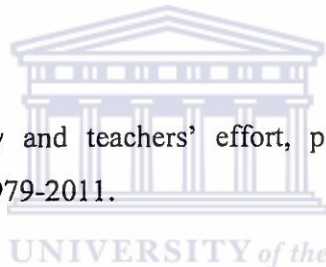
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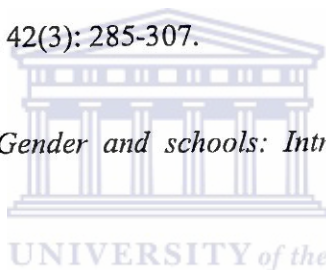
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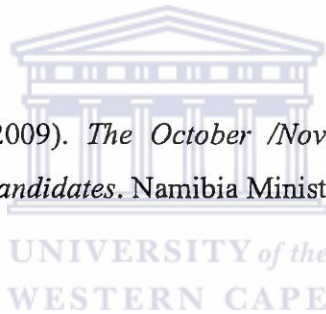
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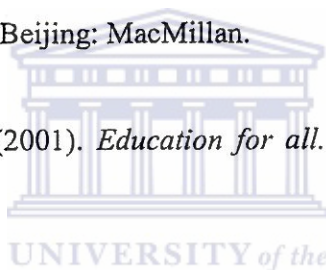
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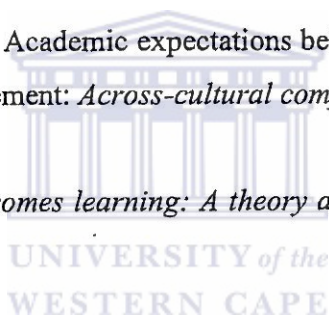
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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A1: TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FROM SCHOOLS A AND B

Table 1

	Question1	Question 2	Question 3
TA	<p><b>The pass rate for Grade 12 learners this academic year</b></p> <p>Many learners will not pass well because they lack good understanding in English. Some learners also lack commitments towards their academic work.</p>	<p><b>Main factors influencing Grade 12 learners' performance</b></p> <p>One of the main factors which lead to low performance among Grade 12 learners is poor English language among learners. Most learners fail to understand the questions from the question papers during examinations due to poor level of understanding of the English language. Shortage of text books in some subjects.</p>	<p><b>How to improve Grade 12 learners' academic performance</b></p> <p>Learners need to be motivated to improve on English language e.g. they need to practice speaking more in English. Learners need to be motivated to take their studies seriously. The school has a programme in place whereby teachers provide extra classes on Saturdays and some holidays. Every subject teacher gets a chance to use these teaching programmes.</p>

	Overcrowded classrooms.	
<b>TB</b>	<p>If both teachers and learners are committed to their tasks, the achievement levels of Grade 12 learners will improve at our school this year. Lack of seriousness among some Grade 12 learners towards their school work, would lead to poor performance levels by the end of the year.</p>	<p>Many learners are not serious about their studies while they are in Grade 11 because they are promoted to Grade 12 despite the fact that they do not pass Grade 11. Some teachers are not serious about helping their learners academically. Lack of motivation among learners towards their studies. Poor understanding in English.</p>
		<p>Learners need to be motivated. Grade 12 learners need to be given information about entry requirements to high tertiary institutions so that they may study to reach those requirements. Learners need good understanding of English language.</p>

**Key: TA = Teachers from School A, TB = Teachers from School B**

**APPENDIX A2: LEARNERS' RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FROM SCHOOL A**

**Table 2**

	<b>Question 1</b> Why grade 12 learners fail	<b>Question 2</b> How teachers influence the performance of Grade 12 learners	<b>Question 3</b> Study sessions at school	<b>Question 4</b> Duration of study session	<b>Question 5</b> Supervision of study session	<b>Question 6</b> Who supervises study sessions
LA	Many learners are not serious with their studies during Grade 11. Some learners who do not stay in the hostel, tend to consume alcohol at bars. Some learners	Some teachers are not serious with their work. They miss lessons. Some teachers do not give us home work. Some teachers take very long time to mark our test books. Teachers must be	Yes, we do have study sessions at our school.	Two hours in the afternoon and one hour in the evening, Monday to Friday.	Study sessions are supervised on all days.	Teachers, Learners Representative Council and institutional workers.

	<p>get stressed during examination. Some learners who stay in the hostel cut the school fence with pliers so that they can go to nearby bars at night in order to drink alcohol.</p>	<p>serious with their work because they are failing us.</p>				
	<p><b>Question 7</b>  <b>Helpfulness of study sessions</b></p>	<p><b>Question 8</b>  <b>How to pass Grade 12 successfully</b></p>				
<b>LA</b>	<p>They are helpful, because we get time to</p>	<p>We need enough text books, and extra lessons as</p>				





	do our homework and study. We really get more time to study but learners who do not stay in the hostel do not attend afternoon and evening study sessions.	preparation for examinations and extending study sessions during examinations.				
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**Key: LA = Learners from School A**

**APPENDIX A3: LEARNERS' RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FROM SCHOOL B**

**Table 3**

	<b>Question 1</b> Why Grade 12 learners fail	<b>Question 2</b> How teachers influence the performance of Grade 12 learners	<b>Question 3</b> Study sessions at the school	<b>Question 4</b> Duration of study session	<b>Question 5</b> Supervision of study session	<b>Question 6</b> Who supervises study sessions
<b>L B</b>	Teachers do not invigilate learners during study time. Lack of text books. Learners are hungry during study time. We do not need to attend study sessions	Some teachers do not give activities. They are lazy!	There are study sessions at the school.	Study sessions start from 14h00 up to 15h30 from Monday to Friday.	Study sessions are not supervised.	Nobody supervises our study.

	hungry.							
	<b>Question 7</b> <b>Helpfulness of</b> <b>study sessions</b>	<b>Question 8</b> <b>How to pass</b> <b>Grade 12</b> <b>successfully</b>						
<b>LB</b>	No! Learners make too much noise during study and we do not concentrate at all.	We need to be given question papers for past examinations. We are always hungry during study and do not have energy to study.						



**Key: LB = Learners from School B**

**APPENDIX A4: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION NOTES FROM SCHOOL A**

**Table 4**

	<b>Question 1</b> <b>Teaching approaches</b>	<b>Question 2</b> <b>Teacher's interaction with learners</b>	<b>Question 3</b> <b>Learners' participation during the lesson</b>	<b>Question 4</b> <b>Teachers' subject content knowledge</b>	<b>Question 5</b> <b>Learners engaged in learning</b>
<b>CO A</b>	Group work, explaining and demonstrating, and giving a practical work (learner-centred and teacher-centred approaches). Learner centred approach was used more than teacher centred approach during the lesson.	The interaction between the teacher and learners was good and learners were free with the teacher. Learners asked questions during practical work.	The teacher posed questions during the lesson and learners answered them randomly. Learners were then given pair work to answer some questions on a question paper. Learners were provided with answer sheets.	The teacher provided clear feedback after learners gave answers from their pair work. The teacher also reinforced correct answers from learners and clarified incorrect answers from the learners.	Learners were engaged in the lesson best, when they were given pair work because all learners were busy discussing the answers and writing them on the answer sheets. Some learners raised up their hands to answer questions posed by the teacher during the lesson presentation.

Key: CO A= Classroom observations from School A

APPENDIX A5: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION NOTES FROM SCHOOL B

Table 5

	Question 1 Teaching approaches	Question 2 Teachers' interaction with learners	Question 3 Learners' participation during the lesson	Question 4 Teachers' subject content knowledge	Question 5 Learners engaged in learning.
CO B	Questioning and answer, group work, peer teaching, and explaining (learner-centred and teacher-centred approaches). Learner centred approach was used more than teacher centred approach	There were good interactions between the teachers and the learners.	Learners were engaged in the lesson that they were given group work. Learners were 3-4 in groups. After doing their group work, one learner from each group, presented the work of their group to the rest of the class.	The teacher reinforced good answers presented by learners, and she made corrections about wrong answers presented by the learners too.	All learners were engaged in doing their group work, and the teacher was monitoring all groups of learners by walking around whole class during the lesson.

	during the lesson.				
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Key: COB = Classroom observations from School B.

APPENDIX A6: THE RESPONSES FROM THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, HOD AND TEACHERS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS FROM SCHOOL A

Table 6

	Question 1 Length of experience	Question 2 Views of past performance of learners	Question 3 Factors affecting Grade 12 learners	Question 4 The role of teachers on learners' performance	Question 5 Any programme at school	Question 6 How teachers are committed to their work
<b>P A</b>	Three years.	Teachers' dedications to their work.	Teachers' commitment to work has improved learners' performance. Some of our learners rent rooms in the	Some teachers are committed to their teaching norms more than others. Hence, the scores of learners' performance levels	Yes, there are afternoon sessions evening study and remedial teaching at school.	Some teachers are more committed than others. Some teachers do not take their teaching role seriously. Thus, if a particular teacher is

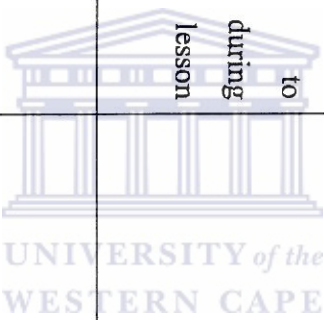
			<p>informal settlement whereby they tend to consume alcohol.</p>	<p>in different subjects vary. You can find most learners passed a certain subject well and you can find most learners achieved very poor results in another subject.</p>	<p>not dedicated to his or teaching work, most of his or her learners tend not to perform well in his or her subject.</p>
	<p><b>Question 7</b> Teachers' absenteeism</p>	<p><b>Question 8</b> Teachers' commitment with continuous assessment</p>	<p><b>Question 9</b> How can learners' performance be improved</p>		
<p><b>PA</b></p>	<p>Absenteeism is not a case at our school.</p>	<p>Yes, teachers are committed.</p>	<p>All teachers should be committed to their work.</p>		

	<b>Question 1</b> Factors influencing learners' performance	<b>Question 2</b> The role of teachers on learners' performance	<b>Question 3</b> Study programmes at school	<b>Question 4</b> Main challenges for teachers on learners' achievements	<b>Question 5</b> Support programme for Grade 12 learners	<b>Question 6</b> Main barriers to Grade 12 learners' performance
<b>HOD A</b>	Pre-knowledge of learners, poor understanding of English among many learners and peer pressure influence learners' learning negatively.	Teachers are managers of classrooms and disciplines in their classrooms. Thus, they can influence learners' performance. The role of the teacher is important in terms of motivating learners to take their studies seriously.	There are extra classes for Grade 12 learners in English subject. There are also vacation classes for Grade 12 learners who perform poorly.	Some teachers are not committed. Learners just join our school in Grade 11 and some of them are placed in fields of studies which are very new to them e.g. Accounting and so on. Most of the fields of study are full at our school. Some learners have low points from Grade 10. The	Making use of past examination question papers. Giving more practical work. Stressing basic competencies stated in the syllabus. We give some extra classes for English during weekends and vacation lessons. All of these programmes were established in order	Some learners assume that Grade 12 is difficult. Thus, they do panic during examination. Some learners are not just committed, even during examination they need somebody to tell them to study.



				commitment levels of teachers towards fulfilling their teaching tasks are not the same, and this has a significant influence on the achievement gains of learners.	to improve academic performance for Grade 12 learners.	
	<b>Question 7</b> How can the performance for Grade 12 learners be improved	<b>Question 8</b> Teaching methods	<b>Question 9</b> The impact of teaching methods on learners' achievements	<b>Question 10</b> How HOD supports teachers	<b>Question 11</b> How HOD can help to improve Grade 12 performance	
<b>HOD A</b>	Both teachers and parents should play the same role of motivating the	Learner-centred approach, because it engages learners in the learning process. Hence, I	If the teacher does not prepare his lesson presentations well, learners will be bored and they will	I do order each teaching materials needed by each teacher. Moreover, I do help teachers	Holding many meetings with teachers, motivating teachers to work hard and	Some learners are promoted to Grade 12 even though they have not passed from Grade

	<p>learners to study hard and be prepared for the examinations adequately. Learners will only take their school work seriously if they are encouraged to do so.</p>	<p>can see whether learners understand or I have to repeat that lesson again.</p>	<p>not learn anything during that particular lesson. The teacher should prepare the lesson and use any relevant teaching aids which can attract learners' attention to concentrate during the presentation.</p>	<p>during classroom observations or assessment about the work.</p>	<p>giving rewards to the best teachers during school award ceremonies.</p>	<p>11. The policy of automatic promotion is one of the main factors that promotes high failure rate in schools.</p>



	<b>Question 1</b> Factors influenced learners' performance	<b>Question 2</b> Views of past performance of learners	<b>Question 3</b> Study programmes at school	<b>Question 4</b> Main challenges for teachers on learners' achievements	<b>Question 5</b> Support programme for Grade 12 learners	<b>Question 6</b> Main barriers to Grade 12 learners' performance
<b>TA</b>	Lack of some teachers' commitment to work. The inadequacies of resources such as text books, and overcrowded classrooms have negatively influenced learners' performance. Learners are 40-45 in classes.	The majority of teachers encourage learners to work hard and help learners with their academic work. Teachers do coach learners to work hard.	Yes, some teachers conduct extra classes in the afternoon and evening in order to help learners to master the basic competencies of the subjects. Science learners are given syllabuses for Science subjects. As a result they do well academically. Learners seem to perform poorly in other subjects	There is a shortage of text books. For example, four learners share one book in some subjects. Classes are overcrowded. Many learners do not perform well in English subject at our school. Some learners are forced to do fields of studies that they did not do at grade 10. Too many learners	Providing necessary materials for learning such as past exam question papers, notes and handouts. Giving subject syllabus to all learners. Coaching learners how to answer exam questions.	Lack of discipline among some learners is the main problem. Most learners perform poorly in English but they do perform very well in science. Lack of text books. Learners will not be able to pass well because they do not take their learning tasks seriously.

<p>Another barrier to learners' effective learning is lack of understanding the English language at school. Learners do not have good educational foundation from primary school.</p>		<p>because they are not provided with subject syllabuses, except in Science subjects.</p>	<p>in the classrooms make teaching and learning difficult. There is a need for additional classrooms at the school. Some teachers are overloaded with school work, especially teachers who teach at Grade 11 and 12 levels. This makes it difficult for the teachers to mark learners' assessment work and finish on time. Learners in Grades 11 and 12 are above</p>		
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<p>should provide enough teaching and learning materials to schools. Inviting role models from the community to motivate learners.</p>	<p>depending on the lesson topic.</p>	<p>learn better. Some teachers prepare their lessons well and use different teaching methods.</p>			
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**Key: PA = Principal from School A, HOD A = Head of Department from School A, TA = Teachers from School A.**



**APPENDIX A.7: THE RESPONSES FROM THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, THE HOD AND TEACHERS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS FROM SCHOOL B**

**Table 7**

	<b>Question 1</b> Length of experience	<b>Question 2</b> Views of past performance of learners	<b>Question 3</b> Factors affecting Grade 12 learners' performance	<b>Question 4</b> The role of teachers on learners' performance	<b>Question 5</b> Any programme at school	<b>Question 6</b> How teachers are committed to their work
<b>P B</b>	Seven years.	Grade 12 results at our school have been improving year by year.	Our school gets learners who completed Grade 10 with low points (23 points), because we do not have a hostel. We need a hostel at our school. Some of our learners are accommodated in the informal	Yes, hardworking and commitment to work has positive influence on our school performance.	No, we do not have any study programme in place.	Yes, they perform their tasks on time.

			settlement which is not conducive to learning.			
	<b>Question 7</b> Teachers' absenteeism	<b>Question 8</b> Teachers' commitment with continuous assessment	<b>Question 9</b> How can learners' performance be improved			
<b>PB</b>	Yes, mostly as a result of sickness.	Yes, teachers are committed towards completing their assessment work.	Teachers should motivate their learners. Teachers should be committed to their work.			





	<b>Question 1</b> Factors influencing learners' performance	<b>Question 2</b> Views of past performance of learners	<b>Question 3</b> Study programmes at school	<b>Question 4</b> Main challenges for teachers on learners' achievements	<b>Question 5</b> Support programme for Grade 12 learners	<b>Question 6</b> Main barriers to Grade 12 learners' performance
<b>HOD</b> <b>B</b>	The school environment is not conducive. Many learners spend time at bars. As a result, many learners do not have time to study. Our school does not have a hostel. Thus, we cannot control our learners to study well. Some Grade 12	Our teachers are committed and qualified professionals. We are lucky that some of our teachers at our school are dedicated.	Some individual teachers arrange to meet some of their learners for remedial teaching during study time. We do not have any official study programme established at this school.	Shortage of text books, many of our learners are those who scored low points from Grade 10. Many learners travel long distances to school. Some of our learners are those who were not in formal education for 2-3 years because, they were improving their points through	I use integration and inclusive teaching methods. I give many assessment activities to learners.	Language is the barrier. Most of our learners answer questions out of context. Our learners have poor understanding in English.

	learners are not doing the same subjects which they did from Grade 10.			Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL).		
	<b>Question 7</b> How can the performance for Grade 12 learners be improved	<b>Question 8</b> Teaching methods	<b>Question 9</b> The impact of teaching methods on learners' achievements	<b>Question 10</b> How HOD supports teachers	<b>Question 11</b> How HOD can help on improving Grade 12 performance	
<b>HOD</b>	<b>A</b> strong foundation from lower primary is needed among learners. Proper teacher training is also needed so that teachers will give proper	It depends on the topic. But, I mainly use participative teaching approach because it makes all learners involved in the learning process.	If the teacher does not present his lessons properly, learners will develop negative attitudes and will disregard that teacher and his subject.	I do provide all assistance that teachers need. I do discuss with them about their strength and weaknesses after I observe their lessons.	I would continue to support, encourage and motivate teachers to work hard. If teachers are not supported and motivated, they will be demoralized and fall down.	
<b>B</b>						


	education to learners.						
<b>Question 1</b> <b>Factors influencing learners' performance</b>	Lack of hostel makes it difficult for the school to control the learners. Most of our learners stay in villages and are occupied by house hold activities. Some involve in drug abuse. Some travel long distances to	<b>Question 2</b> <b>Views of past performance of learners</b>	When teachers reward learners who do well academically, and when teachers are committed at motivating learners. Giving more work to learners helps them to master the subject and pass with quality marks in the end.	<b>Question 3</b> <b>Study programmes at school</b>	No, there is no official program in place. Individual teachers give extra lessons to their learners. There are also subject clubs where learners participate and do some projects.	<b>Question 4</b> <b>Main challenges for teachers on learners' achievements</b>	We do not have enough text books for our learners. We do not have internet. Learners are not self motivated towards their work. Most learners do not have a good understanding of English language at our school. Thus, they fail to interpret
<b>Question 5</b> <b>Support programme for Grade 12 learners</b>	I give them extra lessons for revision. Using past exam question papers for revision. Advise learners to form study groups and make copies for subject syllabuses so that they can know what they should cover. Giving more work to learners. I give a topic test at the	<b>Question 6</b> <b>Main barriers to Grade 12 learners' performance</b>	English language is the main barrier. Learners do not pay attention about reading instructions carefully. Learners do not understand what the question is asking. Learners have a problem about correct spelling of words and grammar. Some of our learners in				

<p>school. Learners waste time in Grade 11 and they find it difficult to cope with Grade 12 because many of them are promoted to Grade 12 without passing Grade 11. Teachers' commitment has positive impact on our learners' performance. Learners are automatically promoted to grade twelve</p>	<p>Some teachers are overloaded with work and cannot mark learners' work and give feedback to learners on time.</p>	<p>facts and understand questions well. Many of our learners are learners who have low points from Grade 10. Learners who have good points do not apply for admission to our school because, we do not have hostel.</p>	<p>end of each topic and do revision for each topic. I teach learners how to answer questions by using question papers of past examinations.</p>	<p>Grade 11 and 12 are allocated to wrong fields of studies which they did not do in Grade 10. Most learners do not have time to study because they are kept cultivating and harvesting at homes. Learners at the school live in the villages whereby they are likely to be kept engaged in doing household activities.</p>
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	<p>even though they did not meet any specific basic requirements to be promoted to Grade 12. Grade 11 and 12 classrooms are overcrowded with 40-45 learners.</p>	



	<p><b>Question 7</b> How can the performance for Grade 12 learners be improved</p>	<p><b>Question 8</b> Teaching methods</p>	<p><b>Question 9</b> The impact of teaching methods on learners' achievements</p>			
<b>TB</b>	<p>Learners should learn how to spell words correctly. Learners should read questions carefully so as to understand them. Learners should read for understanding rather than for memorising. Giving dictionaries to</p>	<p>Learner-centred approach helps learners to take part in the learning processes of their learning activities. Moreover, learners learn better by discovery method and do not forget things easily.</p>	<p>Some teachers do not teach effectively and prepare their learners for national examinations. Some teachers do not create critical thinking among their learners. Some teachers have negative attitudes towards their subjects and learners'</p>			

	<p>learners. Giving more practical work to learners.</p>		<p>performance. Some teachers are positive towards their subjects and learners' performance. As a result, learners will perform well. If the teacher is a hard worker, learners will perform well. The teacher is a role model and has a strong influence on learners' performance.</p>			
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**Key: PB = Principal from School B, HOD B = Head of Department from School B, TB = Teachers from School B**

## **APPENDIX B1: THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GRADE 12 TEACHERS**

### **RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

**University of the Western Cape**

Student Name : Sakaria Amutenya

Student Number : 3078696

Course : M. Ed

Cell number : 0811494291

### **THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GRADE 12 TEACHERS**

This questionnaire is to be filled in by Grade 12 teachers who have been teaching at least for three years at Grade 12 level at this school. The aim of this questionnaire is to collect data for my study which is about identifying the social and environmental factors that could contribute to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto education region of Namibia. The data to be collected for this study is significant for my study of Masters' in Education at the University of the Western Cape. I will maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants in the research and no names will be used at any point in this research or in the report of the research. I highly appreciate your participation and contributions to this study as this will enable my study to be possible. Thank you very much for your efforts and contributions to my study!

**Instruction:** 1. Answer all the questions below in the spaces provided



1. What do you think has been influencing the performance levels of Grade 12 learners at your school (e.g. to what main factors would you attribute the previous performance levels of Grade 12 learners)?

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2. How do you think the role of teachers at your school influences the levels of academic performance of Grade 12 learners?

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3. Does your school have any special programme in place, for assisting and improving academic performance of Grade 12 learners? If yes, what programme do you have and how does it work?

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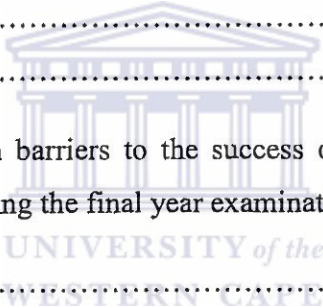
4. What do you think are the main challenges that are facing teachers and preventing them from producing a high pass rate of 25 points for all Grade 12 learners at your school?

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5. Explain how you support and prepare all your Grade 12 learners during the course of their studies in your subject area.

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6. What did you notice as the main barriers to the success of all your Grade 12 learners to perform well in your subject area during the final year examination at your school?

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7. How do you think those barriers/challenges can be tackled (removed) so that all Grade 12 learners will attain quality academic performances in all subject areas at your school?

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8. Which teaching method do you mainly prefer to use in your lesson presentations, the learner-centred or teacher-centred approach? Explain your answer.

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9. Explain how you think teachers' approaches to teaching might influence academic performance of Grade 12 learners either positively or negatively.

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## **APPENDIX B2: THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

### **University of the Western Cape**

Student Name : Sakaria Amutenya

Student Number : 3078696

Course : M. Ed

Cell number : 0811494291

### **THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

This questionnaire is to be filled in by the school principal. The aim of this questionnaire is to collect data for my study which is about identifying the social and environmental factors that could contribute to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto region of Namibia. The data to be collected for this study is significant for my study of Masters' in Education at the University of the Western Cape. I will maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants in the research and no names will be used at any point in this research or in the report of the research. I highly appreciate your participation and contributions to this study as this will enable my study to be possible. Thank you very much for your efforts and contributions to my study!

**Instruction:** 1. Answer all the questions below in the spaces provided

1. How long have you been a principal at this school?

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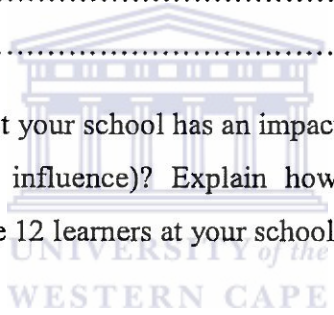
2. What do you think about the previous performance of Grade 12 learners at your school? Give reasons for your answer.

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3. To what factors would you attribute the previous levels of academic performance of Grade 12 learners at your school (e.g. what do you think has caused the performance levels of grade 12 learners to occur like that)?

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4. Do you think the role of teachers at your school has an impact on the performance of Grade 12 learners (e.g. positive or negative influence)? Explain how you see the role of teachers influencing the performance of Grade 12 learners at your school.



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5. Does your school have any programme (s) meant for supporting and improving the performance of Grade 12 learners? If yes, specify the programme and how it works.

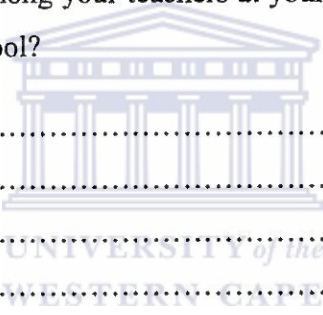
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6. Do you think that teachers at your school are committed towards their roles as teachers with regards to their teaching tasks?

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7. Do you experience absenteeism among your teachers at your school? What is the absenteeism rate among your teachers at your school?



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8. Do you think that teachers at this school are committed towards completing continuous assessment work (e.g. homework, tests, etc) of Grade 12 learners as required by the syllabus?

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9. What would you suggest teachers must do in order to improve the performance of Grade 12 learners at your school (e.g. so that the majority of learners will complete their Grade 12 with at least 25 points)?

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## **APPENDIX B3: THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR GRADE 12 LEARNERS**

**University of the Western Cape**

Student Name : Sakaria Amutenya

Student Number : 3078696

Course : M. Ed

Cell number : 0811494291

### **THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR GRADE 12 LEARNERS.**

These questions are to be answered by Grade 12 learners who are members of the Learners' Representative Council (LRC) at this school. The aim of this interview questionnaire is to collect data for my study which is about identifying the social and environmental factors that could contribute to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto region of Namibia. The data to be collected for this study is significant for my study of Masters' in Education at the University of the Western Cape. I will maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants in the research and no names will be used at any point in this research or in the report of the research. I highly appreciate your participation and contributions to this study as this will enable my study to be possible. Thank you very much for your efforts and contributions to my study!

**Instruction:** 1. I will ask you some questions listed below.

1. Why do you think Grade 12 learners fail?

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2. How do you think teachers influence Grade 12 learners' results? Explain your answer.....

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3. Do you have study sessions (programmes) at your school?

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4. When do you have study sessions at your school?

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5. Are your study sessions supervised?

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6. Who supervises your study sessions and how are they supervised?

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7. Do these study sessions help you? Explain your answer.

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8. What do you think you need in order to pass Grade 12? Explain your answer.

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## **APPENDIX B4: THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS AT SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

### **University of the Western Cape**

Student Name : Sakaria Amutenya

Student Number : 3078696

Course : M. Ed

Cell number : 0811494291

### **THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS AT SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

This questionnaire is to be filled in by Heads of Departments who have been teaching at least for three years at Grade 12 level, at this school. The aim of this questionnaire is to collect data for my study which is about identifying the social and environmental factors that could contribute to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto region of Namibia. The data to be collected for this study is significant for my study of Masters' in Education at the University of the Western Cape. I will maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants in the research and no names will be used at any point in this research or in the report of the research. I highly appreciate your participation and contributions to this study as this will enable my study to be possible. Thank you very much for your efforts and contributions to my study!

**Instruction:** 1. Answer all the questions below in the spaces provided

1. What do you think has been influencing the performance levels of Grade 12 learners at your school (e.g. to what main factors would you attribute the previous performance levels of Grade 12 learners)?

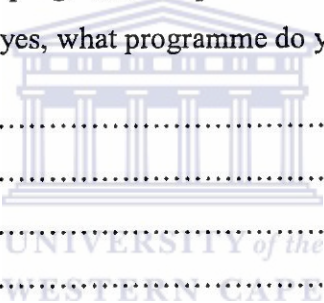
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2. How do you think the role of teachers at your school influences the levels of academic performance of Grade 12 learners?

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3. Does your school have any special programme in place for assisting and improving academic performance of Grade 12 learners? If yes, what programme do you have and how does it work?

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4. What do you think are the main challenges that are facing teachers and preventing them from producing a high pass rate of 25 points for all Grade 12 learners at your school?

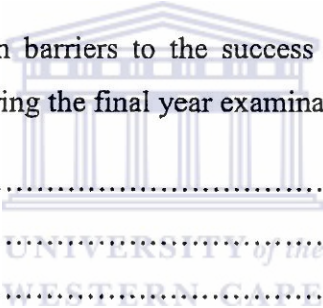
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5. Explain how do you support and prepare all your Grade 12 learners during the course of their studies in your subject area.

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6. What did you notice as the main barriers to the success of all your Grade 12 learners to perform well in your subject area during the final year examination at your school?



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7. How do you think those barriers/challenges can be tackled (removed) so that all Grade 12 learners will attain a quality academic performance in all subject areas at your school?

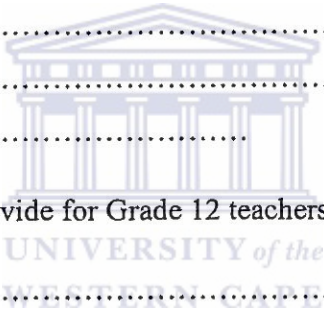
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8. Which teaching method do you mainly prefer to use in your lesson presentations, the learner-centred or teacher-centred approach? Explain your answer.

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9. Explain how you think teachers' approaches to teaching might influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners either positively or negatively.

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10. What support do you as HOD provide for Grade 12 teachers?

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11. What do you think you can do as HOD to help improve Grade 12 learners' results?

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## APPENDIX B5: THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR GRADE 12 TEACHERS

### University of the Western Cape

Student Name : Sakaria Amutenya

Student Number : 3078696

Course : M. Ed

Cell number : 0811494291

### THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR GRADE 12 TEACHERS.

These interview questions are to be answered by Grade 12 teachers. The aim of this questionnaire is to collect data for my study which is about identifying the social and environmental factors that could contribute to low achievement levels of Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto region of Namibia. The data to be collected for this study is significant for my study of Masters' in Education at the University of the Western Cape. I will maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants in the research and no names will be used at any point in this research or in the report of the research. I highly appreciate your participation and contributions to this study as this will enable my study to be possible. Thank you very much for your efforts and contributions to my study!

**Instruction:** 1. I will ask you very few questions.

1. Do you think Grade 12 learners at your school will perform the same as they did last year in Grade 11 or will they perform better than that? Why do you think so?

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2. What do you think are the main factors that have been influencing the general performance of Grade 12 learners so far at your school?

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3. What would you suggest needs to be done in order to achieve high academic performance of grade 12 learners at your school?

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**APPENDIX B6: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM FOR GRADE 12 LESSONS AT SCHOOLS A AND B**

OBSERVATION QUESTIONS	COMMENTS
1. What approaches the teacher uses?	
2. What is the kind of interaction between teacher and learners during the lesson?	
3. Do learners participate during the lesson? Yes/No	
4. Is the teacher's subject content knowledge adequate? Yes/No	
5. Are learners engaged in learning during the lesson presentation? Yes/No	



## APPENDIX C1: CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS

Do you agree to participate in this research? Yes No

Do you agree to answer the questionnaire? Yes No

.....

Signature

.....

Date



## APPENDIX C2: CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

I agree/disagree to allow my son /daughter/ ward to be part of group interview in this research.

.....

Signature

.....

Date



### APPENDIX C3: CONSENT FORM FOR THE TEACHERS

I agree to participate in this research. Yes No

I agree to be interviewed. Yes No

I agree to fill in the questionnaire. Yes No

I agree to be observed during my teaching. Yes No

.....

Signature



UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

.....

Date

**APPENDIX C4: CONSENT FORM FOR HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

Do you agree to participate in this research? Yes No

Do you agree to answer the questionnaire? Yes No

.....

Signature

.....

Date



## **APPENDIX C5: APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

**University of the Western Cape,**  
Faculty of Education,

Private bag x17, Belle- Ville,

7535, Republic of South Africa

11 November 2010

The Director of Education

Private Bag 2028, Ondangwa

Ministry of education

Oshikoto Region.

Dear Sir/Madam



### **APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

I wish to ask for permission to conduct research in some of the senior secondary schools under your able leadership so as to accomplish my research in the Masters' programme in education at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. My research is embedded in a case study design.

My research topic is "Identifying the social and environmental factors that shape the achievement levels of Grade 12 learners from two rural schools in the Oshikoto region of

Namibia". I wish to collect information for 4 weeks from the following: learners, teachers, head of departments and principals.

I will stick to research ethics during the whole process of my research in your schools. However, my research will not in any way jeopardize the teaching and learning processes.

I shall be grateful if you can use your good office to grant me the opportunity to assess some of the schools under your good leadership. Thanks in anticipation of your response.

Yours faithfully

.....

Sakaria Amutenya

Cell number: 0811494291



