

**Factors influencing the Academic Performance of Grade 10 Learners in  
Two Schools in the Rundu Region of Namibia**

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A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
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## DECLARATION

I declare that this study entitled factors influencing the academic performance of grade 10 learners in the Rundu Region of Namibia is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Signed:

March 2001



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## **ABSTRACT**

Factors influencing the Academic Performance of Grade 10 Learners in TWO Schools in the Rundu Region of Namibia.

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M. Phil. mini-thesis, Department of Comparative Education, University of the Western Cape (UWC).

In this mini-thesis, the researcher investigates factors influencing the academic performance of grade 10 learners in two schools in the Rundu Region of Namibia.

The position which the researcher develops maintains that there are factors influencing the academic performance of grade 10 learners in the two schools under study. These factors are not known yet and have to be identified.

The researcher critically looks at the findings of the study by Christie et al (1997), entitled: School Development in South Africa: a research project to investigate intervention for quality improvement in South African schools and adopted their approach of interviewing principals, parents, teachers and learners to identify factors they perceive to have an influence on the Academic performance of grade 10 learners in the two schools. This approach is supplemented by school and classroom observations in order to determine practices and procedures followed by the two schools.

The data obtained from interviews and observations reveal that factors such as Teacher qualifications, teacher experience, commitment to tasks, discipline, English language problem, attitude towards work, culture of silence in class, availability of resources, school leadership, parental involvement and ministerial policies influence the academic performance of grade 10 learners in the two schools.

The researcher then argues that most of these factors if not all of them are well within the domain of the school leadership to deal with. The capabilities and skills of the school leadership, thus determine whether the academic performance of the learners is negatively or positively influenced. The researcher therefore concurs with Haasbroek (1998) when he maintains that the differences in the performances of schools might be found in the broader context of how schools are being managed and governed and in the hidden curriculum of the schools.

The mini-thesis is concluded with recommendations on how to minimize the negative impact of the identified factors on the academic performance of grade 10 learners in the Rundu Region of Namibia.



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The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a stylized classical building with columns and a pediment.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Background to the study

#### Introduction

Formal Schooling was introduced to Namibia (then South West Africa (SWA)) as early as 1805 by the London Missionary Society.

In 1884, Germany annexed South West Africa (Namibia) and white settlement as well as the need for education in the region started to increase. However, a different pattern began to emerge in educational provision for the different ethnic groups for various reasons.

First, settlers regarded blacks as labourers whose welfare depended on the advantage of their master (whites) and, they therefore needed to be educated in accordance with their future role as labourers (Amukugo: 1992).

Secondly, Coloureds who were mainly the offspring of German fathers and black mothers were treated as superior to blacks because of their white heritage and therefore, needed to be treated differently from blacks in respect of education provision. The provision of education to both coloureds and blacks was the responsibility of various missionary societies operating in the region.

Lastly, the white settlers feared that their children would sink to a more primitive level of civilisation if they were to receive the same education as the one provided to indigenous people (blacks). In order to save their children from this situation, schools for whites served to reproduce German schooling systems and enjoyed both missionary and active government involvement in their education. This was a deliberate attempt by white settlers to make education for whites more superior to that of blacks and coloureds.

In 1915, the South African Government assumed control of SWA (Namibia) and inherited the educational arrangement of the former German colony. The inherited educational system fitted in with the aims and policies of the South African Government so well that they not only maintained but also gradually intensified the system of segregated education (Cohen 1994).

In order to make the colonial management of separate education more effective, the South African Government divided Namibia into homelands on the basis of ethnic groupings. Three separate Windhoek-based structures for whites, coloureds and blacks administered the educational concerns of the respective ethnic groups.

In 1973, the Kavango was proclaimed a self-governing homeland with the town of Rundu as the administrative centre. The homeland administration was intended to take over the control, administration and supervision of education and related matters (Cohen: 1994). In reality however, the education department of the homeland lacked the capacity to act independently. A white education officer was retained to manage the educational affairs of the homeland. He continued to implement the system of segregated education. Kavango as a self-governing homeland, therefore, did not have the authority to initiate and implement own policies. The Kavango homeland had to follow what was prescribed for the Kavango by the South African Government.

The homeland administration continued to build one secondary school in each of the five tribal authorities of the Kavango region in order to control the movement of school going youth from one tribe to another. By the end of 1989, the Kavango homeland had six junior secondary schools and one senior secondary school under its jurisdiction. The five tribes in the Kavango region are Va-Kwangali, Va-Mbunza, Va-Shambyu, Va-Gciricu and the Ha-Mbukushu.

Education under the jurisdiction of the Kavango homeland administration was characterised by a shortage of classrooms, funds, equipment, books and qualified

teachers. Schooling was conducted under the most appalling conditions and this resulted in large-scale failure and drop out rates in schools under the jurisdiction of the Kavango administration.

The independence of Namibia in 1990 brought a new vision for education in Namibia. Policy makers generally believed that the historically uneven and unequal distribution of educational resources among communities and schools resulted in differential achievement rates across communities, schools and learners. (Ministry of Education and Culture: 1992). In order to redress the situation, schools that resorted under different ethnic administrations were now placed under the control of one Ministry of Education and Culture. All efforts were geared towards improving the learning environment for historically disadvantaged schools through strengthening of the teaching staff, supply of libraries and textbooks, administrative and supervisory services (Angula: 1990).

The approach would be to continue to maintain standards in schools which were traditionally of high standard, and to direct newly generated resources to formerly disadvantaged schools with the view of upgrading their standards to acceptable levels (Ross: 1998).

The process of upgrading formerly disadvantaged schools has been going on for the past ten years and still learner performance in some schools as measured by their examination results leaves much to be desired.

### **Statement of the problem**

The Rundu Region is one of the regions in the northern part of Namibia, which was neglected during the colonial era in terms of educational resources. The communities served by the schools are characterised by high levels of unemployment, which leads

to people living in poverty. Therefore, education is seen in this part of the country as a tool through which employment could be secured.

The Ministry of Education in Namibia has a constitutional obligation to provide free and compulsory primary education and is trying by all means to provide junior secondary education for as many of those who complete their primary schooling as possible. Unfortunately, senior secondary education cannot be provided according to demand without diverting funds intended for primary education.

Nevertheless, the Ministry has an obligation to provide for more highly skilled humanpower requirements of the country and needs therefore to provide senior secondary education to as many as possible of those who can benefit from it. In so doing, the Ministry is making use of a points system to determine the promotion requirement from the junior secondary to senior secondary school phase.

Learners sit for nine subjects in the junior secondary examinations. Points are allocated for English and the best five other subjects on the following scale: 7 points are allocated for an A symbol, 6 for a B symbol, 5 for a C symbol, 4 for D symbol, 2 for a FF or F and 1 point for a G symbol. A minimum D symbol must be obtained in English (Ministry of Education and Culture: 1/95). A learner had to have obtained 22 points in order to proceed to Grade 11 in 1997, 1998 and 1999.

The total points required for admission to senior secondary education is not fixed but varies from year to year depending on space available. The ideal is to move to 27 points once all schools start to do well in these examinations.

Comparative percentages of the Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) examination results for 1996-1999 in the Rundu Region show a consistently poor performance in certain schools, despite Ministerial efforts to upgrade these schools to a level where they are able to compete with other schools.



**Table 1: Comparative percentages of JSC external exam results (passes) for 1996-1999**

<b>Name of School</b>	<b>1996 %</b>	<b>1997 %</b>	<b>1998 %</b>	<b>1999%</b>
Dr. Romanus Kampungu JSS	72,6 %	48 %	55,97 %	46,9%
Elcin Nkurenkuru SSS	100 %	100 %	100 %	100%
Kandjimi Murangi JSS	29,7 %	21,9 %	29,92 %	25,5%
Leevi Hakusembe SSS	61,9 %	35,2 %	32,07 %	23,5%
Linus Shashipapo SSS	52,5 %	16 %	21,46 %	25,7%
Maria Mwangere SSS	73,0 %	56 %	54,73 %	51,3%
Rundu SSS	56,9 %	51,2 %	64,56 %	40,1%
Noordgrens SSS	100 %	100 %	92,86 %	100%
St. Boniface SSS	Grade 10 not offered then	100 %	100 %	100%
Rucara JSS	Grade 10 not offered then	64 %	47,05 %	31,8%
Bunya JSS	Grade 10 not offered then	19,6 %	15,38 %	43,3%
Nkurenkuru JSS	Grade 10 not offered then	15 %	2,08 %	19,4%
Nyangana JSS	Grade 10 not offered then	Grade 10 not offered then	13,16 %	58%
Kahenge JSS	Grade 10 not offered then	Grade 10 not offered then	16,12 %	30,3%
Kayengona JSS	Grade 10 not offered then	Grade 10 not offered then	16,67 %	17,7%
Sauyemwa JSS	Grade 10 not offered then	Grade 10 not offered then	30,26 %	33,7%

The overall Grade 10 promotion rate for the region for 1996 was, 68,3%; 55,5 % for 1997, 40,6 % for 1998 and 37% for 1999 (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999).

It is clear from the statistics that the region is experiencing a high failure rate in the Grade 10 examinations. High failure rate in the Grade 10 examinations in certain schools in the Rundu Region is a major concern to many parents for two reasons. First, Grade 10 marks the end of the junior secondary education and serves as an entry point to senior secondary education. Second, Ministerial policies do not allow Grade 10 failures to repeat the grade through formal schooling. Such learners must either go for vocational training, which is not easily accessible due to limited space, or enrol with colleges that offer both distance teaching and face-to-face evening classes. Costs involved in studying privately create problems for the majority of learners because of their inability to pay for books and travelling expenses from their homes to the teaching centres and back.

This situation triggered a public outcry, which necessitated a meeting/panel discussion of all stakeholders in education in the Rundu Region held on January 8, 1998 to try and find reasons for the high failure rate especially among Grade 10 learners in the region. The other concern was, why some schools performed consistently better than others, even though their circumstances, location and resources were the same.

The different stakeholders in education advanced a wide range of reasons for the poor academic performance of Grade 10 learners, some members ascribed poor performance to historically uneven and unequal distribution of educational resources among schools and learners. Others identified the following as contributing factors to the poor academic performance in the region:

- Many teachers in the region were either unqualified or under-qualified,
- Many teachers were frequently absent from the schools,
- Lack of professionalism,
- Teacher training programme did not meet the required teaching standards,
- Lack of culture of hard work and commitment among teachers and learners
- Poor school management skills,
- Lack of parental involvement.

(Report of the meeting 1998).

Despite various opinions expressed on the problem, there is a lack of scientific study on factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 10 learners in the Rundu Region.

Schools in the Rundu Region, especially those in the rural areas continue to perform poorly in the Grade 10 examinations despite government efforts to upgrade them to the required teaching and learning standards.

The persistent public outcry about the poor Grade 10 examination results, the appointment by government of task forces and commissions to look into factors affecting educational outcomes suggested that there was a need to conduct a study of factors influencing the academic performance of Grade 10 learners.

Are poor education facilities in the two schools the key factor influencing the academic performance of Grade 10 learners in the two schools or are there other contributing factors? On the other hand why does one school operating under the same condition perform better than the other? Haasbroek (1998) maintains that the differences in the performances of schools might be found in the broader context of how schools are being managed and governed, and in the hidden curriculum of the schools.

## **Purpose and significance of the study**

As a Namibian educator operating in the Rundu Region, the researcher's purpose in this study was to identify factors influencing academic performance of Grade 10 learners in two secondary schools in the Rundu Region. The success or failure of the schools is measured by the Grade 10 examination results for the last three years (1997-1999).

The researcher believes that the factors identified are all within the domain of educators to manipulate. Secondly, once factors that correlate with success are identified, such findings can then provide a basis for improving currently unsuccessful schools and finally reveal those factors that influence academic performance in the two schools in the Rundu Region in order for the education authorities to come up with corrective strategies.

It is not the aim of this study to find solutions to all the educational problems in the Rundu Region but the study attempts to inform and sensitise educational authorities, teachers, learners and parents about the full range of dynamics at work in schools if they hope to intervene effectively toward improving the examination results of schools in the Rundu Region.

It is expected that the study will enable stakeholders in education to understand and appreciate the influences various aspects of the school have on learners' performances.

It is also hoped that the results of this study will shed light on why some schools in the region do not improve their examination results irrespective of the amount of resources being provided to their schools by government and non-governmental organisations.

Finally, it is hoped that this study will contribute towards changing stakeholders' attitudes and beliefs that once adequate resources are provided, good examination results will follow automatically.

### **Organisation of the study**

The study consists of five chapters:

Chapter One deals with the introduction to the study. Background information to the problem is outlined and the significance of the study to stakeholders in education is indicated.

Chapter Two deals with the review of literature. The purpose is to focus on the historical development in studies of effective schooling in developed and developing countries, to examine the explanations from the literature on the relationship between school characteristics and learner performance and to focus on factors influencing academic achievements of learners in schools.

Chapter Three describes the methodology used in the research. The qualitative method of research is explained and the research question formulated.

Chapter Four deals with the presentation and analysis of data.

Chapter Five discusses the findings and makes recommendations.

### **Definition of terms**

#### ***Academic performance***

The term is used to refer to how high or low learners score in the examinations.

### ***Learners***

This refers to pupils or school children in a particular grade or standard.

### ***Combined school***

A combined school is a school offering primary and secondary phases together. An example of such a school is a school that offers Grades 1 to 10. Grade one to seven is the primary phase while Grades 8 to 10 is a junior secondary phase.

### ***Stakeholders in education***

This refers to individuals or a group of people with interest in education. In this context, the term refers to parents, learners, teachers and the Ministry of Education.

### ***Limitations of the study***

The study was limited to Grade 10 learners, teachers, principals and parent representatives on the school board of two rural schools in the region. The time available to the researcher made it impossible to cover more than two schools. Responsibilities at work also made it difficult to cover more than two schools. The results of the study give a general picture of factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 10 learners in the two schools in the Rundu Region of Namibia.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

In this chapter the researcher intends to review the literature on school effectiveness.

The purpose is:

1. To focus on the historical development in studies of effective schools in developed and developing countries.
2. To examine the explanations from the literature on the relationship between school characteristics and learner performance.
3. To focus on factors influencing academic achievements of learners in schools.

#### Historical background in school effectiveness studies

The beginning of school effectiveness studies can be traced back to the 1960s. The “Equality of Education Opportunity” study by Coleman (1966) is often cited as the cornerstone for school effectiveness studies in the United States of America (cited in Scheerens, 1992).

The study intended to give a picture of the extent to which school achievement is related to pupils’ ethnic and social background, the possible influence of school factors on learner performance was also examined (Scheerens, 1992). A similar study was carried out by Jencks *et al* (1972) after the publication of the Coleman report.

The study concluded that school achievement is largely determined by one particular input factor and that is the family background of a pupil. All other factors are of secondary importance and even irrelevant (Scheerens, 1992).

The essential message from both studies, Coleman (1966) and Jencks, (1972) was that school differences accounted for only a small percentage of difference in student achievement, and that a school’s material inputs influenced achievement levels only

slightly, particularly relative to family background. School effectiveness research is generally regarded as a response to the results of studies like Coleman and Jencks' from which it was concluded that the school did not matter very much when it came to differences in pupil performances.

The effective school movement is usually associated with the work of Edmonds (1979) and Brookover and Lazotte (1979) (cited in Lockheed and Levin, 1993, pp.4-5).

In contrast to the studies of Coleman (1966) and Jencks (1972), the study by Rutter et al (1979) of twelve Inner London secondary schools, a study of fifteen thousand hours, is more positive about the influence of schools on student performance.

The central findings are summed up as follows:

“Children’s academic attainment was also strongly and consistently associated with school process influences, even after other variables had been taken statistically into account. On the other hand, in addition, a child’s examination success was strongly linked with his own ability level as measured prior to secondary school transfer, and to the academic balance of the secondary school he/she attended.” Rutter et al, (1979:175) in Christie et al (1997:1).

Rutter et al concluded that the results of the study carried the strong implication that schools can do much to foster good behaviour and attainments and that even in a disadvantaged area, schools can make a difference, (Rutter et al, 1979, cited in Christie et al, 1997). The researcher is also of the opinion that schools can influence the performance of their students depending on the input of the school leadership.

Teachers who are expecting much from their students, for example, may force learners to work hard by giving them and motivating them to do their homework. The purpose of this study among other things, is to find out whether there is a difference



in student performance between a school with teachers that insist that their students work hard and a school with teachers who do not care.

Another study conducted by Mortimore et al, 1988 (cited in Scheerens 1992) concluded that schools do matter. The “effective school” according to the study of Mortimore et al is characterised by educational leadership that regard maintaining records of pupils’ progress as an important resource, a positive and enthusiastic atmosphere backed up by the involvement of the principal and parents and structured and well regulated teaching (Scheerens, 1992). The researcher is again in agreement that schools with strong leadership and that do more to create a conducive environment for teaching and learning will have an influence on the examination results of their students.

Researchers such as Weber, (1971), Edmonds, (1978), Brookover and Lezotte, (1977) (cited in Villet 1998) conducted careful, long-term studies of the effects of schooling. Some of the first studies documented the fact that schools with students of much the same ethnicity and family background and income had varying learning rates, depending on which school they attended. Such documentation implied that school had an influence on student achievement.

A study by Weber (1971) (cited in Villet, 1998) was conducted in four inner-city schools in New York, Los Angeles and Kansas City. The results indicated that reading ability was similar to that of students in average income schools. Interviews with teachers and observations in classrooms revealed that leadership was a significant factor, and that the school administration set the tone and assumed responsibility for instruction and allocation of resources to reach school goals.

On examining leader behaviour in nine elementary schools, Wellisch (1978) (cited in Villet 1998) found that schools were more likely to show improvement in student performance if the instructional programme was well co-ordinated by school leaders.

A study by Edmonds (1978) (cited in Villet 1998) on effective schools concluded that schools and school leadership do make a difference.

### **Characteristics of effective schools identified by the research literature**

Edmonds (1979) (cited in Wilson and Corcoran, 1988) identified five characteristics of effective schools:

- Strong leadership of the principal,
- Emphasis on mastery of basic skills,
- A clean and orderly school environment,
- High teacher expectation of student performance,
- Frequent evaluation of student progress.

These five characteristics came to be known as the Five Factors Theory (Husen and Postlethwaite, 1994).

In the early 1980s a “second wave” of effective schools emerged and the list of common characteristics of these schools also changed.

Purkey and Smith, 1983 (cited in Levin and Lockheed, 1993), Wilson and Corcoran, 1988, Sackney, 1991, Lawton, 1994 and Mishel, 1991 (cited in Ntambeleni, 1997) distinguished and classified characteristics of school effectiveness as follows:

#### **a) Organisational characteristics:**

- School site management,
- Instructional leadership,
- Staff stability,
- Curriculum articulation and organisation,
- School-wide staff development,

- Parental involvement and support,
- School-wide recognition of academic success,
- Maximised learning time,
- District support.

b) **Process characteristics:**

- Collaborative planning and collegial relationship,
- Sense of community development,
- Clear goals and high expectations,
- Order and discipline.

Levin and Lezotte 1990 (cited in Christie et al, 1997) produced a list of effective School Characteristics based on 400 studies in the United States. They included:

- Productive school climate and culture,
- Focus on student acquisition of central learning skills,
- Appropriate monitoring of student progress,
- Practice oriented staff development at the school site,
- Outstanding leadership,
- Salient parental involvement,
- Effective instructional arrangement and implementation,
- High operationalised expectations and requirements for students (cited in Creemers, 1994: 115-116).

In the British context, Mortimor et al (cited in Scheerens, 1992) identified factors that made an effective school, namely:

- Purposeful leadership of staff by the head teacher,
- The involvement of deputy head,
- Structured sessions,

- Intellectually challenging teaching,
- A work centred environment,
- Limited focus within session,
- Maximum communication between teachers and students,
- Positive school climate,
- Parental involvement.

In their discussion of key areas that emerged in research on school effectiveness, Gray and Wilson 1995 (cited in Christie, 1997:2) highlighted the following:

- Successful schools know what they are about and where they are going,
- Teaching and learning are at the heart of the school's activities and both teachers and learners apply themselves to their work,
- Good relationships exist between staff and students,
- There is good leadership at the school, and this includes the senior management of the school,
- Improving the physical environment of the school has been a priority.

McCormack-Larkin (1985) lists ingredients of a successful school effectiveness project as applied in the Milwaukee's "Project Rise" that significantly raised the achievement levels of students in 18 elementary schools as follows:

a) **School climate:**

- Strong sense of academic mission,
- High expectations conveyed to all students,
- Strong sense of student identification/affiliation,
- High level of professional collegiality among staff,
- Ongoing recognition of personal/academic excellence.

b) **Curriculum:**

- Grade –level expectations and standards in subjects taught
- Planning and monitoring for full content coverage.

c) **Instruction:**

- Efficient classroom management through structured learning environment,
- Academic priority evidenced in increased amount of allocated time,
- Review and homework check, developmental lessons, actively monitored seatwork and related homework assignment,
- Direct instruction as the main pedagogical approach,
- Maximising academic engaged time (time-on-task).

d) **Co-ordination of supportive services:**

Instructional approach, curriculum context, and materials of supplementary instructional services co-ordinated with the classroom programme.

e) **Evaluation:**

- Frequent assessment of student progress on a routine basis,
- Precise and informative report card with emphasis on acquisition of basic school skills,
- Serious attitude toward test-taking as an affirmation of individual accomplishment,
- Test-taking preparation skills.

f) **Parent and community support:**

- Regular and consistent communication with parents,
- Clearly defined homework policy that is explained to students and parents,
- Emphasis on the importance of regular school attendance,

- Clear communication to parents regarding the school's expectations related to behavioural standards,
- Increasing awareness of community services available to reinforce and extend student learning.

The researcher considers these ingredients to be the essential elements of any school that is effective in raising the achievement levels of students.

Research studies of effective schools quoted in Wilson and Corcoran (1988) concluded that effective schools differ from ineffective schools in some systematic and predictable ways. Effective schools are described as tightly managed. Their curriculum, instructional practices, and tests are more carefully aligned and the work of teachers is focused on school goals. They make greater demands on students and their policies and practices reduce the influence social environment and poor cultures have on student performances. Such schools are able to reduce, if not eliminate the connection between socio-economic background and academic achievement.

Until recently, little research on effective schooling has taken place in developing countries (Fuller, 1987, Levin and Lockheed, 1993, Silver, 1994, Jansen, 1995). In contrast to some studies undertaken in industrialised countries, Fuller, 1987 (cited in Christie, 1997) notes that school factors do influence students' achievement. Important qualities that influence students' achievements in underdeveloped countries were identified as:

- The effects of the school's social organisation and teaching practices,
  - Quality of teachers,
  - Material factors like textbooks and writing materials,
  - The will to act
- (Haneveld: 1994).

Lockheed and Longford 1989 (cited in Levin and Lockheed, 1993) found that in Thailand achievement was high in schools with more educated teachers, more frequent use of textbooks and enriched curriculum. In Zimbabwe, Riddel and Ngarura, 1991 (cited in Levin and Lockheed, 1993) found that achievement was high in schools with more textbooks, less teacher turnover and a high percentage of trained teachers.

Levin and Lockheed (1993) have further shown that the checklist approach to school effectiveness research that gained popularity in the developed countries seems not to work well in underdeveloped countries. This is because “schools in developing countries lack even the basic minimum inputs necessary for them to function as schools at all, while schools in developed countries are adequately provisioned” (1993:8). They argue that school development in developed countries requires all the elements, namely, basic input, facilitating conditions and the will to act. The researcher is in agreement with their viewpoint because basic input alone cannot lead to student achievement if teachers do not have the will to create the facilitating conditions for learning.

Lockheed and Levin (1993) also show that there are some strategies that are universally accepted for developing schools. These include:

- A central philosophy that guides and inspire the school,
- Community involvement in resourcing schools and inspiring students,
- An emphasis on empowering teachers, students, parents, and the community to take responsibility for education,
- A shift from a more passive approach in teaching to a more active approach where students take responsibility for learning,
- A narrow focus on the goals of the school,
- High teacher expectations, and partnership in the funding of schools.

Haneveld (1994) distinguished and classified factors that determine school effectiveness in Sub-Saharan Africa into five broad categories, namely:

- Enabling condition,
- School climate,
- Teaching and learning process,
- Student outcomes.

### **Criticism against school effectiveness research**

The following criticism has, among others, been levelled against school effectiveness research: Thomson, 1980, Purkey and Smith, 1983, Rowan Bossert and Dwyer, 1983, Cuban, 1984, Siromik, 1985, Stedma, 1983 (cited in Wilson and Corcoran, 1988) de Wall, 1995 and Jansen, 1995 (cited in Nthambeleni, 1997).

- Lack of a guiding theoretical framework,
- Research bias by school effectiveness researchers,
- Sample bias and lack of empirical data on schools and the neglect of the fact that most schools are of average level,
- Lack of valid measure of school effectiveness,
- Absence of longitudinal designs in appropriate methodologies and analysis of data,
- Neglect of immeasurable school factor which impact on school success; namely, school climate, vision and mission, teacher and learner attitude,
- Concentration on school level factors at the expense of learner background and its contribution to achievements,
- The neglect of the multi-level nature of schools i.e. that they consist of learners, teachers, classrooms, districts, regional and national levels.



Despite these shortcomings, the researcher believes that effective school research has contributed to the understanding of the effects of schooling on student achievement because many studies on school improvement were conducted in response to the Coleman (1966) and Jencks (1976) reports that concluded that schools had little effect on student achievement. School effectiveness research in the researcher's opinion can thus be used as a basis for further studies in school improvement programmes.

After studying the characteristics associated with school effectiveness, the researcher is of the opinion that the various school effectiveness factors should be translated into programmes of detailed change and improvement. Educational practitioners, to achieve better quality and/or increased effectiveness in schools should use school effectiveness factors. Riddell (1998) is of the opinion that school effectiveness research has been utilised in third world countries as the underpinnings of much educational reform.

### **Current research on the understanding of change**

Nthambeleni (1997) is of the opinion that current studies of school effectiveness assume that schools have to be viewed as organisations in order to be properly understood. This perception is a result of organisational theories used in the planning of organisational development and change aimed at improvement of school effectiveness. This implies a change in the whole environment that surrounds and contains the school, including the pupils, the teachers, parents, principals and the community at large.

Mehl, 1994, (cited in Mouton 1998) argues that if trained teachers go back into unchanged environments they will tend to revert to the old ways themselves, which the researcher is in agreement with. The school as a system has to change if teacher

training is to be meaningful. This therefore, suggests a need to develop both teacher and school simultaneously.

Concern about the quality of schooling suggests the need for planned change. Dalin et al 1993 (cited in Mouton, 1998) argue that:

- The world is changing and schools need to change as well,
- The school is the place where change must take place. It is the place where community demands and the expectations of students and teachers meet,
- The school needs the support and co-operation of government authorities,
- School development must meet the real needs of students and must encourage the idea of ownership,
- School development involves continuous learning on the part of all individuals,
- The organisation as a whole must be seen as a learning organisation able to respond to changes in the environment.

The researcher is therefore of the opinion that schools must keep track with changing circumstances in the environment they operate in if they are to perform well in the execution of their teaching and learning activities. Teachers need to make changes in their classroom practices by using new materials that are more interesting and relevant, developing new teaching methodologies as well as changing old attitudes and values in order to develop new ones, which meet the new challenges.

The school, through its management, should consistently make appropriate adjustments and changes to its own operational structure in order to build a school environment which is supportive of change for the individual teacher as well as the organisation as a whole (Davidoff and Lazarus, 1997).

## **School improvement**

The aspect of school improvement is directly related to school change processes. Improvement is the ultimate goal of the change process, that is it aims at improving the situation in the school in order for the school to perform at its best.

Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1992 (cited in Nthambeleni, 1997) maintain that it is not enough to identify factors that impact positively on learner performance but a way should be found to translate the identified factors into programmes of action that will lead to identifiable improved learner performances.

Judging from the work of school effectiveness research, it becomes clear that the focus was put on criteria for school effectiveness while neglecting the aspect of how to implement school improvement for effectiveness. Van Nelzen and others (in Nthambeleni, 1997: 36) view school improvement for effectiveness in learning not as a one-off event but a sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in a school with the ultimate aim of achieving the educational goal. Such a view, in the researcher's opinion, suggests that school improvement efforts should be a continuous process aimed at improving the school as a whole organisation.

According to Nthambeleni 1997, an effective school improvement programme requires proper identification of goals, provisions for staff to embark on actions intended to improve teaching, identification of possible obstacles to improvement and a strategy to overcome them. People involved in a school improvement programme should be ready to learn from methods and approaches successfully implemented elsewhere.

A successful school improvement programme also depends to an extent on students' willingness and readiness to learn, improved parental support, teacher competence,

effective school programmes, proper facilities and input from the community in terms of moral and material support and an effective school leadership.

The researcher is of the opinion that school improvement and sustained change need to be considered when dealing with factors that influence learner performance in schools.

### **Research Approaches**

In this section, the researcher intends highlighting similar methodological approaches that were used in researching factors that influence learning and teaching in schools.

The following areas will serve as areas of focus for each of the studies described:

1. Broad approaches to the research
2. How schools were selected in each study
3. Period of time spent in schools

Lightfoot, 1983 (in Christie et al, 1997) conducted a study, “The Good High School”, in which she set out to capture the culture of high schools, focusing on their essential features, their generic characters as well as values that guided their educational goals.

Selection of schools was not scientific. They were selected on the basis of their reputation among educationalists, the high opinion of them held by the inhabitants and surrounding communities and the easy and generous entry they offered (Christie et al, 1997:6).

Instead of looking for weaknesses in schools, Lightfoot examined what worked, what was right and what good schools did well. The research techniques used were observation, interviews and ethnographic description. Schools were visited for three

to four days by researchers, observations were made, and data was collected and written up to capture the cultures of the schools.

The study by Louis and Miles (1992) (in Christie et al, 1997) focused on five urban schools. They were interested in what schools were doing to improve, how they did it and what led to success. These findings were informed by the literature on school improvement and leadership. The authors felt that their findings would be generic enough to be applicable to schools in other settings and on different levels. The selection of schools was made in consultation with state departments, city districts, school improvement programmes and funding agents.

Each school was visited for between eight and eleven days either by one researcher or in pairs. Administrators, teachers, counsellors and students were interviewed. Meetings and other informed events at the schools were observed and noted. Draft reports of each case were sent to key people at each school for comments.

The work of Bryk et al 1994 (in Christie et al, 1997) includes original field research in seven United States Catholic high schools. The study aimed at examining diversity in Catholic high schools. Superintendents in each diocese were asked to nominate good schools. Factors that determined good schools included high student achievement, a range of academic and extra curricular programmes, healthy social relations among a racial mix of students, high teachers and student morale, emphasis on values and social development and a strong religious character.

A research team of two visited each school for ten to twelve days. On the first visit the team interviewed staff, students and parents. They observed classrooms and school life and collected documents on each school. The activities were organized into six broad areas:

- The school's philosophy and mission,
- The curriculum and academic structure of the institution,
- School organisation and staffing,
- The character of student life in the school,
- Finance and governance,
- The catholic characters of the school.

The first phase of the research was concerned with what was happening in the school and hypotheses about Catholic Secondary Schools were developed on this basis. The second phase of the research was more structured and was concerned with searching for evidence to support the hypotheses. Research techniques used were interviews, observation and questionnaires.

The study by Dalin et al, 1994 (in Christie 1997) was based on research done by the World Bank. The project was set up to learn from success in school reform rather than failure. Fourteen researchers carried out the fieldwork, case studies, descriptions and analysis. The methodology used included the coding of field notes, presentation and analysis of findings and a comparison of schools based on key variables studied.

The main part of the study was exploratory and aimed to discover some of the key factors that contributed to successful school change.

Proudford and Bahler, 1995 (in Christie et al, 1997) drew on case studies of four high schools. The purpose of their study was to examine the role that context played in the process of school improvement and effectiveness.

In gathering the data the researchers spent two periods of four to five days in each school. The main sources were staff, student and some parent interviews. In the second round, interview time was devoted to follow-up data collection about issues that had emerged from the first visit.

In the United Kingdom, the National Commission on Education (1996) identified educational under-achievement as an acute problem.

In its report "Success Against the Odds", eleven schools were identified that had succeeded despite the difficult circumstances they faced. The commission argued that the disadvantaged had limited access to educational opportunities and thus there was reduced student performance. Contributing factors identified included poverty, health problems, housing problems, poor home learning environments, prevalence of crime and drugs and family disruption (National Commission on Education, 1996).

The main finding was the high level of optimism that underpinned these schools. Three important priorities emerged, namely the need to improve student behaviour, the physical environment and how the student programme is monitored and reported.

More recently, Christie et al (1997:5) undertook a study of 32 schools in South Africa. One of the aims of their research was to build up a local South African knowledge of schools operating under difficult circumstances.

From initial informal visits to schools and from the wide range of literature on school effectiveness and school quality in developed and developing countries, they drew up a loosely linked set of issues and questions to guide site visits to schools.

NGOs working in school development were approached to recommend schools for inclusion in the study. Criteria for identifying schools were deliberately vague. The authors asked individuals and organisations to recommend schools that they thought were operating well under difficult circumstances and which they thought could make a contribution to their project of building up local knowledge of school development and school quality.

In line with the genre of qualitative research, their report is based on informal observation and on transcribed interviews with principals, teachers and where possible, students. It was the intention of this study to take a similar approach in collecting data from the two schools that were studied.

In their own study, Christie et al (1997) identified eight key features of what they term “resilient schools”. These are schools that manage to survive, if not thrive, in contexts where neighbouring schools showed symptoms of crisis and what has come to be termed as “the breakdown of the culture of teaching and learning in historically black schools” (Christie et al, p10). The key features of “resilient schools” are:

- A sense of responsibility and urgency,
- High quality of leadership in the schools,
- A clear focus on teaching and learning,
- The safety and organisation of the school,
- Appropriate authority and discipline,
- A culture of concern,
- Adequate governance structures,
- Parental involvement.

It was the intention of the researcher to base his studies on the findings of the Christie study. In so doing the study attempted to look for the presence or absence of the key features of "the resilient school" in the schools studied.

The motivations for basing the study on the Christie study were as follows:

- The Christie study was done in South Africa with whom Namibia shares a common history.

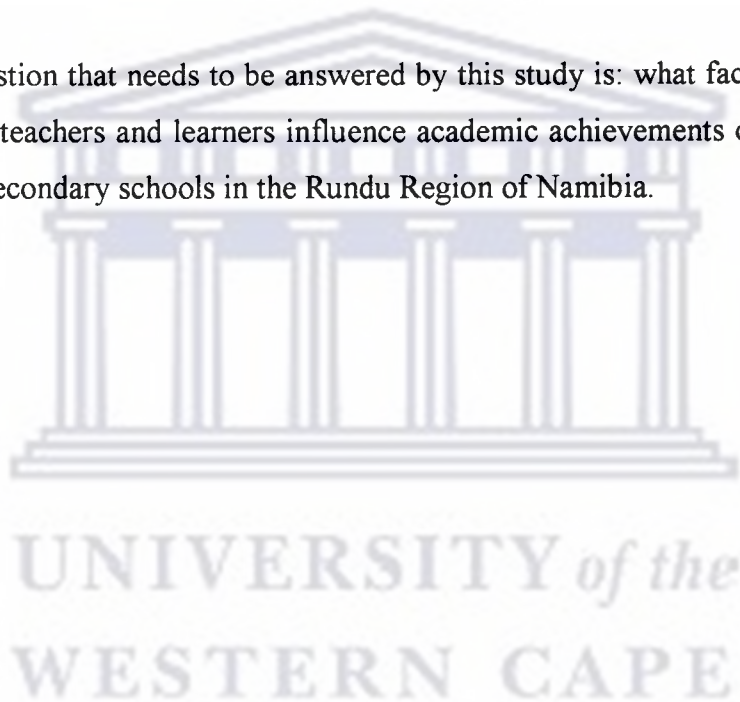


- The same apartheid laws governed both South African and Namibian schools for many years, therefore one would expect the situation in the South African schools to be similar to those in Namibian schools.

### **Research Question**

It is impossible to embark upon research without knowing what one is looking for and one needs guidelines in order to keep track of what is to be achieved.

The question that needs to be answered by this study is: what factors as identified by parents, teachers and learners influence academic achievements of Grade 10 learners in two secondary schools in the Rundu Region of Namibia.



## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

In order to understand why the methodology described in this chapter was chosen, it is necessary to briefly highlight the background of this study. This study aimed at identifying factors that influence the academic achievements of Grade 10 learners in two secondary schools in the Rundu Region of Namibia.

Pre-independence education in Namibia was administered by 11 education authorities, of which 10 were ethnically based (Ross: 1988:1). The Rundu Region is one of seven education regions and covers a geographic area in which the majority of schools were neglected in respect of resource provision until independence in 1990. In each of the remaining current education regions education was provided by six different authorities, administrations for Kavango's, Nama's, Damara's, Owambo's, Caprivians and the Department of National Education which had widely differing levels of resources at their disposal. This was believed to have resulted in different achievement rates across schools and learners (Ministry of Education and Culture: 1994 xiv).

The Namibian education system has undergone reform and restructuring in the ten years since independence. All these efforts were aimed at the following five goals the Ministry of Education and Culture set itself after independence in 1990:

1. Equitable access to education,
2. Improvement of internal efficiency,
3. Quality,
4. Lifelong learning,
5. Democratic participation.

The post-independence reform process started with the development of new uniform curricula in the secondary school phase, followed by the reform of primary curricula (Ross 1998). The need to improve the quality of education was manifested by a decree from the office of the Minister, declaring 1995 as the year of quality education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1995).

In order to achieve the goals mentioned above, the Ministry of Education and Culture issued broad policy directives that sought to address, among other things, the inequitable resource allocation among schools. This was perceived to have had a negative effect on the learner performance in the formerly disadvantaged education regions. A more equitable budget allocation was introduced in the early years of independence. The backlog in physical facilities is being addressed by donor funded construction projects and by needs-based allocation of government resources introduced since the 1996/97 financial year (Ross: 1998). All these efforts have been directed towards creating more learning opportunities for learners in under-achieving schools. The Ministry of Education and Culture envisioned that the effective implementation of the reform would lead to improved examination results in the formerly disadvantaged regions (Villet: 1998). Despite all the efforts by the Ministry of Education and Culture, some schools still continue to have poorer examination results compared to others. Schools are places where the successful implementation of ministerial policies or failure thereof is taking place. Understanding the factors that have an influence on the success or failure of the school's mission of teaching and learning has become imperative.

Identifying the factors influencing different levels of learner performances will increase the understanding of why one school does better in the Grade 10 examination than the other despite ministerial efforts to ensure equitable resource allocation over the last ten years. Such an understanding will enlighten policy makers and education managers to redirect their attention to things that hamper progress in certain schools. One way of looking at the strengths and weaknesses of a school is by

examining the wider context within which educational programs function (Vulliamy, Lewin and Stephens. (In Villet , 1998).

Some schools in the Rundu Region manage to produce satisfactory Grade 10 examination results while neighbouring schools show a lack of the culture of learning and teaching. The concern of different stakeholders in education with the poor Grade 10 examination results in the Rundu Region motivated the researcher to do a study on factors influencing academic achievements of Grade 10 learners in two secondary schools in the Rundu Region.

This included features such as availability and condition of physical facilities, geographical location of schools, school management issues, classroom practice, learning and library facilities.

Any worthwhile explanation of what schools do on a daily basis must be related to the actual situation in which members of the school community interact and how they themselves interpret their situation (Vulliamy, et al 1990, cited in Villet, 1998). This approach to explore and understand the features and practices of the schools requires the researcher to be physically present in the school situation in order to see first hand what is actually happening and be able to arrive at an informed conclusion.

Qualitative research techniques are best suited for observing the situation and interacting with participants of each individual school. The techniques of observation and interview enabled the researcher to find out how schools were managed, what school policies were in place, how teachers conducted their lessons, how learners spent their time on their learning tasks and what the general conditions of the schools were like.

This was possible because of the following characteristics of qualitative research.

- 1) The field focus on qualitative research is indicative of the fact that this research is undertaken within the habitat of the actor(s) (De Vos, 1998). This allowed the researcher to observe the functioning of the schools over a period of time within the real situation.
- 2) The interpretative character of qualitative research allowed the participants to explain the reason for their actions and what it meant to them. This allowed the researcher to interpret the situation for himself from what he observed.
- 3) Qualitative research allowed the voices of the participants to be heard. This enabled the researcher to gather information on the perceptions of different stakeholders on what they thought influenced the academic achievements of Grade 10 learners in the two schools.
- 4) Paying attention to particulars is a feature of qualitative research that assisted the researcher to make sense of the uniqueness of each case (Villet 1998).

Qualitative research thus provided a useful vehicle for achieving the purpose of the study, namely describing and interpreting how key features of effective schools identified by literature correlated with factors influencing academic achievements of Grade 10 learners in the two schools in the Rundu Region.

### **Theoretical and conceptual frame work**

According to Omstein, (Villet, 1998) research on teaching has been moving away from the quantitative mode of enquiry with its prescriptive methods and designs and objective findings since the 1980s. A new paradigm called qualitative or ethnographic research based on fieldwork, usually written in a narrative form, was replacing the rigid form of research that ignored the real situation in which the actual educational activities were taking place (Villet, 1998). This new form of research dealt with descriptions of people and situations, explanations of knowledge and behaviour,

interpretations of theories and assumptions and evaluations of practices and policies. (Omstein, 1995 , in Villet, 1998).

As this study dealt with specific factors that influenced the academic success of learners, it was important to know the experiences of the participants (principals, teachers and learners) and how they interpreted their experiences. The only way to discover this was for the researcher to experience it himself. Qualitative methods such as observations and interviews would take the researcher into the real situation of the participants. (Villet, 1998 :57)

Qualitative research methods in the form of ethnography were employed for the design of this study. Ethnography, which literally means the writing (graphy) about people, in this case participants in the school process, is a strategy of enquiry characterised by observation and description of the behaviour of a small number of cases (De Vos, 1998) in this case, two schools. This approach entailed designing the study to focus on the actual school process of everyday practices to alert stakeholders in education to unforeseen constraints that might be revealed by data collected through interviewing, listening, observing and analysing and interpretation of participants' experiences and actions to their social realities (Villet, 1990).

Spindler (in Villet, 1998) maintains that when one is involved in the process of ethnography, one is involved in an ongoing process of enquiry, aided by certain fundamental anthropological precepts:

- 1) Avoid one's own preconceptions or stereotypes about what is going on and explore the situations as they are viewed and interpreted by their participants.
- 2) One must attempt to make the familiar strange, that is, to try to enter a familiar situation as a stranger in order to ensure objectivity.
- 3) One assumes that to understand why things take place as they do, one must look at the relationship between the setting and its context.

- 4) One is using one's knowledge of existing social theory to guide and inform one's observations.

What this meant in terms of this study was that the researcher attempted to determine how factors influenced the academic success. Principals, teachers, learners and parents interpreted failure of a school. The researcher observed their daily activities and procedures and questioned them on the meanings they attached to them. The researcher also noted the relationship between the setting and context within which the activities were observed in order to understand the activities. The researcher also used his own knowledge of social interaction to guide and inform his observations in the individual school settings.

### **Research Questions**

It is impossible to embark upon research without knowing what one is looking for (purpose of the study), and one needs guidelines in order to keep track of what is to be achieved. As a first time researcher, the researcher preferred to have research questions that provided clarity and focus to his study. The questions also served the purpose of comparing information collected from the two schools. Lastly, the researcher had background knowledge of the phenomenon of factors influencing learners performances in different schools, which led him to certain questions he wanted to ask and matters he wanted to attend to closely.

The questions were formulated to provide a research guideline for the problem under investigation. It also served to focus the study.

The main research question in this study was what factors as identified by parents, teachers and learners influence academic achievements of Grade 10 learners in two secondary schools in the Rundu Region of Namibia?

Other questions were divided into different categories that were related to academic achievements. The first category of questions was directed at determining resources and physical facilities available at the two schools. This category helped to understand how resources and facilities might impact on the school's academic success. Makau and Coombe, 1994 (in Kudumo, 2000) observed that there was a link between facilities and academic achievements. Availability of adequate equipment and materials promoted teaching and learning and the lack thereof prevented teachers from satisfying the requirements of the curriculum.

The second set of questions was directed at teachers. A teacher is a facilitator and co-ordinator of teaching activities in the classroom. The teacher's role is to optimise conditions of learning and teaching within the school environment. Teachers were, therefore, expected to know more about the factors that influenced the academic achievements of the learners they were teaching.

The questions were based on the following:

- Qualification in subject taught,
- Years of experience in teaching,
- Upgrading courses attended,
- Professional support expected from school management,
- Factors teachers considered to influence the academic achievements of their learners.

The third category of questions was for the learners. The learner is at the centre of the education process. All efforts by teachers and other stakeholders in education are aimed at enabling the learner to achieve maximum benefit from the instruction received. The learner, as a major role player in the teaching and learning process, was therefore in a better position to know the factors that influence his/her studies.



Learners were questioned on the following:

- Their perception of the school environment,
- The performance of their teachers,
- What they expected from teachers,
- How much effort they put in their studies,
- Specific factors they considered important for their studies.

A further set of questions was aimed at the parents. Parent representatives on the school boards of the two schools were interviewed. Parents are primarily responsible for the education of their children and they need to show interest in their achievement and progress. The parent representatives on the school board are supposed to represent the interests of the other parents in the school. Knowledge of their role as school board members and their active participation in the decision making process of the school are of vital importance for the academic achievements of their children.

Questions for parent representatives were based on the following:

- Their role as school board members,
- The reporting procedures to parents they represent,
- Their participation in decision making process of the schools,
- Performance of teachers,
- Factors they considered important for the academic achievements of their children.

The last category of questions was for school principals. The principal as leader of the school sets the tone of the school. The quality of leadership in the school is at the heart of effective schooling. "No evidence of effectiveness in a school with weak leadership has emerged from any of the reviews of research" (National Commission of Education) (1996 p. 335). Strong leadership requires both vision, clear, consistent policies and practices.

The principals' questionnaires were therefore based on the following:

- Educational management.
- School organisation and development.
- Factors principals considered to have an influence on the academic performance of Grade 10 learners.

As a Namibian Inspector of Education operating in the Rundu Region, the researcher came to this research process with full knowledge of the Grade 10 examination results in this region. His knowledge of poor examination results in certain schools was a source of motivation for this study. The researcher's own experience with educational activities in the Rundu Region and the desire to improve Grade 10 examination results in this region were the driving forces behind this research. Review of research literature showed that all research begins with the observer's biased curiosity (McMillan and Schumack, 1993).

This implies that it is impossible to keep one's research pure and untarnished by one's interests, values or presence. (Locke et al in Villet, 1998). It is important to recognise and state such bias and retain awareness of ideas that seem to be important to us (Villet 1998). Such biases are:

- 1) As an inspector of Education in the Rundu Region, the researcher chose to undertake the research in the two schools in a remote area he knew very well because of the fact that both operated under the same circumstances but performed differently in the Grade 10 examinations written from 1997 to 1999.
- 2) All principals were well known to the researcher and this in the researcher's opinion made his presence in the school easier. He was not a stranger to them and therefore not intimidating.
- 3) The researcher did not agree with the reasoning that schools were performing weakly in the examinations just because the resources were unevenly distributed during the colonial era.

The researcher understands the current thinking of the “effective schooling paradigm” and “whole school development” movement that there are necessary conditions and key features that characterise a good school (Mouton, 1998). Theories on effective schools and whole school development, suggest schools, which are characterised by a culture, which ensure effective teaching and learning in the school community. The researcher thus embarked upon the research with the assumption that the academic achievements of Grade 10 learners in the two schools under study were influenced by practices and policies followed by the schools.

### **The setting**

The rural area of the Rundu Region provided the setting for the participating schools. The schools serve rural black communities. Teachers and principals generally have lower qualifications than those required for the job. Both schools serve children from a marginalised socio-economic background.

This setting was chosen because the environment posed the same educational challenges to the administrators of the schools but the two schools produced slightly different examination results.

### **The researcher’s visit to the school**

As an Inspector of Education in the Rundu Region, the researcher was familiar with the two schools under investigation even though he had never had the opportunity of teaching at these schools. The researcher has been an educator in this region since the days of colonial rule and knows very well the difficult conditions under which these schools operated and continue to operate. However some of these schools are doing better despite difficult circumstances.

Principals of both schools were well known to the researcher. This facilitated his entry in the sense that the participants regarded him as less of a stranger and more as one of them. However, many changes have been taking place in schools since independence. More resources and facilities were being provided, teachers were upgrading their qualifications, workshops were being organised for teachers as part of the staff development programme of the Ministry of Education and Culture and more instructional materials were being provided to schools. The researcher's visit thus gave the principals the opportunity to talk to him in a more informal way and tell him all about what was going on in their schools.

The principals were informed in advance about the researcher's visit by their respective circuit inspectors and they were more than eager to receive the researcher at their schools.

### **The participants**

As the study focused on factors influencing academic achievement of Grade 10 learners in the Rundu Region, two rural schools offering Grade 10 classes were selected to participate in the study. School Y is situated in the east of the town of Rundu and School X in the west of Rundu.

The regional office of the Department of Education and Culture in Rundu was approached to identify two schools that had more or less similar characteristics but performed differently in the Grade 10 examinations for the last three years 1997, 1998 and 1999. Both schools were combined schools, i.e. they offered both primary and junior secondary phases. Parents, teachers, principals and learners participated in the study.

## **Procedure**

This study used observations and interviews of participants as primary tools for data collection. A careful review of literature provided background knowledge, which facilitated analysis and interpretation. The researcher's first day at the school was devoted to discussing his programme with the principal and management of the schools. Once this was completed, the researcher came to school as an ordinary staff member. He attended the morning briefings, morning assemblies as well as classes to observe some lessons. Interviews were conducted with principals, learners, teachers and parents in order to find out what they thought contributed to the success or failure of their respective schools.

The data collection techniques were typical for field research in the qualitative mode of inquiry (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993). Research design was such that it revealed the holistic description of features and conditions that affected academic success in schools. The researcher intended to portray a holistic picture of the functioning of the two schools with the intention of describing and explaining the factors that contributed to their academic success or failure.

The setting was not selected scientifically and the researcher was not looking for a sample that represented schools in the Rundu Region. The researcher wanted to look at one rural school that has a local reputation of good Grade 10 results and another rural school with poor academic results in the Grade 10 examinations and identify factors that influenced the academic performances of learners in the two schools.

It is the researcher's wish that this approach to research makes an impact on educational practice in the region as it was focused on key school features that were closely related to academic success.

## **Observations**

Five school days were spent with each school. A school observation schedule was developed, which covered aspects of the school environment, physical facilities, school procedure before the start, assembly, language used, intervals, after school activities, physical conditions of classrooms, educational resources, learners language usage, lesson presentation and management of learners. Space was provided on the observation schedule to note down the observations.

The observation schedule contained descriptions of everything the researcher believed was worth noting during his observations. Short notes were taken during this period but intensive field notes were recorded after each observation. This technique enabled the researcher to familiarise himself with practices at the school and how policies were implemented.

## **Interviews**

The researcher conducted interviews with the principals, teachers, learners and parent representatives on the school board. The interviews for the staff members and learners took place in the afternoons in order to ensure that daily school activities were not disrupted.

The principals, all Grade 10 teachers and a number of Grade 10 learners (depending on the number of learners in the class) were interviewed over the five days at each school. The reason for the interviews was to clarify some issues observed and to hear from the participants themselves what they perceived were factors that influenced the academic performance of Grade 10 learners in their respective schools.

Formal open-ended interviews were conducted on how participants saw the success or failure of their schools.

## **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Data analysis was an ongoing process integrated into all phases of the research. Data collected was continuously analysed and interpreted.

### **The process of conducting the analysis**

De Vos (1998) defines coding as the central process by which theories are built from data. Major themes are identified from data that was collected. Each major theme was assigned a letter of the alphabet and sub themes then followed with headings and explanations. The researcher found the coding method more suitable to analyse and present data. According to Glesine, 1998 (in Nyango, 1999), coding is “highly personal, meant to fit you, it need not be useful or clear to any one else” (p31). Glesine further explains the coding process as follows:

*Coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining those scraps of collected data (i.e. observation notes, interview transcripts, memos, documents and notes from relevant literature) that are applicable to your research purpose. By putting like-minded pieces together into data stamps you create an organisational framework. It is progressive in that you first develop out of data, major code clumps by which to sort the data. Then you code the contents of each major code clump, thereby breaking down the major code into numerous sub codes. Eventually you can place the various data clumps in a meaningful sequence that contributes to the chapters or sections of your manuscripts (p31).*

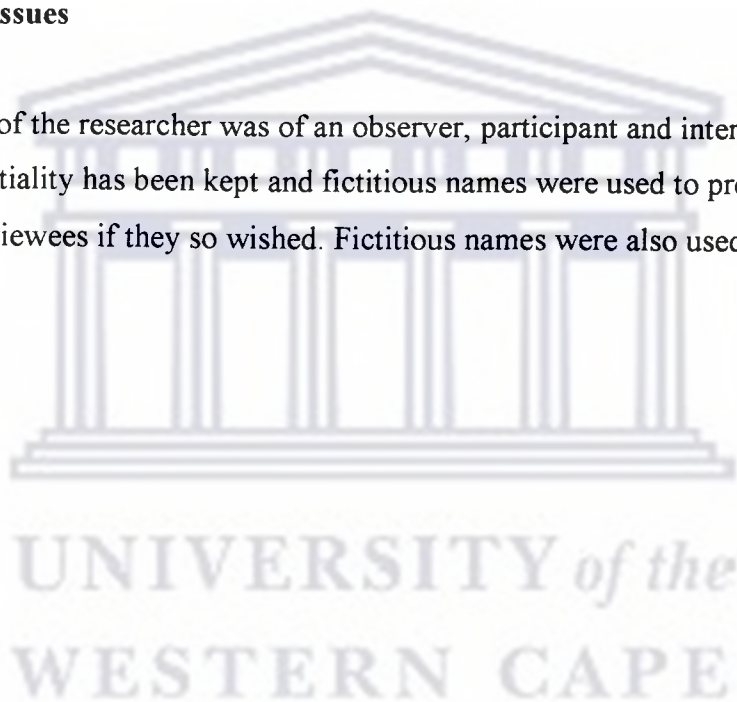
After collecting and coding all data scraps the researcher proceeded to the next phase of data analysis which is arranging the major code into a logical order by determining which clumps or parts of clumps belong together in the final code arrangement of the

chapters. It is important to state that this “process involves thinking about the collected data, reflection of what has been learned, making new connections and gaining new insights ...” (Nyango, 1999, p32).

Aspects that were coded in this study included variables such as persons who were interviewed, processes at the two schools, events that took place during the researcher’s stay at the two schools and opinions reported.

### **Ethical Issues**

The role of the researcher was of an observer, participant and interviewer. Confidentiality has been kept and fictitious names were used to protect the identity of the interviewees if they so wished. Fictitious names were also used for schools.





## Chapter 4

### Presentation and analysis of the data

The research question that needed to be answered by this study was what factors influenced the academic performance of grade 10 learners in two schools in the Rundu Region of Namibia. Two schools were selected for the study. Parents, principals, teachers and learners were interviewed and school and classroom observations were done by the researcher in an attempt to find an answer to the research question.

In this chapter, the data collected from interviews and observations will be presented and analysed.

The data presented in this chapter are responses received and conclusions made from interviews and observations respectively. Grade 10 teachers, principals, learners and parent representatives in the two schools were interviewed.

The two participating schools in the study were X and Y Combined Schools. Schools were not selected scientifically and the researcher was not looking for a sample that represented schools in the Rundu Region. The researcher wanted to look at two rural schools, one with local reputation of good Grade 10 results and the other with a poor Grade 10 academic record. The objective was to identify factors that influenced the academic performance of Grade 10 learners in the two schools.

Five Grade 10 teachers, eight Grade 10 learners, the principal and two parent representatives on the school board were interviewed at the X Combined school while six Grade 10 teachers, thirteen Grade 10 learners, the principal and two parent representatives on the school board were interviewed at Y Combined School. All teachers responsible for Grade 10 classes were interviewed in both schools. Eight

learners out of 40 (20%) were selected for the interviews at the X Combined School and thirteen out of thirteen (100%) at the Y Combined School because of the small size of the class.

The presentation and analysis of the data from interviews and observations in the two schools are done separately because of the nature of the results that differ considerably. This chapter starts with the profile of the X Combined School followed by responses from teachers, learners, principals and parents. The information on the X Combined School ends with the data obtained from observations. The chapter then continues with the profile of the Y Combined School followed by data obtained from teachers, learners, principals, parents, observations and ends with a short summary of the researcher's findings.

<b>4.1. School profile</b>	<b>Year 2000</b>
Name of School :	X Combined School
Name of Principal :	Mr. A
Education region :	Rundu
No of Learners :	694
No of Teachers :	26
Grades :	1 – 10
Location :	Rural village
School day :	Single shift (Morning session)

**Table 2: Grade 10 academic record according to the statements of results for 1997, 1998 and 1999.**

	1997	1998	1999
% of learners who passed	19,6%	15,38%	44,3%

## 4.1 Interviews

### 4.2.1 The teachers

Five teachers teaching Grade 10 subjects were interviewed.

#### 4.1.1.1 Qualifications of Teachers who are teaching Grade 10 classes

**Table 3: Qualification of Teachers at the X Combined School**

Grade 12 + Secondary Education Diploma/Degree	2
Grade 12 + Basic Education Teacher Diploma	2
Grade 12 Without Professional Qualification	1
Below Grade 12	0
Total	5

Table 3 shows that two of the five teachers interviewed had secondary education qualifications. They had been trained to teach Grades eight to twelve and were teaching Grade 10 mathematics and science in which they had specialised. Two of them were teachers qualified for senior primary education but taught Grade 10 subjects for which they were not qualified. These teachers were supposed to teach in the primary phase but were currently used to teach in the junior secondary phase due to a shortage of qualified teachers. One of the teachers only had Grade 12 and was registered with the in-service training programme of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture for Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD).

#### 4.1.1.2 Teaching experience of Grade 10 teachers at the X Combined School

**Table 4: Teaching Experience in years**

5 and above	1
4	1
3	1
2	1
1	0
0	1

Table 4 shows the number of years taught by the five teachers interviewed. The teaching experiences might be for other Grades or in any other schools. One of the five teachers interviewed taught for more than five years and the others four, three, two and less than one year respectively.

#### 4.1.1.3 Workshops attended in Grade 10 subjects

**Table 5: Number of workshops attended by teachers at the X Combined School**

5 and more	2
4	0
3	1
2	2
1	1
0	0

Table 5 shows that two of the five teachers interviewed attended more than five workshops in their respective subjects. One attended three, two attended two, and the fifth attended one workshop.

#### 4.1.1.4 Teachers views on factors influencing the academic performance of the Grade 10 learners

**Table 6: Factors influencing academic performance of Grade 10 learners at the X Combined school**

Lack of materials	1
Absenteeism/ dodging	3
English language problem	5
Lack of admission requirements	1
Learners do not challenge teachers	1
Lack of exposure to subject content	1
Culture of silence in class	2
Exam papers above learners standard	1
Teachers lack knowledge of subject content	2
Pass requirements in lower grades differ from Grade 10 pass requirements	1
Weak background of learners in subjects	3
Failure of learners in tests discourage them from working hard	2
Teaching approaches	1
Teachers attitude towards teaching and one another	1
Automatic promotion	1

Table 6 shows views of Grade 10 teachers on possible factors that have an influence on the academic performance of Grade 10 learners. One teacher was of the opinion that lack of availability of instructional materials especially in practical subjects like physical science influenced the academic performance of learners. The teacher was of the opinion that the lack of instructional materials was influencing the Grade 10 academic performance negatively in the school.

Three of the teachers interviewed were of the opinion that absenteeism and dodging of classes contributed to the poor performance of Grade 10 learners. Teachers said that learners in most cases were absent from school because of the demands parents put on them to look after cattle or to assist with household chores. They were of the opinion that much schoolwork was lost in the process and this led to poor academic performance.

All five teachers interviewed mentioned the language problem as a major obstacle to academic excellence in the school. The majority of Grade 10 learners were not able to follow instructions through the medium of English. English is the official medium of instruction in Namibian schools from Grades 4 to 12. One of the teachers reported that even some teachers had a problem in expressing themselves clearly in English.

The implementation of English as a medium of instruction in the Namibian schools were done in phases over five years. This new medium of instruction was introduced in grade 4 in 1993. The current grade 10 learners have thus been taught through the medium of English for seven years but still have problems with the language. This could be ascribed to the fact that the majority of learners in the rural schools do not have the opportunity of exercising the language outside school because the language is not spoken in their homes.

One of the five teachers was of the opinion that admission requirements to the school also had an impact on the academic performance of learners. The teacher was of the

opinion that the school be allowed to scrutinise learners before they are admitted to school. She went on to say that this was necessary in order to avoid admitting learners with disciplinary problems.

One teacher stated that learners do not challenge teachers in the class. She explained that learners came to classes unprepared and were therefore not able to ask questions. According to the teacher this led to teachers not preparing for their lessons properly because they know they would not be challenged. It was suggested that active learner participation in the classroom activities kept the teacher on his/her toes.

In another interview, a teacher was of the opinion that the level to which a learner is exposed to the subject content determined how fast the learning material could be mastered. She cited an example of her own class where she had to teach topics like depositing money in a bank to learners who did not even have an idea of what a bank was. Her school catered for rural children who were not familiar with the subject matter being taught. This situation, according to the teachers, had a negative influence on the academic performance of the Grade 10 learners.

Two of the five teachers interviewed expressed concern about the culture of silence in the class on the part of learners. She explained that learners were shy to speak in class. The majority of learners were just passive listeners and wouldn't attempt to ask or respond to a question. According to one teacher, this made his task of evaluating the success of his lesson difficult.

In another interview, a teacher stated that the Grade 10 examination papers were above the learners' standard. She explained that the standard of the majority of learners they had in Grade 10 was that of Grade 8 and, therefore, found it difficult to answer questions on Grade 10 subject matter.

Two of the teachers were of the opinion that the teacher's knowledge of the subject content determined the success or failure of lessons presented. Some teachers in school were allocated Grade 10 subjects in which they did not have qualifications. They explained that this was done because the school could not secure the appointment of suitable candidates. This, according to the teachers, influenced the academic performance of the Grade 10 learners negatively in this school.

One teacher reported that pass requirements in lower grades differed from those of Grade 10. According to the teacher, the criteria set for passing grades lower than Grade 10 were much lower compared to the Grade 10 pass requirements. Learners, therefore, found it difficult to meet the pass requirements of the Grade 10 examinations.

Three of the teachers interviewed were of the opinion that learners lacked the necessary background in the subjects they were taking in Grade 10. According to the teachers, there was no link between what was learned in previous grades and in Grade 10. Learners therefore found it difficult to cope with the demand placed on them by the Grade 10 syllabi.

Two teachers interviewed said that because of this weak background in a subject, learners tended to fail the first series of tests in Grade 10. This discouraged learners from working hard to improve their performance.

One teacher said that teaching approaches also influenced the academic performance of learners. She cited an example of the lecturing method. The teacher would be talking all the time and learners would be passive and bored and in some cases some may even sleep.

One teacher was of the opinion that the teachers' attitudes towards teaching and one another might also have influence on the academic performance of learners. The



teacher explained that the level of the teacher's commitment to teaching duties motivated learners to work hard. The spirit of teamwork among teachers also motivated teachers to work hard.

In another interview, a teacher cited automatic promotion as a negative factor influencing the Grade 10 academic performance. The teacher explained that learners who failed for the second time in the lower grades were pushed to the next grade. The teacher reported that some learners had been pushed from Grade 8 till they reached Grade 10. According to the teacher such learners were failures from the word go.

#### 4.2.1.5 **Challenges facing Grade 10 teachers in improving the performance of learners**

**Table 7: Challenges facing Grade 10 teachers**

Coaching learners in examination techniques	1
Remedial teaching	4
Making studies attractive to learners	2
Improving language competencies of both learners and teachers	2
Discouraging absenteeism	1
Completion of syllabi in advance	2
Standardization of questions	1

Table 7 shows answers given by the Grade 10 teachers when asked to state the most important challenges facing them in improving the academic performance of their learners. One teacher was of the opinion that the subject teacher should coach learners in examination techniques. She felt that many learners were failing their subjects because they did not know how to tackle an examination paper.

Four of the five teachers interviewed indicated the need for remedial teaching during the first trimester. According to them this was needed in order to improve on the weak background knowledge of learners in their respective subjects.

Two teachers indicated that subject teachers should strive to make studies more challenging to learners by giving them more homework.

Another challenge facing teachers according to two interviewees was how to improve the language competencies of both teachers and learners. One teacher stated that learners could not be expected to do well in the examination if teachers were not able to express themselves accurately in the medium of instruction. On the other hand learners who were not able to follow instructions well were likely to fail their examinations.

One teacher was worried about ways in which they could discourage learners from absenting themselves from school. She was of the opinion that learners were losing much through absenteeism. She felt that teachers should come up with a strategy on how to solve this problem at the school.

Two teachers felt that they were moving slowly with the syllabi because learners had a weak background in the subjects. They were faced with the problem of completing the syllabi well in advance in order to have enough time for revision.

One teacher reported that teachers at the school were faced with the challenge of standardising the question papers of the internal examinations. He felt that Grade 10 papers that were internally set were of lower standard compared to the external examination papers. He expressed the wish that learners answered test or examination questions that were equal in standard to the external ones at the end of the year.

#### **4.2.1.6 Frequency of homework and how often it was marked**

In this section teachers were asked to indicate how often homework was given to the learners and how often it was marked. All teachers interviewed responded that frequency of homework depended on completion of a topic and that marking was done immediately after the homework was completed by learners.

#### **4.2.1.7 Support expected from school management**

In this section teachers were asked to indicate the kind of support they expected from the school management that would motivate them to do their work better and identified the following:

- Set up rules to curb absenteeism,
- Make the use of English for both teachers and learners compulsory,
- Class visits to give guidance,
- Control of teacher's work,
- Motivation of teachers and learners,
- Initiation of exchange programs,
- Initiate joint subject meetings with teachers from other schools.

All five teachers were of the opinion that support from the school management was crucial for the smooth running of the institution. According to them, this support was even more important to young inexperienced teachers.

The school has a Schoolboard and a Students Representative Council. The Schoolboard is supposed to be responsible for policy making in the School but this could not be confirmed by the researcher as there were no policies available except school rules. The running of the school was found to be proper.

#### 4.2.1 Interviews with Learners.

Eight learners were interviewed.

#### 4.2.2.1 Learners' views on school factors influencing learning at the X Combined School

**Table 8: School factors influencing learning in the school**

Teachers absenteeism	1
Teachers competency	5
Automatic promotion	1
Instructional material	2
Teachers professionalism	2
Language competencies	1

Table 8 shows views of learners on school factors influencing learning at the school. One learner was of the opinion that teachers' absenteeism influenced learning negatively at the school. He explained that some teachers had a tendency of not reporting for duties or they reported for duties but failed to turn up for their respective lessons. Valuable time was lost and as a result syllabi could not be completed in time. Five of the learners interviewed were concerned about teacher competency. They complained that some Grade 10 teachers did not have knowledge of the subject content they were teaching nor high enough qualifications.

One learner cited that the ministerial policy of automatic promotion had a bearing on learner progress. The policy states that a learner who has failed for the second time in the same grade must be transferred to the next grade. The learner was of the opinion

that such learners were not ready for Grade 10 and teachers had to waste much time on repeating subject matter for such learners.

Two learners stated that lack of instructional materials influenced their learning negatively. Learners cited textbooks, exercise books, calculators and chemicals as some of the materials that were in short supply at the school. The school has a mobile library.

Two learners interviewed were concerned about teachers' professionalism. They said that teachers were insulting learners in class. Teachers got angry in class when challenged by learners. The attitude of teachers according to one learner frightened them and caused them not to ask questions in class.

Lack of English language competency was a serious problem at the school according to one learner. She explained that teachers struggled to express themselves when they were teaching and learners found it difficult to understand the medium of instruction. Most of these teachers studied through the medium of Afrikaans and the switch over to English might create language problems for them.

#### **4.2.2.2 Learners' views on the performance of the school in respect of the Grade 10 examinations**

Learners were asked whether they thought that their school was producing a substantial number of learners for Grade 11. All eight learners responded negatively. They were of the opinion that only a small number of learners qualified for Grade 11.

#### **4.2.2.3 Learners views on the performance of teachers**

All eight learners interviewed were of the opinion that some teachers were doing well but there were others who could not cope with the demands of the Grade 10 syllabi.

They felt that teachers should tell learners how to study. One learner was of the opinion that teachers should also force learners to speak English in class.

#### 4.2.2.4 **Are learners themselves working hard enough in preparation for the Examination?**

All learners interviewed responded positively to the above question. Some said they were working hard because they studied long hours. Others said that they were working hard because they were passing tests and internal examinations.

#### 4.2.2.5 **Hours spent on studying and homework per day**

Two learners responded that they spent four hours on studying per day. Three learners said three hours per day. The other three said two hours per day.

#### 4.2.2.6 **How often did learners and teachers talk about study methods?**

Seven learners responded that their teachers never talked to them about study methods. One said they were discussing study methods on a continuous basis.

#### 4.2.1 **Interview with the principal**

The interview with the principal consisted of five sections.

#### 4.2.3.1 **Background information of the principal**

There were five items under this section:

- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Name of school    | X Combined School |
| 2. Name of Principal | Mr. A             |
| 3. Qualifications    | Academic: Std 10  |

Professional: high primary

Education certificates.

4. Membership of any educational organisation: He reported to be a member of the Namibia National Teacher's Union.
5. Support provided by such an organisation for educational management development: The principal responded that his organisation gave financial assistance to members to upgrade their qualifications in education.

#### 4.2.3.2 Educational management experience

This section consisted of three aspects.

1. Years of experience as principal of the school: The principal responded that he had been the principal of this school for six years.
2. Management courses attended in the last five years: The principal responded that he attended courses in stock control, budgeting, staff appraisal and public relations.
3. Is training/ support provided by regional office of education and non-governmental organisation: The principal responded positively. He said that both the regional office of education and non-governmental organisations were providing training.

#### 4.2.3.3 Educational Management needs

The principal was asked to rate his school's performance in the following areas.

##### 1. *School vision and mission statement*

He responded that his school was doing well in this area because they set themselves clear objectives.

##### 2. *School development plan*

The principal responded that they made use of a year plan and has just heard of the school development plan.

### *3. Staff discipline*

The principal responded that since the school received qualified teachers from the University of Namibia and Colleges of Education staff discipline has improved dramatically.

### *4. Staff competency*

The principal responded that he was quite happy with his staff competency because of qualified teachers he now had at the school.

### *5. School loyalty*

The principal said that both staff and learners were loyal to the school.

### *6. Pupil discipline*

The principal reported this item to be a problem at the school. He complained that learners seemed not to realise the importance of education.

### *7. School administration*

The principal was of the opinion that his school administration was fairly good and could be improved if the principal's teaching load could be lessened.

### *8. Relations with the community*

According to the principal, the school was doing well in this area. On the question as to whom the principal relied on for advice and support in doing his job as school principal, he mentioned the following:

- Staff members of the school
- Circuit inspector
- Regional office of education



The last question under this section was whether there were plans in place for improving/maintaining the quality of educational management at his school. The principal responded positively. He mentioned that he wanted to develop key teachers in mathematics. He also wanted his school to be upgraded to teach up to Grade 12.

#### 4.2.3.4 Organisational development

1. *Do you have a mission statement?*

The principal responded that the school did not have a mission statement but what they wanted to achieve was known. This included strengthening staff and improvement of Grade 10 results.

2. *Do you do strategic planning for the school?*

The principal answered in the affirmative. According to him planning was done by the principal and then presented to the school management for additions.

3. *Does your school have policies on the following?*

- Discipline: The principal responded in the affirmative.
- Language: The principal confirmed that it was the policy of his school for teachers and learners to use English during school hours.
- School uniform: The principal responded that school uniform was not compulsory at his school.
- Use of school resources: No there was no policy.
- Code of conduct for teachers: The principal responded that the school was making use of the code of conduct from the Regional Office of Education.
- Extramural activities: The principal confirmed that teachers were allocated different sport codes.
- Staff development: There was no policy in place according to the principal.
- Pupil development: There was no policy in place according to the principal.

#### *4. Do you have a management team?*

The principal responded in the affirmative and that it consisted of the principal and the three heads of departments.

How often do you meet? The principal responded “Twice a trimester”

What do you discuss? “We discuss the timetables, subject allocation to teachers, examinations, school development fund and working relations.”

What committees do you have at school? “We have a management committee, committee of subject heads and disciplinary committee.”

How often do you meet as a staff? “Each morning for morning briefings and twice a trimester for staff meetings.”

Are minutes taken at staff meetings? The principal responded in the affirmative.

Are agendas distributed before meetings? “Yes, agendas are discussed by management before distribution.”

Do you have a budget for the school fund? “Yes, different committees put up their individual budgets which are then consolidated in one school budget.”

What is the school fund used for? “It is mainly used for buying photocopy paper, teaching and learning materials as well as reference books.”

Who makes final decision on how funds are to be used? “The school board makes a final decision on how funds are to be used.”

#### **4.2.3.5 General**

The principal was asked to give his opinion about factors that influenced the academic achievement of the Grade 10 learners at his school. In response to the question, the principal mentioned the following nine factors.

1. Teachers' characteristics: The principal explained that those teachers who are able to handle their subjects and also maintain discipline produced better results compared to others.
2. Learners characteristics: He said that learners who were serious about their studies by attending classes regularly, doing their homework and practising English passed their Grade 10 examinations as compared to those who were lazy and always absent from classes.
3. Parental involvement: He mentioned that some parents did not want to attend parent meetings. Others failed to take care of their children and were reluctant to assist financially.
4. Community: The community in which the school was located did not support the school's effort to improve the Grade 10 results according to the principal. He cited an example of community members who did not mind selling alcohol to learners.
5. Regional Office of Education: The principal was of the opinion that only teachers were blamed for the high failure rate of the Grade 10 learners by the regional office. Learners themselves were comfortable because there was always a scapegoat for their own failures.
6. Automatic promotion: Transferring of learners who failed their previous grades twice to the next grade resulted in learners getting to Grade 10 unprepared.
7. Discipline: Learners absenteeism was a problem at this school according to the principal and it had a negative effect on the performance.
8. Government policies on pregnancy: According to the principal, a girl who is pregnant may not be taken out of school. The school was compelled by the Ministry to keep the girl in school till few days before she delivered. Such girls were unlikely to perform well in the examinations.
9. Democratisation in education: The principal was of the opinion that many stakeholders misunderstood democracy in education. Some stakeholders felt that they could do as they wished without any consequences. He cited an example of parents who kept their children in the house to do household jobs and only to send

them back to school after a week or so. The principal was of the opinion that this was happening because parents understood democracy in education to mean doing anything one wanted to do.

#### **4.2.4 Interview with parent representatives on the school board**

There are three representatives on the school board. Two of them were interviewed on aspects related to their role as school board members.

##### **4.2.4.1 The role of parent representatives on the school board**

The parents were asked to express themselves on their role as parent representatives on the school board. Both responded that they saw themselves as representing fellow parents in school matters.

##### **4.2.4.2 Involvement in the decision-making process of the school**

The parents were asked whether they were involved in making decisions in the school and how. Both parents responded that they were involved to a certain extent. One parent stated that in most cases they were only invited to meetings when there was a disciplinary problem with teachers or learners.

##### **4.2.4.3 Reporting of school issues to the community**

On the question as to how the community they represent was given feedback on school matters, both parents responded that reporting back to the community was on an informal basis. One parent said that she always met other community members at the water point and would brief them on school matters if asked to do so. The second parent interviewed said that he would talk about school affairs if asked by community members.

#### **4.2.4.4 Reporting of community concerns to school management**

When asked about how community concerns were reported to school management, both parents responded that this was done through personal consultations with the principal and the principal in turn would inform the rest of the management team.

#### **4.2.4.5 Parent's view on the performance of the school in respect of Grade 10 results**

Both parents were of the opinion that the Grade 10 results improved very much in 1999 compared to the previous years and were satisfied with the current performance of the school.

#### **4.2.4.6 Reasons for the current state of affairs (improvement at the school)**

One parent was of the opinion that learners' performances were improving because teachers and learners were working hard and co-operation between the two parties had improved very much. The other parent responded that Grade 10 results were improving because teachers were committed to their teaching task.

#### **4.2.4.7 What can parents do to improve the Grade 10 results of the school?**

One parent responded that learners should be encouraged to attend school regularly and teachers should be motivated to work hard. The other parent was of the opinion that parents should reward learners who were doing well in their school work and reprimand those who are not working hard.

#### **4.2.4.8 What can parents do to encourage both Grade 10 learners and teachers to work hard in order to improve the results?**

One parent was of the opinion that both teachers and learners should be rewarded for a job well done. He further commented that both learners and teachers should be reprimanded if results are not satisfactory.

The other parent suggested that both teachers and learners should be discouraged from excessive consumption of alcohol especially during weekdays.

### **4.3 Observations**

#### **4.3.1 Classroom observations**

Classroom observations were done in the school in order for the researcher to familiarise himself with what was happening in the classroom in respect of the following aspects.

- Availability of learners resources,
- Availability of educational resources,
- Physical condition of classrooms,
- Physical appearance, behaviour and interaction of the learners,
- Teachers confidence in presenting lessons,
- Use of teaching methods and approaches,
- Use of consolidating strategies,
- Management of learners in the classroom.

##### **4.3.1.1 Availability of learners resources**

In both classes observed, learners had their own desks, textbooks and stationery.

#### **4.3.1.2 Availability of educational resources**

Each classroom had one cupboard and display areas. However, teaching aids such as posters, charts, maps and overhead projectors were not available.

#### **4.3.1.3 Physical condition of classrooms**

The classrooms were in good condition. There were no signs of vandalism, the rooms were adequately ventilated and the temperature of the rooms were conducive to learning. However the floors of the two classrooms were not clean.

#### **4.3.1.4 Physical appearance, behaviour and interaction of the learners**

The majority of learners did not wear school uniform but they were properly dressed according to the weather. The negative aspect observed was that learners were reluctant to participate in classroom activities. The reason could be language problems. Learners behaved well.

#### **4.3.1.5 Teachers' confidence in presenting lessons**

Four of the teachers observed were confident in presenting their lessons. Learning task objectives were clearly defined and teachers knew what they were aiming at. In one case a teacher seemed not to have prepared for the lesson and was not sure about the accuracy of the information he was giving to learners. Major problems observed in two lessons were that teachers were not familiar with the content of the subjects and teachers did not know how to encourage pupil participation.

#### **4.3.1.6 Use of teaching methods and approaches**

The following facilitation techniques were used by teachers during lessons.

Three teachers used small group discussions of less than 10 members. Four teachers used lecturing techniques. Two teachers used group project techniques.

All five lessons included direct instruction of content. Only two teachers assessed what had been learnt during the lesson. Two teachers gave homework at the end of their lessons. Only one of the teachers observed summarised the activity at the end of the lesson.

In the researcher's opinion teachers should use a variety of techniques such as direct questioning, explaining, demonstrating, groupwork, challenging the learners' ideas, checking for understanding, helping and supporting, providing for active practices and problem solving, etc. These techniques according to literature are considered to actively involve the learner in his/her learning task. The observer was looking for the above mentioned strategies during the lesson observation but this could not be observed.

#### **4.3.1.7 Use of consolidating strategies**

Three teachers demonstrated solutions on the chalkboard. In one case learners completed examples from the textbooks.

#### **4.3.1.8 Management of learners in the classroom**



Teachers did not identify learners who did not do their homework. Order in the classroom was maintained by keeping learners busy with either an assignment or listening to the lesson. Rewarding or punishing of learners were not observed.

#### **4.3.2 School observations**

The observations concentrated on the following areas.

##### **4.3.2.1 General condition of the school premises**

The school grounds were clean and well kept. There were no signs of vandalism on the school grounds and school buildings.

The school was however not fenced and this resulted in members of the community walking through the school premises during school hours. Such movements disturbed classes by attracting both learners' and teachers' attention.

The school does not have a designated parking area for staff and visitors parked their cars right in front of the classrooms. This was also disturbing for both teachers and learners.

The school made use of pit latrines and learners' and teachers' toilets were not cleaned regularly.

##### **4.3.2.2 Activities before school starts**

The school started at 06h50. The principal and teachers arrived on time, however a large number of learners were arriving late because of the long distances they had to walk from their homes to school. It was observed that there was no mechanism in place for monitoring latecoming and as a result no steps were taken against learners arriving late during the observation period.

#### **4.3.2.3 Activities during assembly**

No assembly was conducted during the week of observation.

#### **4.3.2.4 Activities during breaks**

The only break was at 09h35 and it lasted for 30 minutes.

The principal and staff members assembled in one of the classroom that was used as a staff room for tea. Learners were standing around all over the school premises. Some went to a nearby shop to buy sweets and biscuits while others were playing around on the premises.

#### **4.3.2.5 Activities after school**

The school closed at 12h35. Learners came back to school at 15h00 for afternoon studies. Supervisory staff was not observed. It seemed as if learners attended the sessions unsupervised.

No extra mural activities were observed during the week of observation. The principal stayed behind after school if he had appointments or if he had to finalise some administrative matters.

Some teachers, especially members of the management team, stayed behind after school to do some administrative work.

Some learners reported back at the school at 15h00 for the study session. Others who stayed far away from the school did not come back for studies.

#### **4.3.2.6 Other events that took place during the school day**

Community members were always on the school premises to fetch water as the only water point in this area was on the premises.

Parent representatives on the school board were invited to the school to talk to the Grade 10 learners about their studies (encouraging learners to work hard). One staff meeting was held during the period of observation to discuss the organising of the August examinations.

#### 4.4 School profile

Year 2000

Name of school	:	Y combined school
Name of principal	:	Mr. B
Education Region	:	Rundu
No. of Learners	:	225
No. of Teachers	:	17
Grades	:	1 – 10
Location	:	Rural village
School day	:	Single shift (morning)

**Table 9: Grade 10 academic record according to the statements of results for 1997, 1998 and 1999.**

	1997	1998	1999
% of learners who passed	64%	47,05%	31,8%

#### 4.5 The interviews

##### 4.5.1 Teacher interviews

Six teachers teaching Grade 10 subjects were interviewed.

#### 4.5.1.1 Qualification of teachers teaching Grade 10 classes at the Y Combined School

**Table 10: Qualification of Teachers at Y Combined School**

Grade 12 + HED or B degree	0
Grade 12 + BETD/PTC (Primary Teacher Certificate)	2
Grade 12 with no teaching qualifications	3
Below Grade 12	1
Total	6

Table 10 shows that two of the six teachers interviewed did the subjects they were teaching up to Grade 12 level plus a teaching diploma. Three of the teachers had Grade 12 qualifications in the subjects but without teaching qualifications. One teacher did the subject he is teaching up to Grade 10 level. None of the teachers at the school had post matric qualifications in the subjects they were teaching.

#### 4.5.1.2 Teaching experience of Grade 10 teachers at the Y Combine School

**Table 11: Teaching Experience in years**

5 years and above	0
4	5
3	0
2	0

1	1
0	0

Table 11 shows that five of the teachers interviewed had four years of teaching experience and one teacher only one year of experience.

**Table 12: Number of workshops attended by Grade 10 teachers at the Y Combined School**

5 and more	1
4	0
3	1
2	2
1	2
0	0

Table 12 shows that 1 teacher attended five or more workshops, one teacher attended 3, two teachers attended 2 and two teachers attended 1 workshop.

#### 4.5.1 Factors influencing academic performance of Grade 10 learners at the Y Combined School

On the question as to what teachers thought were factors influencing the academic performance of Grade 10 learners at the school, the following factors were identified.

**Table 13: Factors influencing academic performance of grade 10 learners at the Y Combined School**

English language problem	2
Lack of community involvement	1

Low morale of learner	1
Lack of teaching skills	1
Lack of instructional materials	4
Overcrowded classes	1
Lack of exposure	1
Commitment of teachers	2
Weak background of learners	4
Security situation	1
Automatic promotion	1
Lack of discipline	1
Wrong subject allocation	1

Table 13 shows that two teachers were of the opinion that the language used as medium of instruction influenced the performance of learners negatively. They explained that the English language was unfamiliar and learners were struggling to master it.

One teacher felt that the lack of community involvement in the education of their children influenced their learning abilities. He went on to say that without the required financial support from parents, the school could do little to improve the performance of Grade 10 learners.

One teacher was of the opinion that low learner morale affected the performances of learners negatively. He explained that because learners were not able to understand the language of instruction, they became de-motivated and lost interest in their schoolwork.

One teacher felt that most teachers teaching Grade 10 lacked the necessary skills. He went on to say that there were teachers who were not trained as teachers and lacked the teaching methodology of the subjects.

Four teachers reported that lack of instructional materials such as exercise books, posters, dictionaries and overhead projectors had a negative impact on teaching and learning at the school. The teachers complained that it was sometimes impossible to give homework to learners because there were no exercise books.

One teacher said that overcrowded classes at the school led to disciplinary problems. He explained that learners could not concentrate because they were sitting uncomfortably.

Lack of exposure was another factor identified by one teacher as influencing performance at the school. According to the teacher, the majority of Grade 10 learners were not familiar with things mentioned in the subject content, e.g. banks, mountains etc. This made it difficult for learners to comprehend what they were being taught.

Two teachers felt that commitment of teachers left much to be desired. According to them some teachers did not put in effort to prepare learners for the examination. They relaxed and expected learners to work hard on their own.

Four teachers expressed the opinion that the background of the learners in their respective subjects influenced the examinations negatively. They explained that learners they were receiving in Grade 10 were not up to standard in terms of subject knowledge.

One teacher was of the opinion that the war situation in the Kavango region also affected schooling at their school. According to him learners were sleeping in the bush to avoid attacks by unknown criminals from Angola and were coming to school tired the next morning. Learners were not attending evening studies for fear of being attacked by criminals.

One teacher was concerned about the system of automatic promotion which resulted in learners progressing to the next grade without mastering the subject matters of the previous grade.

One teacher reported that lack of discipline among both teachers and learners influenced the academic performance of Grade 10 learners at the school. Some teachers were not attending to their classes and some learners were also absenting themselves from classes, according to the teacher.

One teacher was of the opinion that wrong subject allocations to teachers were influencing teaching at the school. He said that some teachers were given subjects they were not trained in. This made it difficult for the teacher to explain the subject matter to the learners.

#### **4.5.1.4 Challenges facing Grade 10 teachers in improving the performance of learners**

On the question of challenges facing Grade 10 teachers, the following were mentioned.

- Analysing the syllabus,
- Teacher to act as role model,
- Acquisition of reference books,
- Counselling of learners,
- To improve the pass rate,
- Completing syllabi in advance,
- Involving community in education,
- Developing creativity skills,
- Encouraging learners to read intensively,



- Encouraging exchange programmes,
- Testing and marking tests on a regular basis,
- Effective use of study sessions,
- Use of old question papers for revision.

#### **4.5.1.5 Frequency of homework and marking**

Teachers were asked how often homework was given to learners and how often the homework was marked.

Two teachers responded that they were giving homework daily and marking was also daily. One said twice per module and marking depended on other commitments by the teacher.

Two teachers replied that they were giving homework twice a week and marking was done immediately after collecting the homework books. One teacher responded that he did not give homework that needed to be marked. He explained that exercises were done in class and learners marked their own work in his subject.

#### **4.5.1.6 Support teachers expected from school management**

On the question of what support teachers expected from the management team that would motivate them to work better, teachers identified the following needs.

Three teachers were of the opinion that school funds should be allocated to individual subjects to enable teachers to buy subject materials.

Four teachers expressed the need for class visits to enable management to know what was going on in classes. They also explained that newly appointed teachers needed guidelines and advice in presenting lessons.

Two teachers felt strongly that management should control teacher preparations and learners homework weekly.

#### 4.5.2 Interview with learners

Thirteen learners were interviewed.

##### 4.5.2.1 Learners views on school factors influencing learning at the Y Combined School

**Table 14: School factors influencing learning in the school**

Home conditions	3
Lack of materials	10
Teachers dodging classes	1
Shortage of teachers in some subjects	2
Lack of financial support by parents	4
Study time too short	2
Lessons not clear	1

Table 14 shows responses received from learners on their views of factors influencing learning in the school.

Three learners expressed concern about conditions at their homes. They explained that their parents were poor and could not afford to feed them properly in order to be energetic in class. They went on to complain that they were given a lot of work to do which sometimes caused them to be absent from school. They gave examples of looking after cattle, pounding of mahangu (millet) and preparation of food as some of the work keeping them busy at home.

Ten learners were of the opinion that lack of learning materials had a negative influence on learning at the school. They explained that exercise books, dictionaries, calculators, pens, etc. were in short supply at the school. According to them, these items were necessary if learning was to be enhanced.

One learner mentioned that some teachers were dodging their classes. She went on to say that much teaching time was wasted in the process.

Two learners mentioned a shortage of teachers in some subjects as a de-motivating factor in their learning. They explained that sometimes they stayed without teachers in certain subjects for the whole trimester.

Four learners mentioned the lack of financial support as influencing their learning. According to the learners parents failed to buy them calculators or pay their school fees. The Ministry of Basic Education and Culture did not provide calculators and as a result some learners had to rely on borrowing calculators from others, which was frustrating.

Two learners were of the opinion that much of their study time was taken up by extra mural activities. They complained that they were left with little time for their studies.

One learner responded that some teachers were not clear in presenting lessons. According to her much work was not understood and thus made learning difficult.

#### **4.5.2.2 Pass rate of Grade 10 learners**

All learners agreed that the school did well in 1997 when Grade10 was offered for the first time at the school but the pass rate dropped in 1998 and 1999.

#### **4.5.2.3 Teachers' performances and ways to improve it**

Learners were asked to give their views of the performance of their teachers and ways in which teacher performance could be improved. All learners agreed that teachers were doing well at the moment but could still improve in the following areas:

- Commitment to their work,
- Supervision of study sessions,
- Counselling of learners,
- Attending workshops,
- Extra classes,
- Supervision of home work,
- Attending to weak learners,
- Provision of learning materials,
- Attendance of classes.

#### **4.5.2.4 Input by learners themselves**

All learners interviewed responded that they were working hard enough in preparation for their Grade 10 examinations because they were passing their tests, they were doing their homework and they were studying on a daily basis.

#### **4.5.2.5 Hours spent on study and homework**

Nine learners reported three hours and more and two learners reported two hours that were spent on studies and homework per day.

#### **4.5.2.6 Discussion of study methods**

Learners were asked to say how often they and their teachers talked about study methods. Six said that study methods were discussed continuously. Five reported one to three times a week and one said that the teachers did not discuss study method with them at all.

#### **4.5.3 Interview with parents' representatives**

##### **4.5.3.1 How did parent representatives on the school board see their role?**

The two parents interviewed mentioned the following perceptions of their role.

- To represent fellow parents,
- To help solve problems at school,
- To inform the community about changes at the school,
- To support school initiatives.

##### **4.5.3.2 Involvement in the decision-making process of the school**

Both parents agreed that they were involved in the decision making process because they were consulted before any decision was taken by school management.

##### **4.5.3.3 Ways to report school issues to the community they represent**

The two parents responded that they were supposed to call meetings with fellow parents to inform them about issues at the school. According to them this has not yet happened.

##### **4.5.3.4 How are community concerns reported to school management?**

One parent said concerns were reported through the secretary of the school board to the principal. The other parent said that community concerns were reported to the principal.

4.5.3.5 a) **How do you rate your school in terms of the Grade 10 examination result?**

One parent said he had trust in the school. The other one said it was an average school.

b) The parents were asked to express their opinion whether the school was doing well enough

All of them agreed that the school was not doing well in terms of the Grade 10 performances at the moment.

4.5.3.6 **What was the reason the learners were not performing well in the Grade 10 examination?**

The two parents identified the following factors as contributing to the performance of Grade 10 learners.

- Lack of competent teachers ,
- Teachers were not committed to their work,
- Learners did not take their studies seriously.

4.5.3.7 **What can parents do to improve the Grade 10 result in the school?**

Parents identified the following strategies:

- Encourage learners to attend classes regularly and to take their schoolwork seriously,

- Parents should meet school management to discuss school matters,
- Discuss problems with teachers to motivate them to work hard.

In conclusion parents were asked to add anything they felt could help improve the performance of Grade 10 learners at the school and they responded as follows:

- Materials should be provided,
- Teachers should be appointed in time,
- Parents should be encouraged to get involved in the studies of their children.

#### 4.5.4 Interview with the principal

The interview of the principal consisted of five sections.

##### 4.5.4.1 Background information of the principal

1. Qualifications of Principal: Academic: Std 10  
Professional : ECP ( Education Certificates Primary)
2. Union Membership: He is a member of the Namibia National Teachers Union
3. The Union provided support for educational development.

##### 4.5.4.2 Educational management experience

Years of experience as principal of that school: 6 years

Management course attended in the last five years: financial management, personnel management and stock control

Did the regional office of education and non-governmental organisation provide training/ support? The principal responded that such training was provided.

#### 4.5.4.3 Educational management needs

The principal was asked under this section to rate his school's performance in the following areas.

##### 1. *School vision and mission statement*

The principal responded that his school was one of the best in the area and wanted to see it progressing well.

##### 2. *School development plan*

The principal said that he wanted to develop that school to senior secondary level.

##### 3. *Staff discipline*

Staff discipline was good according to the principal. He explained that there were no absenteeism and dodging.

##### 4. *Staff competency*

On staff competence, the principal replied that the staff was very creative. Teachers always came to the principal with constructive suggestions.

##### 5. *School loyalty*

The principal said this was good because everyone was supporting the school.

##### 6. *Pupil discipline*

It was good according to the headmaster

##### 7. *School administration*

The principal responded that the school activities were divided among teachers and everybody was contributing to the well being of the school.

##### 8. *Relations with the community*

This was very good according to the principal. Parents were coming on their own to see what was happening in the school.



On the question of whom the principal relied on most for advice and support in doing his job as a school principal, he replied that he relied on the management team and the rest of the staff members.

#### 4.5.4.4 Organisational Development

1. *Presence of mission statement:* There was no mission statement in place.
2. *Strategic plan for the school:* This has not been developed yet.
3. *Does the school have policies on the following?*
  - *School discipline:* the principal responded in the affirmative. He produced a set of school rules.
  - *Language:* according to the principal the school did not have written policy on language but it was a tradition at the school for teachers to use English when talking to learners in order to encourage learners to improve their English.
  - *School uniform:* school uniform was not compulsory
  - *Use of school resources:* no policy was in place.
  - *Code of conduct for teachers:* the principal responded that they were using guidelines from the Ministry of Education.
4. *Management team and its composition:* under this section the principal responded that he had a management team consisting of heads of departments.
5. *Frequency of meetings and discussion points:* the principal responded that they meet each morning to discuss the activities for the day.
6. *Committees at the school:* the principal reported that he had financial, disciplinary and subjects head committees.
7. *Frequency of staff meetings:* the principal reported that they met every morning to discuss the day's activities and once per trimester for formal staff meetings.
8. *Are minutes taken at staff meetings?* The principal responded in the affirmative and also explained that they were distributed to staff and the agendas were also distributed before such meetings.

10. *School fund.* On the school fund the principal explained that he did not have a budget but the funds were used for buying writing materials, sports equipment, and files for the office and teachers. He further explained that the financial committee made final decisions on how funds were used.

#### 4.5.4.5 **General**

The principal was asked under this section to give his opinion on factors that influenced the academic achievements of the Grade 10 learners at his school. On this question, the principal identified the following factors.

1. Distribution of learning materials: he said that exercise books and pens were delivered late. Learners could sit for the whole trimester without stationery.
2. Assistance from the regional office of education: he explained that there is a communication gap between advisory teachers and subject teachers. Teachers were not visited regularly.
3. Communication problem between school and regional office of education: he complained that circulars and invitation letters for meetings were received late.
4. Lack of facilities like typewriters, photocopy and duplicating machines made the reproduction of revision materials such as old question papers difficult.
5. Parental ignorance of the importance of education: some parents prevented their children from attending classes in order to perform household duties. He further explained that the majority of parents were not monitoring the academic progress of their children.
6. Contact between school and non-governmental organisations was difficult: According to the principal this is due to the long distances between the school and the offices of such organisations.

#### 4.6 **The observations**

##### 4.6.1 **Classroom observations**

Specific areas that could influence learning were looked at.

#### 4.6.1.1 **Learners resources**

Each learner had a desk, textbooks and stationery. Availability of calculators was a problem in this school.

#### 4.6.1.2 **Physical condition of the classroom**

The condition of the classroom was perfect. These were new buildings and everything such as adequate light, walls and floor, ventilation, etc. was in order.

#### 4.6.1.3 **Educational resources**

Things like posters, display area and cupboards were in place. However things like overhead projectors and library books were not observed. The school has a mobile library which is taken to classes by the teacher whenever it is needed.

#### 4.6.1.4 **Learners**

There was only one Grade 10 class of thirteen learners in this school. The same learners were observed in all six lessons that were attended.

The physical appearance of learners was good. They did not have school uniform but were neatly dressed according to the weather. Learners participated in classroom activities in three of the five lessons observed. In other cases learners were passively listening to the teachers.

One could see from the learners' responses to questions by teachers that the majority of them had few problems in understanding the medium of instruction.

#### 4.6.1.5 Teachers

Three of the six teachers defined the learning task objectives very clearly. One teacher was not sure where to start the lesson and the other teacher just wrote the topic on the black board but failed to tell the learners what he expected them to know after the lesson.

Four of the six teachers had confidence in themselves while presenting lessons. The other teacher seemed not to be sure about what she was doing.

The use of teaching methods and approaches were satisfactory in three of the lessons. In these three lessons the teachers used questions to encourage learners to respond. In some cases learners were organised in small groups of two to discuss a certain topic before the teachers asked questions.

In two lessons, teachers relied on lecturing without the participation of learners.

The consolidation of what had been learnt was not satisfactory in all cases. In only two cases did teachers attempt to write solutions on the blackboard but no effort was made to emphasise the most important themes of the lesson.

#### 4.6.1.6 Management of learners

This was a small class of thirteen learners. There was order in the classroom. The previous day's homework was not asked prior to the start of the new lesson. No effort was made to identify learners who did not do their homework. No rewarding or punishing of learners was observed.

#### **4.6.2 School observations**

This part consisted of the following sections.

##### **4.6.2.1 Condition of school environment**

The school was not surrounded by homesteads, as is the case with many rural schools. Disturbing factors such as movement of community members through the school and noise was limited. This made the environment more conducive to learning. The school buildings were clean and neat and no signs of vandalism were evident on the school grounds and school buildings. However, the school was not fenced and there was no security guard.

##### **4.6.2.2 Activities before the school starts**

The school starts at 07h00. The principal arrived before 07h00. Teachers and the majority of learners arrived on time. There was no mechanism for monitoring latecomers by teachers or learners at the school. The assembly was in the open and learners were addressed in both English and the vernacular. The local language was used for the benefit of the Grade 1 – 3 learners. Announcements made related to the activities of the day.

##### **4.6.3.3 Activities during break**

The first break was at 09h30 and it lasted for twenty minutes. The second break was at 11h10 for 10 minutes. Both principal and the majority of teachers assembled in the staff room for tea. It was observed that some teachers who did not contribute to the tea fund did not come to the staff room but stayed in their respective classrooms.

Learners played around on the school premises for the duration of the breaks with no supervision.

#### **4.6.3.4 Activities after school**

The official closing time was 12h40. Everybody went home for lunch. The principal and supervisory teachers came back at 14h45 to supervise afternoon studies. Grades 5 – 10 learners living within a radius of 5km from the school came back at 15h00 for the study sessions but those learners outside the 5km radius were exempted from attending studies because of the distance. No staff meeting or parents meeting took place during my visit to this school.

#### **4.6.3.5 Other events that took place during the school days**

Nothing extraordinary took place during the period of observations.

### **4.7 Summary of findings**

#### **Ethos of the two schools**

The data seem to confirm the researcher's assumption that the performance of Grade 10 learners in the two schools studied were influenced by practices and policies followed by the school. There was no evidence of mission statements that could guide and inspire the schools. School rules and codes of conduct were in place in both schools but the implementation thereof was not evident. The implementation of rules and policies is important for enforcing authority and discipline among teachers and learners, which is a key aspect of the ethos of the successful school (Christie et al, 1997, p. 10).

The interviewees were asked open-ended questions on factors that influenced academic performances of Grade 10 learners in their respective schools. The data collected from the X Combined School seems to suggest that the school was stuck in a cycle of low expectations, lack of direction and external perception of failure. The researcher came to these conclusions because none of the interviewees in this school was confident and optimistic about the future performance of the Grade 10 learners of the school. All of them were just concerned about factors that impacted negatively on the performances of the learners and did not know how the difficulties could be overcome. The majority of the learners were reluctant to speak in class out of fear that they would be laughed at by fellow learners. The researcher observed that teachers did not attempt to encourage the learners to participate in classroom activities in most cases. Learners who were silent throughout the lessons were thus deprived of the opportunity to practise the English language. The researcher concluded that the culture of silence in class at the X Combined School demoralised both teachers and learners.

In the case of the Y Combined School the principal, teachers and learners were optimistic and eager to prove themselves in the coming examinations (for the year 2000). The principal was talking with pride and confidence of how he wanted to upgrade his school to senior secondary level. Teachers were talking about the outstanding Grade 10 result in 1997 when the school offered Grade 10 subjects for the first time. They acknowledged that they did slightly badly in 1998 and 1999 but intended to get back to their 1997 academic record in the year 2000 examinations. Learners interviewed at the Y Combined School were positive about passing the year 2000 examinations. High expectations and requirements for students are the most effective school correlates (Creemers, 1994: 115-116 cited in Mouton, 1998: p.195).

Another important issue to be raised here is the question of setting objectives for the schools. The researcher concluded from his observation that there was no consensus reached by parents, principals, teachers and learners in respect of what the two

schools wanted to achieve. This became evident from the way the different stakeholders were blaming each other for the non-performance of their respective schools. Teachers were blaming learners, learners were blaming teachers, principals were missing parental support while parents were complaining that principals did not always inform them about school matters. Parental involvement in the life of the school was found to be more difficult in both the X and Y Combined Schools. The majority of parents in these rural areas did not have formal education and as a result did not always appreciate the importance of education for their children. The principal at the X Combined School was of the opinion that teachers and parents did not always have similar expectations for children. Teachers expected learners to attend classes regularly for example while parents expected learners to look after cattle on certain days.

Stakeholders in schools have to keep in mind that the atmosphere of a school was greatly influenced by the degree to which the school functioned as a cohesive unit. Unity of purpose is a condition for achieving consistency of educational practice throughout all staff in the school (National Commission of Education 1996, p.316).

The other aspect was the attitude of teachers and learners towards teaching and learning in the two schools. The majority of teachers were good in teaching learners new concepts, new knowledge and new skills. The researcher concluded from the lesson observations that teachers and learners did less in the task of consolidating, practicing, internalizing and applying new concepts, knowledge and skills. Teachers did not ensure and demand that each learner mastered, revised and retained the new knowledge. The majority of teachers kept on teaching until the bell went for another period without giving homework or assignments to learners. Most teachers and learners are focused on their teaching and learning tasks respectively.

Learner behaviour and class attendance by grade 10 learners were good in both schools. However there were no measures in place to control this behaviour by



learners and teachers. Some teachers in one of the schools have the habit of missing classes. The researcher observed learners looking for their teachers on more than one occasion in one of the schools.

### **The language issue**

The Ministry of Education and Culture embarked upon the formulation of a language policy for Namibia immediately after independence. The new language policy was announced in November 1991 and made provision for the recognition of English as the official language and medium of instruction in all Namibian schools, except schools established for the express purpose of accommodating children of foreign nationals (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993).

The Ministry of Education and Culture opted for English as an official language for the following reasons among others:

- Namibia is a multilingual society and needed a common language as a medium of communication to facilitate citizen participation and decision making in a democratic society. As no single indigenous language could be used which will facilitate nation building, the Ministry of Education and Culture opted for English which was considered to be a neutral language to foster nation building and reconciliation.
- Afrikaans as a medium of instruction during The Apartheid era was used by the colonial masters (The then South African regime) to legitimise the divisions in the Namibian society and the inequalities of power and privilege. The continued use of Afrikaans as the official language in Namibia would therefore, be perceived by the public as an attempt to perpetuate the power and privilege of the Afrikaans speaking whites.
- The English language is spoken in most countries of the world. English was therefore regarded by the Namibian policy makers as a language of international connections (Ministry of Education and Culture 1993, p 65).

The implementation of English as a medium of instruction in Namibian schools were done in phases over five years to permit the preparation of new materials and teacher upgrading.

The language policy also recognised the pedagogical importance for children to study through their own language during the early years of schooling when basic skills of reading, writing and concept formation are developed. The home language, a local language or English was introduced as a medium of instruction in Grade 1 – 3, with English as a subject in 1993.

English was introduced as a medium of instruction for all promotional subjects, except other languages, in Grades 4 to 7. The process of introducing English as a medium of instruction in the senior primary phase started in 1993 and was completed in 1995 (Katzao, 1999).

English is the medium of instruction for all subjects at secondary school level, Vocational Technical Institutions and Teacher Training Colleges, as well as at Tertiary level. English was therefore introduced at the said levels beginning in Grade 8 in 1991 and reaching Grade 12 in 1995.

The Ministry of Education and Culture considered proficiency in the official language at the end of the 7 year primary cycle to be sufficient to enable all children to be effective participants in society or to continue their education (Ministry of Education and Culture 1997). This seems not to be the case in the two schools studied. The Grade 10 learners for the year 2000 were in Grade 4 in 1993 when English was introduced to them for the first time as a medium of instruction. They have been taught through the medium of English for the complete seven years of their primary cycle but still have serious problems with English according to the data obtained from interviews and observations.

Erkana (1992) observed in the paper presented to the National Conference on the Implementation of the language policy for Namibian schools that teachers' education background in the Rundu region was 80% Afrikaans and 20% English and others. He further stated that learners used local languages outside the classroom and Afrikaans and English were virtually non-existent.

This implies that teachers were to be trained intensively in the English language skills while learners were to be exposed to reading a variety of literature to develop their vocabulary and stimulate their thoughts. The successful answering of comprehension questions in examinations is almost impossible for candidates who have not read widely (Ministry of Education and Culture 1992). This implies that there should be school libraries.

In the researcher's opinion, training of the entire teaching force in the English language skills could not be properly done due to financial constraints. The absence of qualified librarians in the two schools coupled with the limited number of reading materials and poor English skills by teachers can be some of the factors contributing to the English language problems in the schools. The researcher is therefore of the opinion that the language problem can only be overcome by training teachers in the techniques of teaching English to non-English speakers and the provision of adequate literature to school libraries. Learners should be guided to develop the love for reading.

### **School governance in the Rundu Region**

The Ministry of Education and Culture has been encouraging democratic decision making in schools in Namibia since its inception in 1990. The Ministry drew up the Namibian Educational Code of Conduct for schools which was issued in 1990. The document made provision for the establishment of formal school level structures such

as Schoolboards and Student Representative Councils for democratic decision making purposes (Angula & Grant Lewis, 1997, p 245).

The document also laid out the results and responsibilities of students, teachers, principals and schoolboards. It discusses the democratic process needed in the administration of schools and specifically stated the responsibilities of principals and schoolboards to initiate and support parent participation in school affairs and that teachers have the responsibility to consult with students' parents.

However, schoolboards in Namibian schools do not yet have decision making powers but make recommendations to the Regional director of education who in consultation with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Culture makes the final decisions.

Both schools X and Y that were studied had schoolboards but their participation in decision making process of the schools according to the researcher's observation are limited by factors such as:

- Low level of education of community members from which parent representatives on the schoolboard are elected. Educational issues under discussion are thus difficult to be understood by parents in most cases.
- The absence of the education act to regulate the relationships among parents, teachers, learners and the regional department of Education and Culture.
- The inability of communities to support their schools financially due to the socio-economic situation in the Region.
- The school management structures in the two schools are not clear. School principals are appointed in both schools but deputy principals and Head of departments are non existent. Schools have to resort to nominating teachers to act in these positions on a temporary basis. This makes it difficult for schools to form management teams. This situation led to principals taking decisions alone which in turn frustrated other teachers as they felt left out.

It is therefore, recommended that the education act be finalized in order to regulate the working relationships of stakeholders in education. In the researcher's opinion, the involvement of parents in the education of their children can be strengthened if they are given legal powers to act in the interest of the education of their own children.

### **Teaching Strategies**

The Ministry of Education and Culture through the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) developed a new curriculum for the Namibian schools. A different method of teaching was introduced which is centred on the needs of the learners and which is intended to assist each learner to achieve the best of which he or she is capable. This implies that a teacher should attempt to develop the capacity for individual thought and decision making of the learners. This process of more learner-centred approach calls for teachers to understand the underlying purposes of the new approach.

Older teachers who have been trained in the old dispensation lack the necessary skills in the new approach. It has proved difficult for the Ministry of Education and Culture to give adequate in-service training to the whole teaching force.

In some cases newly trained teachers arriving in a school are discouraged from teaching in the new way by principals who do not understand the basis on which their junior teachers are working (Presidential Commission on education, Culture and Training 1999).

The basic principle on which the learner-centred approach is based, is learners learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. The teaching method

used should be chosen to encourage the active involvement and participation of the learners. Teachers should structure lessons appropriately for each task.

A variety of techniques can be used such as direct questioning, eliciting, explaining, demonstrating, group activities, challenging the learners' ideas, checking for understanding, helping and supporting, providing for active practice and problem solving. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1996, p 23).

Again teachers need to be trained in the use of the new teaching strategies. Principals who are resisting change should also be trained to change their attitudes towards the new teaching methods.

Teachers are still preparing their lessons according to principals' preferences in the two schools that were studied by the researcher. This might be contradictory to the new ways of approaching teaching and learning. This situation sometimes led to conflicts between newly trained teachers and their principals if not addressed.

The purpose of the study as stated earlier was to identify factors that influenced the academic performance of Grade 10 learners in two schools in the Rundu Region. The data obtained from interviews and observations revealed the following factors to have an influence on the academic performance of Grade 10 learners in the two schools studied.

#### **1. Teacher - related factors**

- Teacher qualifications,
- Teacher experience,
- Teacher commitment,
- Teacher discipline,
- Language,
- Teacher attitude towards teaching and one another.

## **2. Learner - related factors**

- Absenteeism and dodging of classes,
- Language problems,
- Culture of silence in the class.

## **3. Availability of educational resources**

## **4. School management issues**

- Availability of mission statements and strategic plans,
- Policies on various aspects of school management,
- School management team.

## **5. Parental involvement**

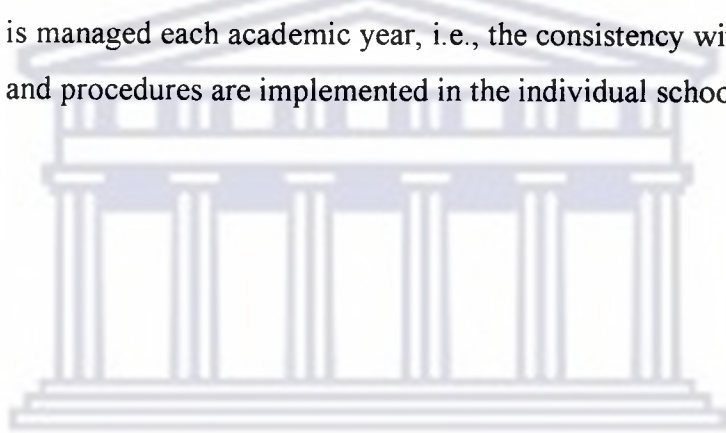
## **6. Ministerial policies**

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the Y Combined School outperformed the X Combined School in 1997 and 1998 but X Combined School did better than Y Combined School in 1999. According to the interviewees, X was improving on the pass rate because of newly appointed qualified teachers. Y has kept its old teachers since the inception of Grade 10 at the school but its pass rate for the last two years (1998 and 1999) had been dropping.

The only explanation the researcher can give for why the performance of Y Combined School was dropping is perhaps staff motivation. Teachers were perhaps not motivated for one or another reason. For this year however, teachers at Y showed optimism and could not wait for the end of the year's results.

The conclusions reached by this research study are as follows:

- Identical factors identified by teachers, parents, principals and learners are influencing the academic performance of Grade 10 learners in both the X and Y combined schools.
- The identified factors are within the domain of the school leadership to deal with.
- The differences in the academic performances of grade 10 learners in the two schools can be ascribed to the manner in which the individual school is managed each academic year, i.e., the consistency with which policies and procedures are implemented in the individual schools.



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## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Recommendations

#### Introduction

The objective of this study was to identify factors identified by learners, teachers and parents as influencing the academic performance of Grade 10 learners in two schools in the Rundu Region. Two schools were selected for the purpose of this study. Both schools are offering Grades one to ten and are serving rural communities in remote areas. Both schools are not able to attract highly qualified teachers due to distance between the schools and the nearest town. In other words, both schools operate more or less under the same conditions but recorded slightly different examination results for the last three years.

The discussion focuses more on what teachers, learners, and parents said that could possibly be factors influencing the performance of Grade 10 learners in the two schools. Conclusions drawn from the schools and classroom observations are also discussed.

Factors considered by learners, teachers and parents to be influencing the academic performance of Grade 10 learners in two schools studied can be classified into the following broad categories:

- Teacher-related factors,
- Learners characteristics,
- Availability of educational resources,
- Management issues,
- Parental involvement and,
- Ministerial policies,

## **5.1 Teacher - related factors**

### **Teachers' qualifications**

It was found in both schools that the majority of teachers did not have teaching qualifications or did not have the academic qualifications required to teach the junior secondary phase. This, according to stakeholders interviewed, influenced the academic performance of learners negatively. The researcher is of the opinion that education is a process through which knowledge, skills and attitudes is transferred. The teacher as a knowledgeable person should act as resource person during encounters with the learner. The degree to which this process will be successful depends on the knowledge of the teacher. Formal qualifications in subjects are mostly used to measure how much the person knows about the subject matter. The more knowledgeable the teacher is on the subject, the more likely he/ she is to be successful in his/ her teaching task. This view is in line with results of studies done in developing countries where it was found that achievement was higher in schools with better educated teachers (Lockheed, M.E & Levin, H.M. (1993).

### **Amount of teacher experience**

It was found in both schools that all teachers, except principals, had few years of teaching experience. It is the researcher's opinion that this is due to the fact that the schools were recently upgraded to the junior secondary phase. Teachers who had been there for many years had very low qualifications and, therefore, were used in lower primary grades.

According to the researcher's observations, a lack of teachers to teach Grade 10 subjects could be influencing the Grade 10 academic performance of learners negatively. Teachers might have problems in the methodology of the subject and have to wait for the arrival of a subject advisor, which was not on a regular basis. For

example after observing his lesson the researcher asked a teacher at one of the schools why he did not give copies of the syllabus to learners in order for them to see the basic competencies required by the syllabus. He responded that he was under the impression that the syllabus is a confidential document that should be handled by the teacher only. Rural schools have had difficulties in attracting experienced teachers from other parts of the country because of a lack of accommodation as well as the unwillingness of the teachers to work in remote areas.

### **Teachers' commitment**

Teaching, in the researcher's opinion, is a process that involves a lot of planned activities that must be executed in a particular sequence. These activities include the division of the work required by the syllabus into smaller units (scheme of work) preparation of lessons, presentation of lessons and the evaluation of the lessons to see whether lesson objectives are being met. These activities become daily routine and this requires personal commitment to the teaching task.

Commitment is a question of discipline, the researcher believe that when a teacher decides on things, he/she should make sure that they are followed up.

Stakeholders interviewed in both schools were of the opinion that teachers were not committed to their tasks. They came to school unprepared and did not always mark the homework of the learners. Such behaviour discouraged learners from taking their studies seriously. Teaching must therefore be focused in order to facilitate learning.

As discussed in Chapter 2 of this mini-thesis, a clear focus on teaching and learning is one of the key features identified in the study of schools that have overcome "the breakdown of the cultures of teaching and learning in historically black schools" (Christie et al, 1997, p.10).

## **Unprofessional teacher behaviour**

According to the researcher's view, teacher discipline is a pre-requisite for effective teaching. Stakeholders interviewed brought the following issues to light.

Teachers were absenting themselves from duties. This occurs mostly after weekends or on the days teachers got their salaries. Stakeholders reported that learners were frequently left without teachers because of teacher absenteeism. The researcher did not verify the information with the attendance register to determine how frequently the teachers were absent.

The other issue raised by parents was teachers who were abusing alcohol. According to parents, some teachers spent much of their after school hours drinking and did not have time to prepare for the next day's lessons. This resulted in teachers coming to classes unprepared. The last issue that was mentioned under teacher's discipline were teachers who reported for duties but never turned up for their respective classes. The researcher observed learners on more than two occasions looking for subject teachers in one of the schools and a lot of teaching time was lost in the process.

Whether the teacher was absent, unprepared or procrastinating, the fact remained that time was lost and the teaching work was not done. This could lead to teachers not finishing the syllabus well in advance of the final examinations and could influence learners' performances negatively. One of the schools had a 67% pass rate in Grade 10 in 1997 when they offered the grade for the first time but the pass rate went down the following year (1998). The researcher asked one of the teachers to explain the reason for the situation. He explained that every teacher made it a point to work hard in 1997. The school had had good results that year and teachers started to relax the following year and hoped for history to repeat itself. This explanation implies that teachers can make a difference if they want to.

### **Level of language skills**

Teaching involves continuous communication between the teacher and the learners. The way a teacher expresses himself/herself will determine how the learners will receive the information. Language competency is thus a key factor if teaching is to be effective.

Teachers, learners and parents interviewed were all of the opinion that language competency was one of the factors influencing the academic performance of Grade 10 learners in the two schools. This opinion was confirmed during the researcher's lesson observations in both schools. Some teachers were not able to express themselves clearly when they were teaching. Sometimes the researcher could see from their reaction that they were not sure whether learners understood what they were saying. This is a problem that needs to be overcome if teaching is to be effective. Teachers were also not exposed to the use of English outside school hours. Rural villages did not present teachers with opportunities to practice English as almost everybody uses the vernacular.

Erkana (1992) observed that 80% of the teachers in the Rundu Region were more fluent in Afrikaans than English by the time English was introduced as the medium of instruction in the Namibian schools in 1991. The sudden switch over from Afrikaans to English created communication problems to teachers in presenting their lessons.

Teachers expressed the wish that their lessons be observed and controlled by the management in order for them to improve their language skills. The researcher understood the teachers to have assumed that members of the school management were senior teachers who were supposed to have been knowledgeable of what other teachers were doing. Their intervention was seen as a means to assist inexperienced teachers to improve their teaching. The fact that teachers were missing visits by their

seniors could be interpreted by the researcher that the school management was not functioning as expected.

### **Teachers attitudes towards teaching and one another**

The majority of teachers reported that the major factors influencing the academic performance in their respective schools was the weak background of learners in subjects and their inability to understand English. In all cases teachers were citing negative things about learners. It is the researcher's opinion that the way teachers define learners could have an influence on the way they worked with their learners. If teachers believed that their learners were stupid and had failed already even before the final examinations, the researcher does not believe that such teachers will put in an effort to assist these learners.

Learners with weak backgrounds in subjects and those with language problems need not be reminded of their deficiency but rather be given remedial teaching. Teachers who are positive about their learners' capabilities, in the researcher's opinion, are more ambitious to assist their learners to overcome the weaknesses.

The other issue that came to light during the interviews was the lack of consultations among teachers teaching the same subjects. The researcher expected teachers teaching the same subjects in the same school to at least consult and advise each other on subject matter. The majority of teachers were reluctant to seek advice from a colleague. They sat with problems waiting for a subject advisor when they did not even know when he/she was going to come. For example, a teacher in one of the schools had been transferred from a private school in the same region. The researcher asked her what she found different in her new school. She replied that there was far less co-operation among the teachers compared to her previous school. She explained that teachers were shy to consult each other on school matters and there was no spirit of co-operation among teachers at her new school.

Her explanation suggested that teachers' attitudes had an influence on their teaching and therefore on the academic performance of learners.

Some learners complained that some teachers were insulting learners in class. In the lessons observed this was not evident but what was evident is that some teachers were threatening in their voices and facial expressions. Statements such as "I don't care whether you pass or fail, I have completed my studies already" were made in two of the lessons observed.

There was no evidence of what teachers expected from each of their learners. It was clear from the interview with learners that they were not under pressure to prove themselves. Learners could come to class without the previous day's homework because the majority of the teachers were not expecting to see their work before they could start with the new lesson.

The relationship of positive teacher attitude and learner performance is supported by Langlois and Zales (1992) when they suggested that most students can perform most learning tasks successfully, if teachers display positive attitudes by creating a supportive and co-operative atmosphere and by treating learners with trust and respect. It is therefore the researcher's belief that learners' performances can be improved if teachers change their attitudes towards their learners by assisting them to overcome their weaknesses rather than adopting a "don't care or negative attitude."

## **5.2 Learner - related factors**

### **Absenteeism and dodging of classes**

Both teachers and principals reported learner absenteeism to be a major problem in both schools. However, this could not be confirmed during lesson observations in both schools. One or two Grade 10 learners were absent during the first day of the

researcher's observation at X Combined School while Y reported one learner to be absent during the researcher's visit. The attendance came to 100% during the subsequent days of the researcher's observation of five days at each school.

The contradiction between what the teachers and principals said and what was observed is difficult to explain. The only possible explanation the researcher could arrive at was that either teachers were trying to suggest that learners themselves should be blamed for their academic performance in Grade 10 and thereby covering themselves or absenteeism could have been a problem in lower grades and generalised to be applicable to the whole school. Alternatively, it could be a mere coincidence that all Grade 10 learners attended classes during the weeks the schools were visited.

### **Language Problems**

Teachers and principals reported that English as a medium of instruction was a problem in both schools. Learners found it difficult to understand the lessons in English. Teachers explained that the majority of learners did not build up strong vocabulary in the lower grades and therefore found it difficult to either understand what was taught or to respond to questions by teachers. One factor that aggravated the problem was the fact that these learners never used English outside school hours.

This problem was confirmed during the interviews with learners. Most of the learners could not understand what the researcher was asking them. Instead of asking the researcher to repeat the questions they started to respond but it was difficult for the researcher to understand what they were saying. The researcher had to repeat the questions many times using different words until they understood what he was trying to ask them. This problem was severe in one of the two schools sampled.



Teachers in both schools mentioned the language as a problem in their respective schools. In the interviews conducted and lessons observed it was evident that in one school the level of understanding and speaking English was more advanced compared to the other school. The fact that learners at both schools were from the same socio-economic background and attended two different schools that were operating under the same conditions but had Grade 10 learners who varied in their levels of understanding English suggested that the teachers made the difference. Some teachers were able to assist learners to improve their language proficiency through remedial teaching while others did not do anything to improve the situation. This could be observed from the way teachers were interacting with learners in this specific school. English as a medium of instruction was introduced to the current Grade 10 learners in 1993 when they were in Grade 4. They have been taught in English for the last seven years but still have serious problems with the language. This can be explained by the fact that these learners do not speak English outside the classroom.

As commented already in Chapter 4, Erkana (1992) observed once again in a paper presented to the National Conference on the Implementation of the language policy for Namibian schools that learners in the Rundu region were using local languages outside the classroom most of the time by the time English was introduced as a medium of instruction. He further stated that Afrikaans and English were virtually nonexistent. In the researcher's opinion, the problem with foreign languages existed even before the introduction of the English as a medium of instruction.

### **Culture of silence in class**

One of the factors identified as influencing the academic performance of Grade 10 learners was the issue that learners were passive listeners in the class. Learners were quiet throughout the lessons and there was no way a teacher could perceive what learners did know. Learners who remained quiet throughout the year could not reveal

what they did not know to the teacher in order to be corrected before they could make mistakes in the examinations.

Teachers complained that they did not know how to assist the learners if they did not talk about their problems. The silence of learners during lessons was evident during the lessons the researcher observed. The researcher believes that proper teaching intervention could activate learners to be participative or responsive in class.

The researcher asked some of the learners why they did not want to talk during the lessons. Some said they were shy to speak and some replied they were afraid of being laughed at by others if they spoke and made a mistake.

The culture of silence can again be linked to the language problem or the extent to which teachers are able to motivate and encourage learners to actively participate in classroom activities or to the classroom climate set by the teacher (Angela Thody et al, 2000, p 17).

The researcher talked to the principal of one of the government-subsidised private schools that had achieved a 100% pass in their Grade 10 examinations throughout the years. She was asked whether she thought that passiveness in class had an influence on learners' performance and what strategy they used to overcome this. She replied that passiveness in class is a big problem and what they did in their school was to make all learners talkative. Each learner was given a chance to talk in class and if such a learner refused to talk then he/she had to reconsider his/her stay at the school.

The researcher is of the opinion that people learn through their mistakes and there is no way learners can master the subject content if they are not prepared to make mistakes and that the teacher is tolerant of mistakes.

### 5.3 Availability of Educational Resources

The best teaching and learning involves active participation by both teacher and learner. The success of this process is enhanced if schools have adequate teaching and learning aids. Such educational resources include textbooks, exercise books and writing implements, classrooms, classroom equipment such as chalkboards, desks, overhead projectors and so on. Educational resources enable teachers to present their lessons more effectively. Both teachers and learners can make use of the resources to actively become involved in classroom activities. A lesson that fails due to lack of resources will affect the academic performance of learners. Learners who do not do their homework due to lack of resources will also not do well in their examinations.

Teachers and learners interviewed in the two schools agreed that the availability of educational resources was a key factor influencing the academic performance of Grade 10 learners. They complained about textbooks and exercise books that were not delivered on time. According to them they had to wait for the whole trimester before such materials were delivered.

Learners had problems in specific subjects such as mathematics and physical science where they were unable to do many practical exercises due to lack of materials.

Most of the required materials had been delivered by the time that the lesson observations were made. However, what was evident was the lack of calculators for mathematics and physical science. Some mathematical calculation in Grade 10 cannot be done without a calculator. It was also the requirement of the syllabus that learners should have calculators. Unfortunately, provision of calculators was not the responsibility of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture but of the individual parent. Lockheed and Levin (1993) observed that one of the elements required to create an effective school in developing countries was the availability of adequate instructional materials.

The researcher is of the opinion that each learner needs a textbook in a situation where learners have problems understanding the medium of instruction. They could then identify difficult words in the textbook, look them up in the dictionary and by so doing build up their vocabulary.

Learners also complained about a lack of dictionaries in their respective schools. The researcher, after talking to them and their teachers, came to the conclusion that the learners had indeed been issued with dictionaries some time before. Learners might have lost their dictionaries or not cared for them and they were thus destroyed.

#### **5.4 School Management Issues**

In the researcher's opinion, the way in which the school was organized and managed influenced the extent to which it was successful in assisting learners to pass their examinations. The principal of the school plays a crucial role in organising and managing the school.

The principals of the two respective schools were interviewed on various aspects of school organisation and management. Specific questions on aspects that the researcher believed were essential for successful teaching and learning were asked. Various studies on effective schooling emphasise the role that effective school management and governance play in creating the necessary conditions for effective teaching and learning.

The following are responses made by principals when asked about school management issues:

### **Availability of mission statements and strategic plans**

No evidence of mission statements and strategic plans could be found even though principals reported that they knew what they wanted to achieve for the schools.

### **Policies on various aspects of school management**

The principal of one school produced a set of rules but it was not evident whether the rules were applied or not.

Both principals admitted to not having written policies on aspects such as homework, school uniform, use of school resources, staff development and pupil development. The school therefore, did not always know what to do about these aspects in the absence of clear policies.

### **School management teams**

Both schools had management teams comprising of the principal and their head of departments. In most cases these head of departments were not appointed in these positions but nominated by the schools to assist in the management of the schools. One was tempted to doubt such teachers' commitment to their management tasks as they were just temporarily placed in the positions.

The researcher concluded from the principals' responses that both principals were not clear about the objectives they wanted to achieve because of the absence of mission statements and strategies that could guide the schools towards achieving the set

objectives. The school cannot perform well in the examination if the school leadership does not have a clear vision on how to achieve academic excellence.

Teachers interviewed were asked to identify the kind of support they needed from the school management that would assist them to improve their teaching. Teachers in both schools were of the opinion that rules had to be implemented to curb absenteeism, they wanted the school management to conduct class visits to give guidance and also to control teachers' work. According to the researcher's view both schools were not effective with managing teaching and learning in the absence of such activities.

### 5.5 Parental Involvement

Parental involvement was through three representatives on the school board in each school. These members were elected in each school. The members were elected from the parent community to represent their interests in the education of their children.

The parent representatives saw their role as representing fellow parents in school matters. Some representatives expressed the view that they were part of the decision making process only when there were problems in the schools. In most cases they were sidelined and only informed about the decisions taken by the school management at a later stage.

It was not clear what the functions of the school board were. According to the principal the school board consisted of himself as chairperson, three parent representatives, three teacher representatives and three learner representatives.

It was observed on two occasions in one school that the principal only invited parent representatives to a meeting which was suppose to have been a school board meeting.

In other words, only parents attended the meeting and other members of the school board were not invited.

Principals of both schools complained that the community in which the schools were located did not support the schools' efforts to improve the academic performance of Grade 10 learners. However there was no evidence of the schools' efforts to involve parents in activities that could improve the academic performance of learners. These were rural communities and the majority of parents did not have formal education. The researcher is of the opinion that there is no way such communities could know what schools expected from them unless they were told what to do.

#### 5.6 Ministerial Policies

Teachers were concerned about the effects of certain ministerial policies on the discipline of the school as well as academic performance of learners in particular.

Teachers and principals were of the opinion that the policy of promoting learners to the next grade who had failed their previous grades twice led to learners getting to Grade 10 unprepared. However, when talking to principals it was explained that the policy also required teachers who taught the learner in the previous grade where he/she had failed twice, to give a comprehensive report to teachers in the next grade about the learners' weakness. This was required in order for teachers in the next grade to attend to these weaknesses.

The other issue raised was the policy that allowed pregnant girls to attend classes until a few days before delivery. Teachers were of the opinion that this could be easily interpreted by learners and the community at large that learners were allowed to have sexual relationships in school. An increase in such relationships could divert learners' attention from their studies. The researcher is inclined to agree with this

viewpoint. However there was no evidence that pregnancy among girls in Grade 10 was common.

The third concern raised by teachers and principals was the fact that government schools were not allowed to refuse admission to learners on the grounds of unsatisfactory academic performance in previous grades. According to teachers all learners who applied for admission to the schools were unconditionally admitted. As a result schools were even admitting learners they knew caused disciplinary problems which in turn had an impact on the academic performance of others.

### **5.7 Recommendations**

Based on the results of the study it became clear that most of the factors identified were negative and therefore affected the schools negatively. The researcher asked open-ended questions and expected both negative and positive answers but the replies were dominated by negative factors. There is a need to change these negative factors into favourable opportunities that will enhance teaching and learning in the schools.

Based on these statements the researcher would like to recommend the following:

- 1) The interviewees doubted competencies of the majority of teachers in the two schools. Special references were made to the subject content, teacher attitudes and teaching skills. The researcher recommends that adequate professional support by advisory teachers and the regional office be strengthened. This can be achieved by developing tailor made courses for subjects in which teachers are experiencing problems. Advisory teachers can identify teachers in need of assistance during their visits. Such courses can then be offered during weekends or school holidays.

Special emphasis should be placed on lesson preparation, lesson presentation, the need for evaluating the lessons and the importance of homework to



learners. The researcher believes that the negative attitude of teachers was as a result of frustration on the side of teachers who lacked the necessary skills to handle their classes. Such training programmes should therefore also aim at improving the working relationship between teachers and learners.

- 2) The regional office of education should advise the colleges of education on the specific needs of the schools and request them to provide training accordingly. Special emphasis should be put on knowledge of the subject content and methodologies. Schools should make special efforts to recruit teachers according to their needs in order to avoid the allocation of subjects to teachers without the necessary background.
- 3) Most teachers reported that learners had problems in understanding the medium of instruction. Some teachers also reported that even teachers had problems in expressing themselves in English. This was confirmed during the interviews the researcher had with both learners and teachers and also during the researcher's lesson observations. Teachers can overcome the language barrier through practice and reading. Schools should therefore make it a policy that English is spoken throughout the school during school hours.
- 4) The language problem in respect of learners was an effect of what was happening in lower grades. It is recommended that the lower primary phase of the school be staffed with qualified teachers in order to build a solid foundation on the background knowledge of the learners.

Regional offices should make money available for buying library books for schools in the rural areas. This will give learners the opportunity to read many more English books already in the lower grades. It is hoped that by so doing, learners will expand their vocabulary of the English language.

Schools must find strategies that will encourage learners to be talkative in class. This can be achieved through compulsory discussions in class, debates and speech competitions.

- 5) Based on the interviews conducted with the principals, the researcher doubts whether principals understood what was meant with mission statement, strategic planning and policies. It is recommended that principals be trained in developing mission statements, how to do strategic planning and develop policies that will support school efforts aimed at achieving what is implied by the mission statements.
- 6) It is also recommended that strong leadership be promoted in schools by appointing principals that have proven themselves to be successful in teaching their subjects of specialization. This should be an added appointment requirement apart from the traditional requirements such as academic qualifications and experience. Principals should also be appointed on contract in order to keep them on their toes.
- 7) According to the results of the study the two schools must take whoever walks into the door without selecting the kind of learners best suited to the school goals. In this regard it is recommended that schools should introduce many more basic programmes such as literacy, remedial teaching and more slowly paced teaching. Regional offices should provide adequate counselling services to schools in order to identify learners with problems and come up with suggestions to schools on how their problems could be solved. Schools should offer life skills to all classes in the school. This will compliment the efforts by school counsellors.
- 8) Parental involvement in education plays an important role in the academic achievements of learners. Parents are primarily responsible for the well being

and financial support of their children in schools. It was evident from the findings of this study that parent representatives on the school board were not clear about their roles and responsibilities. It is recommended that school boards should be trained in their roles and responsibilities.

This can be achieved through workshops and talk shows on the local radio. They should also be provided with communication skills so that they can effectively participate in the decision making process of the schools. Existing structures such as educational forums should be activated so that they could promote community participation in education.

- 9) The majority of teachers reported that the two schools lacked the necessary instructional materials to enable them to teach effectively. A lack of instructional material influences the academic performance of learners. It is recommended that budgetary provisions be made by the regional office of education to provide such materials according to the needs of the schools and in good time. Schools should also be required to put control mechanisms in place to prevent instructional materials from being lost through negligence and waste.

Finally it is recommended that further research on learner and teacher discipline in the Namibian context be conducted to determine causes of such behaviour and to come up with suggestions that could alleviate the problem.

In conclusion, the researcher would like to emphasize that teachers play an influential role in the academic performance of the learners. They are the initiators of the teaching-learning process and must guard against factors that may disturb this process. The study was intended to identify factors that influenced the academic performance of Grade 10 learners in two schools in the Rundu Region of Namibia. The study looked generally at what teachers, principals, parents and learners thought

were influencing the academic performance of Grade 10 learners in the two schools. All stakeholders were positive about their respective schools despite factors such as the lack of teaching materials, incompetent teachers, language barriers, lack of parental involvement and government policies that affected the performance of learners negatively.

Strategies on how the Ministry and the schools themselves could neutralise some of the negative factors in the schools are also important. Teachers and learners should find a common understanding of how academic results could be improved. They should not regard themselves as opposing partners in the learners' efforts to achieve academic excellence.



Appendix 1  
**Teacher Interview**

1. Name of teacher

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2. What Subjects are you teaching in grade 10?

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3. What are your Qualification in the subjects you are teaching?

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4. How long have you been teaching the subjects?

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5. How many Workshops did you attend in the subject you are teaching?

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6. What in your opinion are factors influencing the academic performance of your grade 10 learners in their respective subjects and in general.

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.....

7. What would you list as the three most important challenges facing grade 10 teachers at the school in improving the performance of learners?

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

8. How often do you give home work to your learners and how often is it marked?

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9. What support do you expect from the school management team that will motivate you to do your work better?

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Appendix 2  
**Interview with Learners**

1. As a grade 10 learner of this school what factors do you think influence your learning?

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2. Judging from the results of the previous years, do you think the school is producing enough learners for grade 11? Motivate your answer.

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3. What do you think about the performance of teachers? Can you suggest how they could improve on their performance so that more learners could pass their grade 10 examinations.

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.....

4. What about yourself. Do you think you are working hard enough throughout the year in preparation for the end of the year examination? Motivate your answer.

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5. How many hours do you spend on studying and home work per day?

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6. How often do you and your teachers talk about study methods?

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Appendix 3

**Interview with parent representatives**

1. How do you see your role as parent representative on the school board?

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2. Are you involved in the decision making process of the school? How?

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3. How do you report school issues to the communities you represent?

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4. How do you report community concerns to school management?

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5. a) How do rate your school in terms of the grade 10 examination results.

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b) Are you satisfied with the grade 10 results of this school/ are you happy with the number of grade 10 learners that qualify for grade 11 in relation to the number of learners that sit for the grade 10 examinations?

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.....

6. What are the reasons for the current state of affairs at the school you represent?

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.....

7. a) What in your opinion can the parents do to improve the grade 10 results of this school.

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.....  
.....



b) What can parents do to encourage both grade 10 learners and teacher to work hard in order to improve the results?

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.....  
.....

8. Is there anything you want to add that you think might help improve the performance of the grade 10 learners at this school?

.....

.....

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Appendix 4  
**Interview with Principals**

Back ground

1. Name of the

School: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name of principal:

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Qualification of principal: Academic:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Professional

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Membership of any professional educational association/ union  
organisation

5. Does such an association facilitate or provide support for educational  
management development

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**B. Educational management experience**

1. How long have you been principal of this school

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Which Management courses have attended in the last five years?

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2. Is training/ support provided by, regional office of education and Non Government Organisation (NGO)?

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**C. Educational management needs**

1. How would you rate your school's performances in the following areas?  
Motivate your response.

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- a. A school vision and mission statement

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- b. School development plan

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c. Staff discipline

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d. Staff competence

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e. School loyalty (staff and students)

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f. Pupil discipline

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g. School administration

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h. Relations with the community

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2. Whom do you rely on most for advice and support in doing your job as a school principal.

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3. Are there plans in place for improving/ maintaining the quality of educational management at your school. Specify.

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**D. Organisation and development**

1. Do you have a mission statement

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2. Do you do strategic planning for the school?

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3. Does your school have policies on the following:

- 3.1 School discipline

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3.2 Language

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3.3 School uniform

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3.4 Use of school resource

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3.5 Code of conduct for teachers

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3.6 Extra mural activities

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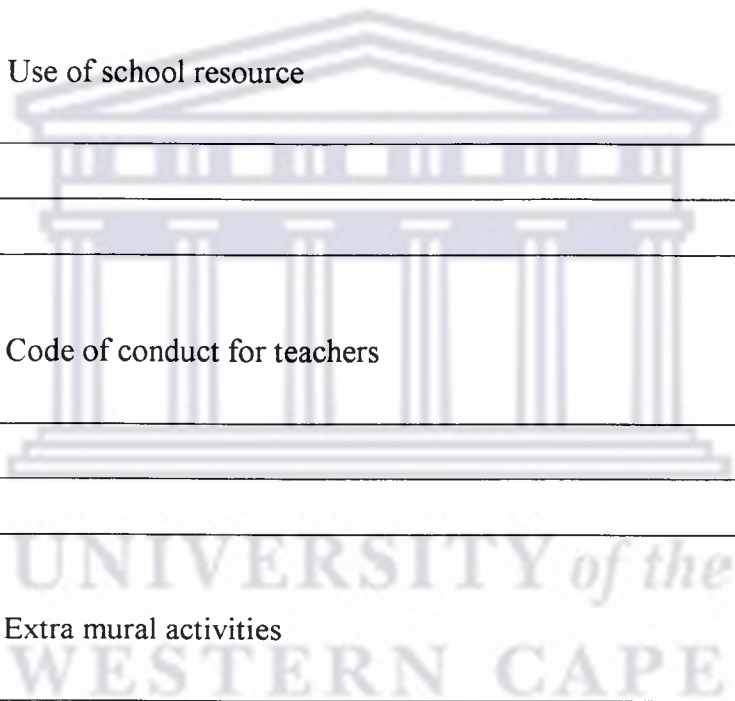
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3.7 Staff development

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3.8 Pupil development

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4. Do you have a management team? Who does it consist of?

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5. How often do you have meetings ?

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6. What do you discuss during meetings?

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7. What committees do you have at school?

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8. How often do you meet as a staff?

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9. Are minutes taken at meetings? And are they distributed to staff?

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10. Are agenda distributed before meetings?

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11. Do you have a budget for the school fund?

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12. What is the school fund used for?

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13. Who makes final decisions on how funds are to be used.

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E. General

1. As manager of the school, what in your opinion are factors influencing the academic achievement of the grade 10 learners at the school.

Adapted from: The Thousand Schools Project (1998).



Appendix 5

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

A. GENERAL

Date of observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of observer: \_\_\_\_\_

a) School:

\_\_\_\_\_

b) Name of teacher:

\_\_\_\_\_

c) Subject:

\_\_\_\_\_

d) Number of learners present:

\_\_\_\_\_

e) Number of learners absent:

\_\_\_\_\_

2. LEARNERS RESOURCES

a) How many learners share a desk?

b) Do all learners have text book?

Yes	No
-----	----

c) If no, how many do not have text books?

d) Do all learners have stationery (e.g. pens/pencils/ exercise books)

e) If no, how many do not have stationery?

f) In the event of those who do not have stationery what do you do?

Yes	No
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### 3. PHYSICAL CONDITION OF THE CLASSROOM

1. a) Please tick the applicable block (s) regarding the physical condition of the classroom.

	Yes	No
Are there signs of vandalism?		
Are the walls and floor clean?		
Is the room adequately ventilated?		
Is the temperature of the room conducive to learning?		
the light in the classroom adequate?		
Is the writing board visible to all learners?		
Are learning aids (if available) accessible to learners		
Is there enough space between desks for the teacher and learners to move around?		

b) Additional comments on physical condition

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#### 4. EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Please tick the appropriate block (s) to indicate availability of educational resources of the classroom, and rate the quality using the scale below:

Key: 1= poor                      2= Good                      3=Excellent

	Yes	No	Quality
a) Teaching aids such as posters/charts/maps present?			
b) Audio-visual teaching equipment e.g. overhead projector, radio			
c) Library books			
d) Display area			
e) Educational games			
f) Cupboards			
g) Other (please specify)			

#### 5. LEARNERS

a) Please tick the appropriate block (s) regarding the learners

	Yes	No
1. Do the majority of learners wear school uniform?		
2. Are the majority of learners appropriately dressed according to the weather?		
3. Are more than 25% of the learners coming late (10 minute +after the lesson was scheduled to start)		
4. Do the majority of learners participate in classroom activities?		
5. Other ( please specify)		

b) Comments on the physical appearance, behavior and interaction of the learners

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c) Provide a judgement of the ability of the majority of the learners to stay on the learning task, using the rating scale below:

1= poor

2= Moderately well

3=very well

	Yes	No	Rating
1. The teacher involves the majority of learners in the learning task?			
2. The majority of learners pay attention?			
3. The majority of learners follow instruction?			
4. The majority of learners participate in the learning task?			
5. The majority of learners ask questions?			
6. The majority of learners respond to questions?			
7. the majority of learners are familiar with the use of materials?			
8. The majority of learners seem to understand the learning task?			
9. The majority of learners seem to understand what is expected from them?			
10. The lesson disrupted by: _ external factors (e.g. noise) - Teacher called away - learners coming late - learners behaving badly - other ( please specify)			

3. Which language is used most often by the majority of learners?

Language	
English	1.
Mother tongue	2.
Both English and mother tongue (code switching)	3.
Other (please specify)	4.
.....	

## 6. TEACHER

### 6.1 Task identifications and clarification

a) How does the teacher define the learning task objective?

.....

.....

.....

b) Please use the rating scale below to assess the confidence of the teacher in presenting the lesson:

1= Poorly

2= Moderately well

3= Very well

	RANKING
1. Spelling out instruction	
2. Familiarity with the content of the subject	
3. Usage of assessment techniques	
4. Usage of methods that encourage pupil participation	



5. Integration of daily-life examples into the class	
6. Relating the lesson to the life-experience of the pupil	
7. Using resources ( in addition to the text book) to enhance learning	
Other (please specify) ..... .....	

c) Comments on confidence of the teacher in presenting the lesson

.....  
.....  
.....

d) Rate the linguistic competence of the teacher in English, on the following scale:

1= Poor                      2= Satisfactory 3= Excellent

e) Rate the extent to which the teacher uses the pupil's home language to enhance learning.

Limited Extent 1.....2.....3.....4 Great Extent

## 6.2 Lesson Presentation

a) Please indicate whether the teacher uses the following facilitation techniques during the lesson, and rank them on the scale bellow:

1= Not used at all                      2= Used very frequently                      3= Used all the time

	YES/NO	RANK

1. Small group discussion. ( 10 members)		
2. Large group discussion. (10 and more members)		
3. Lecturing		
4. Different assignments for different levels of pupil 5. Group projects		
6. Independent study		
Other (please specify) _____ _____		

b) Comment on the use of teaching methods and approaches

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

c) Does the lesson include

	YES	NO
1. Direct instruction of content?		
2. Assessment of what has been learnt?		
3. Summary activity at the end of the lesson		
4. Homework assignment?		

d) Please indicate which of the following forms of assessment were used during the lesson

FORMS OF ASSESSMENT	YES	NO
1. Group assessment		

2. Question and answer techniques		
3. Pupil complete tasks from the text book		
Other (please specify) ..... .....		

e) Additional comments on the use of assessment techniques by the teacher

.....  
.....  
.....

### 6.3 Consolidating Strategies

a) Please indicate whether the teacher used the following consolidating strategies during the lesson

CONSOLIDATING	YES	NO
1. Group exercises		
2. Individual exercises		
3. Demonstration of solution on the chalk-board		
4. Learners complete examples from the text book		
5. Learners complete worksheets/ examples designed by the teacher , verbalise his/her responses		
6. Teacher presents problem to the learners, the learners		

b) Additional comments on the consolidating strategies used by the teacher

.....  
.....  
.....

c) Regarding homework assignments,

	YES	NO
1. Were any assignments given to children prior to the lesson?		
2. Does the teacher check if the assignments were done by the pupil?		
3. Other (please specify)		

#### 6.4 Management of learners

Please comments on how the teacher manage the learners with regard to:

a) Learners that have not done their homework / assignments

.....  
.....  
.....

b) Maintaining order in the classroom

.....  
.....

c) Rewarding learners

.....  
.....  
.....

d) Punishing learners

.....  
.....

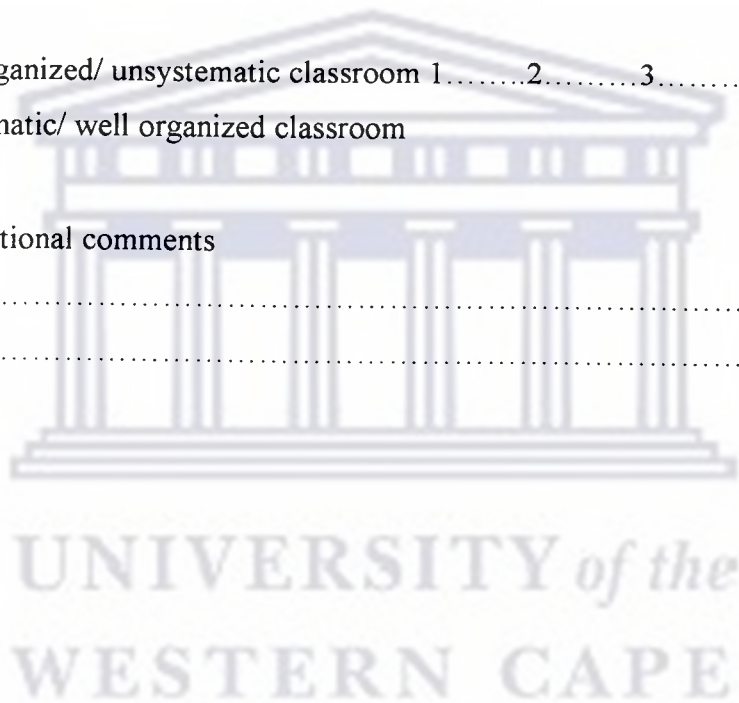
7. General Comments

7.1 Assess in general terms where you rate the kind of teaching methodology observed in the classroom using the scale below:

- a) Traditional teacher-centred methodology 1.....2.....3.....4.....5  
child-centred learning
- b) Predominantly rote learning 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 active  
participation by learners
- d) Disorganized/ unsystematic classroom 1.....2.....3.....4.....5  
systematic/ well organized classroom

7.2 Additional comments

.....  
.....



Adapted from: The Thousand Schools Project (1998)

Appendix 6

**SCHOOL OBSERVATION SCHEDULE**

A. GENERAL

Date of observation: \_\_\_\_\_

Time (start) of observation: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of observer: \_\_\_\_\_

1. School: \_\_\_\_\_



UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

2. Please indicate the appropriate statement

STATEMENT	YES	NO
1. The school environments is conducive to learning (e.g. no external disruption, noise)		
2. The school grounds are clean		
3. The school grounds are well kept (e.g. grass been cut, no weeds)		
4. The school ground have a garden		
5. The school well fenced		
6. A security guard is on duty		
7. A designated safe parking area for staff is available		
8. The school building is neat and clean		
9. Staff toilets are in a working condition and clean		
10. Student toilets are in a working condition and clean		
11. Sign of vandalism are evident on the school grounds and school building ( broken windows/ doors, graffiti)		

3. Does the school have the following administrative support people?

STAFF		TOTAL
Secretary	1	
Clerk	2	
Receptionist	3	

**B. Phase 1: BEFORE THE SCHOOL STARTS**

4.a) What time is the official starting time? .....

4.b) What time did the school actually start? .....

4.c) Please circle the appropriate numbers

STATEMENT	EARLY	ON TIME	LATE
1. The Principal arrived .....	1	2	3
2. The majority of learners/pupils arrived .....			

5. Describe the mechanism for monitoring late coming, i.e what steps were taken – if any- to admonish, punish , etc. students and /or teachers coming late. If nothing was done, elaborate on this as well.

a) Teachers

.....

.....

b) Learners

.....

.....

6. Assembly

a) Was school assembly conducted on the day of your visit?

YES	NO

b) Where was the school assembly held? \_\_\_\_\_

ASSEMBLY VENUE	
Individual classrooms which have been joined	1
School Hall	2



In the open (e.g. courtyard)	3
Other (please specify)	4

c) Which language is used during assemble

LANGUAGE USED	
English	1
Mother tongue	2
Both English and mother tongue (code switching)	3
Other ( please specify)	4

c) Briefly describe the issues which were addressed during assembly.

.....

.....

.....

**PHASE 2: INTERVAL (BREAK)**

7.a) At what time was the first break? .....

7.b) How long was the first break? .....

7.c) At what time was the second break? .....

7.d) How long was the second break? .....

8. Please describe the activities of the majority of the following people during break

a) Principal

.....

.....

.....

b) Teachers

.....  
.....  
.....

c) Learners

.....  
.....  
.....

**D. PHASE 3: AFTER SCHOOL**

9.a) What is the official closing time? .....

9.b) What time did the school actually close? .....

9.c) Please indicate the appropriate column.

AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES	YES	NO
1. Do learners have supervised study after school? (please specify) ..... .....		
2. Are there any extra-mural activities taking place after school? ..... .....		

9. If any of the following people stay behind after school, please explain how many and what reason.

a) Principal

.....  
.....  
.....

b) Teachers

.....  
.....  
.....

c) Learners

.....  
.....  
.....

10. Please provide a description of any other events, which you consider as being significant, that took place during the school day (e.g. staff meetings, parent meetings, visits from community members).

.....  
.....  
.....

Adapted from: The Thousand Schools Project (1998)

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