

An investigation into underperformance in Social Studies grade 5-7 in
selected Namibian primary schools: A case study

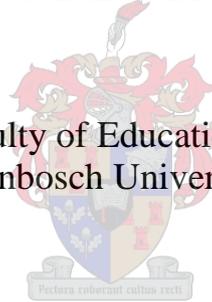
by

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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

December 2016

DEDICATION

It was extreme difficult to complete this work without the presence of my dearest mother and eldest sister. However, it is with great pleasure that I dedicate this work to two very important and special people in my life, who worked very hard to give me an opportunity to receive an education: my late and ever-dearest mother, Elizabeth Nashilongo Mushelenga, and my late and dearest sister, Taimi Mushelenga-Kamati, who passed on during my studies at Stellenbosch University. May their legacy continue to inspire me to reach for the ultimate best, as I promote the best of education by following in their footsteps. May they rest in peace!

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It is appropriate at the end of this study to pay tribute to all of those whom have made this study possible. The success of this research does not depend on me alone. Hence, the consultation and support of the following people made this work possible.

Firstly, I would like to extend my special thanks and appreciation to the Almighty God for giving me this opportunity to pursue my studies at Stellenbosch University. I further want to thank the following people:

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May God bless you all!

TAN Negumbo

ABSTRACT

The study, situated in the context of Namibia, describes the results of research undertaken with regard to the underperformance of Grade 5 to 7 learners in Social Studies. The initial results of an analysis of the results in Social Studies between 2008 and 2014 in three selected schools in the Karas Region, Namibia, indicated severe underperformance. The researcher, as part of the case study, identified three schools in an effort to determine the possible causes of learners' underperformance in Social Studies in these selected schools. The study posed the following research question: What are the possible causes of underperformance of learners in Social Studies in Grade 5 to 7 at primary schools in Namibia?

A qualitative case study research design, guided by an interpretive research paradigm, was employed to answer the research question and achieve the aims and objectives of the study. Data were collected from biographical and semi-structured interviews, lesson observations and analysis of appropriate documents. The purpose of using different methods in this study was to ensure that through triangulation, validity and reliability could be obtained.

The data collected were analysed through thematic analysis. Findings from the data indicated a number of possible causes for the underperformance of learners, namely lack of trained teachers, insufficient teaching approaches, unconducive physical teaching contexts, lack of teaching and learning materials and lack of optimal parental involvement in their children's education due to work situations. The majority of the participants argued that English as the medium of instruction in Namibian schools is one of the barriers for learners learning Social Studies as well as other subjects. However, the participants confirmed that learners' lack of English proficiency is due to the language backgrounds of the learners. Recommendations are made to address these problems.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie, wat in die konteks van Namibië uitgevoer is, beskryf die resultate van navorsing oor die onderprestasie van graad 5- tot 7-leerders in Sosiale Studies. Die aanvanklike resultate van 'n ontleding van die Sosiale Studie-uitslae tussen 2008 en 2014 in drie gekose skole in die Karas-streek, Namibië, het ernstige onderprestasie aangetoon. Die navorser het as deel van die gevallestudie drie skole geïdentifiseer in 'n poging om die moontlike oorsake van leerders se onderprestasie in Sosiale Studies in hierdie gekose skole te bepaal. Die studie is deur die volgende navorsingsvraag gerig: Wat is die moontlike oorsake van onderprestasie van leerders in Sosiale Studies in graad 5 tot 7 by laerskole in Namibië?

'n Kwalitatiewe gevallestudie-ontwerp, gerig deur 'n interpretatiewe navorsingsparadigma, is gebruik om die navorsingsvraag te beantwoord en die doelwitte en doelstellings van die studie te bereik. Data is ingesamel deur biografiese en semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude, leswaarnemings en 'n ontleding van toepaslike dokumente. Die doel van die gebruik van verskillende metodes in hierdie studie was om te verseker dat geldigheid en betroubaarheid deur triangulasie verkry word.

Die ingesamelde data is deur tematiese ontleding ontleed. Bevindinge uit die data het op etlike moontlike oorsake van onderprestasie gewys, naamlik gebrek aan opgeleide onderwysers, ondoeltreffende onderrigmetodes, niebevorderlike kontekste van fisiese onderrig, gebrek aan onderrig-en-leermateriaal en gebrek aan optimale ouerbetrokkenheid by kinders se opvoeding weens werksomstandighede. Die meerderheid deelnemers het aangevoer dat Engels as onderrigtaal in Namibiese skole een van die hindernisse is vir leerders in Sosiale Studies asook in ander vakke. Die deelnemers het egter bevestig dat leerders se gebrek aan Engelse taalbeheersing die gevolg is van die leerders se taalagtergrond. Aanbevelings word gemaak om hierdie probleme te oorbrug.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Continuous Assessment
ETSIP	Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme
MBESC	Ministry of Education Sport and Culture
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MoE	Ministry of Education
NIED	National Institution for Educational Development
NSPI	National Standards and Performance Indicators
PAAI	Plan of Action for Academic Improvement
SDP	School Development Plan
UPE	Universal Primary Education
NANTU	National Namibia Teacher's Union

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this study was to investigate the underperformance in Social Studies at primary school level (Grade 5 to 7) in selected Namibian schools. This chapter provides an overview of the study and the historical background to the study. In this chapter the focus is on the following: the background to the study, the rationale for the study, the significance of the study, the research problems and the research questions. Thereafter, the aims of the study, the research design and methodology, including sampling, are highlighted. The data-collection methods used in this study are also briefly discussed. Moreover, the chapter underlies the ethical considerations pertaining to the study and provides a description of the reliability and validity of the study. More detail on how reliability and validity were addressed in this study is provided in Chapter 3. The chapter then concludes by highlighting the layout of the thesis.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Namibia was under German colonial rule for 30 years (1884–1915). At this time it was called German South West Africa. This was followed by 75 years of South African colonial governance (1915–1990), during which the country was known as South West Africa (USAID, 2005:3). During South Africa's apartheid regime, Namibia used the Bantu education system, which served the interests of white supremacy. It denied non-white people access to quality education (Tjitendero, 1984:8). This implies that both racism and inequality underpinned Bantu education. After independence was obtained in 1990, the Namibian government reconstructed the education system to ensure that quality education was accessible to all Namibians, regardless of their race, religion or political beliefs. Moreover, the Namibian government decided to transform its education system, which led to the drafting of the policy document titled *Towards education for all*. This policy aimed at facilitating the provision of quality education for all citizens (Ministry of Education and Culture [MEC], 1993:2).

In an attempt to catalyse the provision of quality education for all, the Ministry of Education (MoE) categorised the education system into primary, combined and secondary schools (MoE, 2008:3). The aforementioned categories were further sub-divided into five phases, namely pre-primary phase (Grade 0), lower primary phase (grades 1–4), upper primary phase (grades 5–7), junior secondary phase (grades 8–10) and senior secondary phase (grades 11–12). In this new dispensation, History and Geography were integrated at grades 5–7 (upper primary phase) and

were now known as Social Studies. According to the National Curriculum for Basic Education (MoE, 2010:13), the aim of merging these subjects to become Social Studies was for the learners to learn and understand the importance of human rights, democracy and environmental issues. They can also explore and come to understand interactions between social, cultural, economic, civic and political issues.

1.3 MOTIVATION/RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

This study was initially motivated by the personal observations of the researcher while teaching the subject Social Studies to grades 5 and 7. Performance in Social Studies has been poor in the past seven years, as shown in tables 1.1 to 1.6 below.

The underachievement in this subject is a general concern among Namibian Social Studies educators. Hence, this has prompted the researcher as an experienced Social Studies teacher to undertake an investigation into the possible causes of the underperformance of learners in Social Studies as a combined subject at the upper primary school level (grades 5–7) in Namibia. Tables 1.1 to 1.6 below show some statistics of the actual results of grades 5–7 Social Studies over seven years (2008–2014) for three schools in Namibia. The results were obtained from the Education Regional Office and selected schools with a permission of the Regional Director of Education in the Karas Region and school principals (their names are withheld due to ethical reasons). The names of the schools are protected by codes, namely X, Y and Z. The following tables present the analysis results for Social Studies for 2008–2014 from the selected schools.

Table 1.1: Analysis results for Social Studies Grade 5 for 2008–2012

Mark	A–B		C		D–E		A–B		C		D–E		A–B	C	D–E
	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011	2012	2012	2012
SCHOOL X	3	9	8	8	14	7	0	0	8	6	17	29	1	3	35
SCHOOL Y	3	9	8	8	14	7	27	17	46	40	48	60	26	44	31
SCHOOL Z	8	8	10	13	26	19	4	8	20	27	18	35	20	40	19
TOTAL	14 (15%)	26 (30%)	26 (28%)	29 (33%)	54 (57%)	33 (38%)	31 (17%)	25 (11%)	73 (39%)	73 (33%)	83 (44%)	124 (56%)	47 (21%)	87 (40%)	85 (39%)

Table 1.2: Analysis results for Social Studies Grade 5 for 2013–2014

Mark	A–B		C		D–E	
	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014
SCHOOL X	16	10	13	23	45	39
SCHOOL Y	17	26	34	44	31	57
SCHOOL Z	14	38	35	19	22	39
TOTAL	47 (20%)	74 (36%)	82 (43%)	86 (25%)	98 (29%)	135 (46%)

Table 1.3: Analysis results for Social Studies Grade 6 for 2008–2012

Mark	A–B		C		D–E		A–B		C		D–E		A–B	C	D–E
	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011	2012	2012	2012
SCHOOL X	0	2	4	6	19	10	0	0	7	8	9	8	3	15	4
SCHOOL Y	7	5	34	26	53	82	4	27	46	70	89	19	13	43	44
SCHOOL Z	4	6	44	46	37	45	11	13	48	46	54	40	16	59	31
TOTAL	11 (7%)	13 (6%)	82 (50%)	78 (34%)	72 (44%)	137 (60%)	15 (6%)	40 (17%)	101 (38%)	124 (54%)	152 (57%)	67 (29%)	32 (14%)	117 (31%)	79 (35%)

Table 1.4 Analysis results for Social Studies Grade 6 for 2013–2014

Mark	A–B		C		D–E	
	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014
SCHOOL X	14	15	32	26	14	39
SCHOOL Y	19	21	30	56	73	46
SCHOOL Z	14	7	47	28	29	44
TOTAL	47 (17%)	43 (15%)	109 (40%)	110 (39%)	116 (43%)	129 (46%)

Table 1.5 Analysis results for Social Studies Grade 7 for 2008–2012

Mark	A–B		C		D–E		A–B		C		D–E		A–B	C	D–E
	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011	2012	2012	2012
SCHOOL X	1	4	10	4	5	7	0	3	2	4	5	9	5	3	7
SCHOOL Y	19	16	30	34	54	51	8	5	45	63	44	58	19	56	41
SCHOOL Z	8	4	45	44	44	48	10	4	34	41	57	46	10	48	40
TOTAL	28 (13%)	24 (11%)	85 (39%)	82 (50%)	105 (48%)	106 (48%)	18 (9%)	12 (15%)	81 (39%)	108 (46%)	106 (52%)	113 (49%)	34 (15%)	107 (47%)	88 (38%)

Table 1.6: Analysis results for Social Studies Grade 7 for 2013–2014

Mark	A–B		C		D–E	
	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014
SCHOOL X	13	11	24	25	21	50
SCHOOL Y	5	21	63	45	30	25
SCHOOL Z	13	23	30	25	23	39
TOTAL	31 (21%)	55 (36%)	117 (43%)	95 (14%)	74 (53%)	114 (33%)

The results of the table 1.1 show that in 2008, of the Grade 5s, only 15% of the learners achieved above average; 28% obtained a C symbol, which is average; and 57% scored below average, i.e. D and E symbols. In 2009, 30% of the learners achieved an A or B, while 33% achieved a C and 38% obtained D and E symbols. Of the Grade 5s in 2010, only 17% obtained an A or B, 39% achieved a C and 44% obtained D and E symbols, while in 2011 only 11% of the learners achieved an A or B, 33% obtained a C and 56% obtained D and E symbols. The results show that in 2012, 21% of the learners achieved an A or B, 40% achieved a C and 39% obtained a D or E symbol.

Table 1.2 show that in 2013, of the Grade 5s, only 20% of the learners scored above average (A or B), while 36% of the learners scored a C symbol (average) and 43% of the learners scored below average (D or E). In 2014, 25% of the learners scored an A or B, 29% obtained a C and 46% obtained a D or E.

The following are the Grade 6 analysis results of Social Studies in 2008 to 2012. For the period of 2008, only 7% achieved an A or B, 50% obtained a C and 44% obtained D and E symbols, i.e. below average. In 2009, 6% of the learners obtained an A or B, 34% achieved a C and 60% obtained D and E symbols. In 2010, 6% achieved an A or B, 38% obtained a C and 57% obtained D and E symbols. In 2011, 17% of the learners achieved an A or B, 54% obtained a C and 29% obtained D and E symbols. Moreover, in 2012, only 14% obtained an A or B, 31% achieved a C and 35% scored below average.

Table 1.4 shows the results for Grade 6 in 2013 were as follows: 17% of the learners achieved an A or B, while 40% of the learners obtained a C and 43% obtained a D or E symbol. In 2014,

the results for Grade 6 show that 15% obtained an A or B, while 39% of the learners achieved a C and 46% of the learners obtained a D or E symbol.

Next are the Grade 7 analysis results of Social Studies in the period 2008–2012. The table shows that in 2008, only 13% of the learners managed to obtain an A or B, 39% achieved a C and 48% obtained D and E symbols. In 2009, 11% of the learners obtained an A or B, 39% achieved a C and 50% obtained D and E symbols. In 2010, only 9% obtained an A or B, 39% achieved a C and 52% of the learners obtained D and E symbols. In 2011, the results for Grade 7 shows that 15% achieved an A or B, 46% obtained a C and 49 obtained D and E symbols. Furthermore, the analysis results of Grade 7 in 2012 indicate that 15% of the learners achieved an A or B, 47% obtained a C and 38% obtained D and E symbols.

In 2013, of the grade 7s, 21% learners achieved an A or B, whereas 36% learners obtained a C and 43% of the learners obtained a D or E symbol. In 2014, only 14% of the leaners managed to achieve A or B symbols, whereas 53% of the learners obtained a C symbol and 33% learners obtained a D or E symbol. It is evident from the results that there is certainly poor performance in Social Studies.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research will be useful particularly for researchers in the field of Social Studies. The study is essential, as it will help other school stakeholders to understand the root causes of the problem of underperformance and work towards finding solutions. This study is also useful to teachers of primary level grades 5 to 7, particularly Social Studies teachers, because it may open their eyes to ways of effective teaching and learning of Social Studies. It may also help educators to realise the factors that contribute to learners' poor performance in Social Studies and to address the issue in future.

1.5 RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the analysis of the results of grades 5 to 7 for the period 2008-2014, it is clear that there is a problem of underperformance. There has been notable underperformance of learners in Social Studies (grades 5–7) at primary school level in Namibia since the implementation of curriculum reforms in 1992. In view of primary education reforms, these require more efforts from the MoE to address the imbalances within the education system. This is because learners continue to perform very poorly in Social Studies, as evident from the results from 2008–2014 (see tables 1.1–1.6). The challenge is that if learners fail Social Studies at primary school level, the implication is that they will lack understanding of the interaction in social, cultural, economic,

civic and political spheres, and the relationship between people and environments. However, the causes of underperformance in Social Studies (grades 5–7) at primary school level in Namibia are unknown. Therefore, Social Studies can thus be seen as an important “vehicle” to enhance learners’ understanding of these different spheres. This study drew its primary interest from this polemic, hence the main research question as formulated below.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question formulated for this study was: What are the possible causes of underperformance of learners in Social Studies in Grade 5 to 7 at primary schools in Namibia?

1.7 THE AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aims of this study were the following:

- To investigate the possible causes of learners’ underperformance in Social Studies in grades 5–7 in selected Namibian primary schools
- To determine the challenges of teaching and learning experienced by teachers of Social Studies.
- To determine the challenges of teaching and learning experienced by teachers of Social Studies.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 Research design

The research project was designed to investigate the underperformance of learners in Social Studies at primary school level. Merriam (1998:6) describes a research design as similar to an architectural blueprint; it is a plan for assembling, organising and integrating information. Therefore, this research employed a qualitative design because the qualitative research paradigm in its broadest sense refers to research that elicits participants’ accounts of meaning, experiences or perceptions. In this way, the descriptive data from the participants were gathered through interviews. Bush (2002) explains that the aim of qualitative research is to gain saturation of information rather than representation in numbers and to use non-statistical methods with a small population sample, which is often purposely selected.

There are several related theoretical perspectives that are rooted in the interpretive approach, namely pragmatism, phenomenology and hermeneutic approaches. Among all three approaches, the current research lies in the field of phenomenology, because a phenomenological study is a study that attempts to understand people’s perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a

particular situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:141). In this study, the researcher attempted to understand the particular situation of learners' underperformance in Social Studies.

1.8.2 Research methodology

According to Harding (1987:2), methodology is the theory of knowledge and an interpretive framework that guides a particular research process. In other words, a framework guides the research activity. According to Golafshani (2003:600), a qualitative study refers to any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. This study was in the form of words rather than numbers. Moreover, in this research, the main body of data was obtained from interviews, observations and document analysis presented in words rather than numbers.

According to Merriam (1998:5), qualitative research seeks to explain and understand social phenomena within their natural setting. This suggests that the interpretive approach implies the understanding of human actions. In this study, an interpretive paradigm was used, as it was deemed appropriate for the study. This is because the researcher attempted to seek the experiences of learners and Social Studies subject teachers and principals at primary schools in Namibia in order to understand the possible causes of learners' underperformance.

Furthermore, this study had a case study design, whereby the researcher focused on grades 5, 6 and 7 classrooms in Namibia. According to Merriam (1998:19), a case study is defined as intensive descriptions and analyses of a single unit or a bounded system, such as an individual, programme, event, group intervention or community. The case study is usually employed to gain in-depth understanding of a situation and meaning for those involved.

Moreover, Denscombe (2003:31) states that the case study offers the opportunity to explain why certain outcomes might happen. This study determined the situation of learners' poor performance in Social Studies. It investigated why the results of Social Studies are poor as well as the factors that may contribute to such poor performance. The researcher chose this research to be a case study in order to analyse personal and individual experiences in the field of Social Studies about the needs and the possible causes of the underperformance of learners in this field. The researcher has also studied and analysed the instructional strategies uses by the Social Studies subject teachers to teach this subject.

1.8.3 Sampling

Sampling is a process in research whereby a small group is identified, examined and viewed as representatives of a larger group. Purposive sampling was done. Sharan (1988:48) describes

purposive sampling as based on the assumption that the researcher wants to determine, understand and gain insight; therefore, one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most. In this regard, the researcher identified three different schools from the Namib Circuit in the Karas Region in Namibia where all subject teachers of Social Studies and all the principals of the selected schools were the participants of this study. The researcher actively selected the most productive sample to answer the research question.

The researcher decided to choose only three schools for interviews and observations because they are manageable within the proposed time allocated to complete the research report. The three schools were selected on the basis of the followings: The researcher used the 2008–2014 grades 5–7 Social Studies analysis results to choose the schools for research, distance from the researcher’s living place in order to make the study economically sustainable, the availability of resources and upper primary phase and easily communicate any information needed in this study. The researcher was of the view this would make it easier to get information from the selected teachers who teach Social Studies and experience the subject matter. These schools have been selected purposely because the researcher had access to the schools, teachers and principals.

1.9 DATA-COLLECTION METHODS

Data-collection methods involve the use of various data-collection tools. In this study, data-triangulation methods were used to collect data. These data-triangulation methods were interviews, observations and documents. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:141) describe triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspects of human behaviour. Similarly, Briggs and Coleman (2007:100) argue that triangulation means “comparing many sources of evidence in order to determine the accuracy of information or phenomena”. Adelman (1980, cited in Cohen et al., 2007:143) states that triangulation is a useful technique where a researcher is engaged in a case study. In this study, triangulation was used to collect data on the research topic. The purpose of using the triangulation method was to capture different information on the same phenomenon.

1.9.1 Interviews

Le Grange (2009:5) states that there are three types of interviews, namely structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. The interviews in this study were semi-structured with open-ended questions to collect the data. This kind of interview is well suited to qualitative

research, because in this approach two people talk, ask each other questions on a particular subject and it allows for the interviewee to raise his or her point of view.

The advantage of using this technique in this particular study is that it is a powerful tool to gain insight into educational issues and to understand the experience of individuals whose lives constitute education. However, the disadvantage of this technique in general is that interview data can easily become biased and misleading if the person being interviewed is aware of the perspective of the interviewer. Too often interviewees provide information based on what they think the interviewer wants to hear. The researcher opted for an interview rather than a questionnaire because of its adaptable nature.

During the interview, teachers' ideas and responses were followed up with further questions to gain clarification. The researcher also probed responses and investigated the participants' motives and feelings; for example, through the interviews judgements could be made based on their tones of voice, facial expressions and hesitations – the hidden and genuine messages they communicated to the researcher. Such information is difficult to obtain if the researcher uses a questionnaire (Bell, 1993:91–94). Interviews will therefore give a researcher specific in-depth information on feelings and the genuine intentions of the participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, and 2000:42).

All the interviews were recorded after permission was granted. Data from the interviews were analysed using the constant comparative method, which is described as a type of data analysis whereby the researcher compares the similarities and differences of the data in order to formulate the main theme.

1.9.2 Observations

According to Best and Kahn (2006:265), observation is often referred to as fieldwork because it takes place in the field. They further state that the researcher in the field must take field notes and that these notes may vary, but they must contain sufficient information. In support of this, Merriam (1998:92–95) states that field notes are descriptions of the content and interactions that took place during the fieldwork. It also contains the content of what people have said and the researcher's own feelings, reactions and reflections about the significance of what the researcher has observed. Therefore, in this study the researcher used field notes – notes were taken during the classroom observations and reflected on after the observations.

Classroom observations and post-lesson discussions were also used to determine how Social Studies components are addressed in the classroom. It was deemed important to observe

teaching and learning to determine how effective the teaching methods used are to cater for the combination subjects (History and Geography) and to determine whether History or Geography content is not being neglected. The Social Studies curriculum and other documents related to Social Studies were analysed.

1.9.3 Document analysis

Documents were used to collect data to analyse learners' classroom activities, tests, examination question papers and all learners' assessment activities were considered. Documents were analysed to assess to what extent the Social Studies syllabus addresses the content. The focus was on the use of strategies when assessing Social Studies. More specifically, the researcher explored reasons for poor performance in Social Studies. Therefore, the following documents were reviewed:

- The Social Studies syllabus to evaluate the topics and competencies of the subject to determine whether they are at the level of the learners and cater for the learners' needs
- Promotion schedules and continuous assessment (CA) mark sheets
- Subject policies and assessments policies.

All the documents mentioned above were analysed and the results of this analysis are presented in Chapter 4.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Burgess (1989:3), research activities in education involve ethical considerations because ethical data have to be collected from the context of study. Consideration was also given concerning permission to visit schools and individual teachers. Therefore, an application to carry out the research at the primary schools in the Karas Region was submitted to the appropriate educational authorities. The researcher also submitted an application for ethical clearance to the Research Ethics Committee of Stellenbosch University. In this study the researcher ensured that the research is carried out with due consideration of ethical procedures. This implies that the rights and identities of all participants in the study were protected.

1.11 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

According to Best and Kahn (2006:289), reliability is the degree of consistency that an instrument or a procedure demonstrates, in other words, what is it measuring and is it done consistently. However, Bush (2002:65) refers to validity as used to judge whether the research

accurately describes the phenomenon which it intends to describe. Validity is that quality of the data-gathering procedures that enables it to measure what it supposed to measure.

Bush (2002:60–69) proposes strategies to ensure reliability and validity, which were applied as follows to the current study:

- Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Social Studies teachers. All interviewees were asked the same questions in the same way so that the procedure should be reliable. The verbal responses were noted down, voices were recorded and their body language was observed.
- When the researcher develops the validity and reliability instrument, for example, the interview questions, then the measurement tools should measure what is the research intent to measure.
- Record data: All the interview responses were recorded by noting down and recording them via mobile audio-recording and voice-recording.
- Participants' language: The interviews were conducted in English for fair and accurate communication.

1.12 STRUCTURE OF CHAPTERS

A brief overview of the layout of the thesis is given in this chapter in order to clarify the way in which the thesis is structured. The layout of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1 outlines the context in which the study took place. It describes the Namibian education system after independence. It focuses on educational changes made after independence, particularly in terms of the subject Social Studies.

Chapter 2 contains the literature review relating to the research topic.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology and design employed in this study. It further discusses the research paradigm, including the research methods or techniques used for data collection.

Chapter 4 presents the findings to report and discuss the results of the research. It offers a discussion of the possible factors that may contribute to learners' poor performance in Social Studies in Namibia.

Chapter 5 concludes the study with the recommendations.

1.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter orientated the overview of the study. It also outlined the structure of the study. The chapter discussed the background of the study and the importance of undertaking an investigation into the possible factors that may contribute to learners' poor performance in Social Studies at upper primary school level (grades 5–7) in Namibia. The factors that may contribute to learners' underperformance are discussed in the chapters to follow. The next chapter contains the literature review.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW ON UNDERPERFORMANCE IN SOCIAL STUDIES AT PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 discussed the context of the study. Chapter 2 provides an overview and a critical literature review on the notion of underperformance, with specific reference to underperformance in Social Studies. Furthermore, the chapter reflects on the possible factors that may contribute to learners' poor performance in Social Studies in grades 5, 6 and 7.

According to Mouton (2001:5), the preliminary literature review helps the researcher to demarcate the field of study by showing how other scholars have approached the object of study. This means that the literature review can enhance the researcher's understanding of the topic of research. This study reviewed both national and international literature on the topic to be investigated.

The literature review focuses on exploring the various theories of other researchers that previously examined the phenomenon with regard to possible causes of the underperformance of learners. The literature review centres on the following aspects: the issue of underperformance; the curriculum (including curriculum change and the implementation thereof); legislation and policy; the Namibian promotion, repetition and transfer requirements; the implementation of policies in schools; effective management, leadership and learners' performance; parental involvement; attitudes towards learners' learning and academic performance, and finally methods of teaching Social Studies.

2.2 UNDERPERFORMANCE

From the researcher's experience, in some Namibian primary schools, the average performance of learners in Social Studies over several years is significantly below the level that would be expected. The researcher interprets the concept of 'underperformance' as referring to when a learner performs worse than what it is expected of him or her or performs below average in a specific subject.

Underperformance is mostly the result of various factors outside and inside schools, which include a variety of socio-economic factors that influence children's educational performance. Most of the literature (Adekunle, 2001; Aston, 2011; Dhurumraj, 2013 and Etsey, 2005)

revealed that the factors that contribute to learners' poor performance are related to education policies, curriculum change, the ineffective management of schools, a shortage of teaching and learning materials and resources, overcrowded classrooms, lack of trained teachers and other issues. In this study, the researcher focused on factors regarded as pertinent issues.

Research studies conducted by Swarts (2003), O'Sullivan (2004), Kandumbu (2005) and Iipinge and Kasanda (2013) report that implementation of educational change, unmanageable large class sizes and lack and unavailability of learning materials and resources are challenging issues in some schools in Namibia. The next sections entail a review and discussion of these factors as well as other related aspects.

2.3 THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum is considered central to the education process. According to Du Preez and Reddy (2014:13), a curriculum is a social construct and it must therefore be accepted that there is no general interpretation of this concept; rather, it should be explained in the context in which it is used, leading to various ways of interpretation. This means that different authors explain the concept of curriculum according to the way they use it or the way they understand it. For example, Carl (2012:29) defines a curriculum as a broad concept that may include all school-planned activities and therefore also subject courses that are offered during the normal school day. In line with this, the MEC (2010:1) describes a curriculum as an official policy for teaching, learning and assessment that gives direction for planning, organising and implementing teaching and learning. Although the definitions of 'curriculum' differ for these authors, their identification of the different aspects and relevance of curriculum interconnects. The above explanations led to the researcher's understanding of a curriculum as a well-designed plan of teaching and learning processes that includes both teaching and learning activities that need to be done in and outside the classrooms. The following section gives a short description of curriculum change, followed by a justification for curriculum change in Namibia.

2.3.1 Curriculum change

The world has always been changing, but the question is, what is change? According to Morrison (1998:13), change can be regarded as an active and continuous process of development and growth that involves a reorganisation in response to needs identified. In relation to curriculum change, Mwetl and Van Wyk (2009) state that the curriculum should inspire learners to seek to fulfil their full potential as contributing and responsible citizens.

Internationally, there is a similarity with the underperformance of learners in Social Studies, for example, according to Routman (2014:42), there has been only a few remarkable positive changes in measurable results in most American schools, so far, mainly in Social Studies, Mathematics and English. This means that learners are not performing well in the above-mentioned subjects after the curriculum reforms and combination of the two subjects (History and Geography) into one subject, Social Studies, at primary school level (grades 5 to 7). Successful reform in education requires sufficient time. The great challenge of curriculum reform lies in the implementation stage (MEC, 2010:5). Achieving some measure of success in a tangible way is a critical incentive during implementation. This implies that curriculum implementers, who are mostly teachers, need to be committed in order to succeed and reach curriculum goals.

Some studies indicate that policy makers produce curriculum changes without any consultation with teachers (Evan, 2000:17). Similarly, Carl (2005:223) argues that teachers are not involved in curriculum development, but are only participants during the implementation phase when they receive training in teaching the new curriculum. In this study, the question may arise: Is the Social Studies curriculum relevant with regard to content and meeting learners' needs if educators were not involved in the development of the curriculum? The researcher argues that teachers are more familiar with what the learners need as well as their difficulties. In support of this, Routman (2014:42) states that teachers of language and Social Studies in upper primary school levels can incorporate these subjects into teaching processes, for example Social Studies teachers can teach learners how to access, read, summarise and discuss current events in their History lesson and provide insight into the world in which the learners live.

After the election of the new Namibian democratic government in March 1990, government has taken steps to change the pre-colonial education system. The change of the education system included a curriculum aimed at seeking an appropriate approach to addressing the education imbalances of the past. The researcher understands that curriculum is changed or renewed for particular reasons. Hence, planning is a prerequisite. The underlying reason for curriculum change and planning is not to fail learners, but rather relates to the kind of society required or the kind of future citizens that are anticipated.

During curriculum change, learners' activities in the existing curriculum are revised and new activities are designed to suit the new curriculum. Therefore, teachers are expected to change learner activities in order to suit and accommodate the revised curriculum in teaching and

learning. If teachers fail to revise activities and design them based on the existing curriculum, it may affect learners' performance.

2.3.2 Reasons for curriculum change in Namibia

The Namibian curriculum changed from being an exclusionary neo-colonial (apartheid) education system to a more equal and inclusive alternative system. According to the MEC (1993:1), the previous education system in Namibia focused on educating the elite in a positivistic system that was based on apartheid and racism. It further states that the Namibian education reform was guided first and foremost by a policy document titled *Towards education for all: A development brief for education, culture and training* (MEC, 1993). The curriculum as described in this document is built on learner-centred education and is aimed at harnessing curiosity and excitement, as well as promoting democracy and responsibility in lifelong learning. The Namibian curriculum aims to provide a coherent and concise framework in order to ensure that there is consistency in the delivery of the curriculum in schools and classrooms throughout the country. The MoE changed the education policy in terms of teaching methods from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach. The new policy claims to create a space that encourages teachers to use group work and teamwork to consolidate the new approach. Learners should always be encouraged to participate in lessons and take responsibility for their lessons to become self-reliant as well as critical thinkers. The new policy condemns memorisation, yet there are still some learners practising it. Some teachers are even encouraging learners to memorise without understanding by spoon-feeding their learners.

After Namibia's independence, teacher-centred learning was reformed in line with the four major goals of education, which are access, equity, quality and democracy, which were to be realised through the education principles of learner-centred education. A learner-centred approach demands a high degree of learner participation. It is based on a democratic pedagogy: a methodology that promotes learning through understanding and practice directed towards empowering and shaping the conditions of one's own life (MoE, 2003:7). The Ministry argues that a learner-centred approach is more appropriate, as learners are expected to be more involved in lessons through the facilitation of the teacher. For example, learners should work in groups or pairs. Teachers are encouraged to use group work, pair work and team work to consolidate the new approach.

However, there are still some teachers who practise the old methods of teaching through a teacher-centred approach. In this approach, teachers talk while learners are required to listen to

them. Freire refers to this approach to teaching and learning as a banking system in education. Freire (2007:72) argues that education becomes an act of depositing, in which the teachers are depositors and children are depositories. This means that teachers are just teaching and learners are simply receiving knowledge from teachers. According to Freire (2007:73), in such banking concept of education, teachers consider themselves as knowing everything and learners knowing nothing; teachers talk and learners listen; teachers think and learners are thought about. Freire's argument is that in a teacher-centred approach, teachers are depositing their knowledge without considering learners as if they cannot think and have aimed goal to achieve. Therefore, teachers should apply Freire's theory by considering that learners are people who can think and have goals to achieve in their lives. They should let learners become more involved in teaching and learning activities and facilitate them in ways that may lead to their successful achievement of their academic potential. In the same line, the new curriculum posits that memorisation should not be used or promoted as a method of teaching and learning in Namibian schools (MEC, 1993:121). For this reason, learners should be motivated to develop a culture of thinking and become responsible for their education. This means that teachers may encourage learners to think critically during the teaching and learning process rather than waiting to receive knowledge from teachers.

The researcher concurs with this idea, as memorisation does not promote learners to become self-confident or critical thinkers. Moreover, the researcher argues that teachers should stop spoon-feeding learners. They should let learners think critically and develop the ability of good reasoning when they participate during lesson presentations. It may help learners become self-reliant and active in the lessons. Furthermore, it develops confidence and a sense that they have the ability to contribute productively to their own learning.

2.3.3 The Social Studies curriculum at primary school level

Namibia has a Basic National Curriculum at primary school level, which includes a Social Studies curriculum. During the curriculum change from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach, changes in the curriculum in terms of both content and methodology emerged as the key focus in reforming the education system. The subject content changed from South African and German history (colonialism) to the country's own history (Namibian history), while the teaching methods changed from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach. During the curriculum reform period, History and Geography were also merged into one subject, namely Social Studies. In this regard, the curriculum aims to provide learners with opportunities for developing various skills that will enable them to function effectively in society. It also aims to

build confidence and develop attitudes necessary for adult life and to provide learners with important skills that can help them in their lives. In addition, a further aim is to develop in the learners the ability to adapt to their changing environment and accept their society.

Emphasis is now placed on the use of discovery learning, experimentation and simulation. Despite the good intentions of the new curriculum, concern has been raised. Alaezi (1989:134) warned as early as that if the school curriculum does not contain knowledge and accommodate the needs of learners, there will be negative consequences. Firstly, learners at school will not learn the value of society, and may grow up feeling rejected by society and being societal misfits. Secondly, if learners reject societal values, they will be unable to contribute to and function effectively within society. It may also lead to academic underperformance. In the same line, Okogu (2011:53) reports that inappropriate selection and utilisation of suitable teaching methods negatively affect the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum. Therefore, the school curriculum as well as the Social Studies curriculum should be well planned and should contain knowledge of the value of society and the needs of learners.

2.3.4 Implementation of curriculum change

The process of curriculum changes and implementation has been and still is a challenge in education, as debated by various authors. Fullan (1993:37) argues that the implementation of curriculum change involves a change in practice. Such change, as pointed out by Fullan (1993), involves three aspects: the possible use of new or revised materials, the possible use of new approaches and the possible alteration of beliefs. Change involves moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar; from the known to the unknown. This notion can apply to teaching: Teachers should teach learners from the known to the unknown. Similarly, a familiar teaching approach is abandoned and a new one is implemented in the teaching and learning process. In general, teachers are currently facing challenges particularly with regard to curriculum change, for example all lessons should be planned according to the requirements of the new curriculum to attain effective teaching and learning. Furthermore, studies conducted by Kandumbu (2005) and Iiping and Kasanda (2013) report that the implementation of educational change is a challenge in some schools in Namibia. Swarts (2003:27–28) claims that lack of implementation arises from the lack of trained teachers, unmanageable large class sizes and unavailability of resources. This means that the factors mentioned above may negatively influence learners' academic performance. However, this does not mean that these factors are the ones that necessarily contribute to learners' poor academic performance in Social Studies; hence the factors involved in this study were investigated during the data collection.

Fullan (2001) states that in order to enable teachers to take ownership of the proposed change, subjective realities should be considered. This refers to change causing fears among teachers. Furthermore, curriculum change in Namibia is experienced by teachers as a threat rather than an opportunity; as something to be avoided, if possible, rather than something to be welcomed. Teachers need to consider how to minimise the above-mentioned reasons so that these reasons do not contribute to learners' poor academic performance.

In contrast, O'Sullivan (2002:222) claims that the successful implementation of educational change always depends on the extent to which teachers are prepared to implement the change process, therefore teachers' attitudes towards any change contribute to the success or failure of its implementation. This means that curriculum implementation will require dedicated and committed teachers who will be willing to introduce and implement the new curriculum and acquire the new approaches for teaching this curriculum. It also shows that the implementation of a new curriculum demands the efforts of teachers, school management and principals. Furthermore, Carl (2002:247) states that teachers must change their attitude, become committed and must be self-empowered. This means that teachers should have a positive attitude in order to embrace change and treat it as normal. Teachers should not see curriculum change as a threat, but should work hard so that they are able to challenge the situation of learners' poor academic performance. They should see and understand that curriculum change is a way they can develop and grow in terms of the teaching and learning process. In this study the researcher claims that if teachers become positive, show interest in teaching and are committed and innovative, they will become specialists in their subject area, for example Social Studies, and it might be easy for them to become curriculum change implementers. This means within the new curriculum change, teachers should be seen as both agents and implementers of curriculum change.

Principals and school management should help teachers and encourage them to adapt to the curriculum change. The point here is, during the implementation of the curriculum reform in Namibia, teachers can also design a variety of activities on topics to develop various study skills that learners require in Social Studies. This process should be developed in the next grades.

Moreover, curriculum implementation is the phase where design is put into practice. This is also seen as a management system with the aim of changing or improving the curriculum. According to Okogu (2011:49), poor planning will affect the implementation of the curriculum negatively. For this reason, learners' academic performance might also be affected negatively. Therefore, sound planning should be effectively utilised in order to minimise unsuccessful curriculum implementation and underperformance of learners in Social Studies. The researcher's opinion is

that, in order for the curriculum to be effectively implemented, it would be wise to continuously evaluate it by taking into account the situations that may hinder successful implementation, while also reviewing those aspects that promote successful implementation. The factors that could possibly hinder successful implementation, such as resistance and lack of resources, should be considered during implementation. Because change brings fear, causing individuals to hold onto what they know best, it is necessary to manage change with support and sympathy. In addition, the implementation of the curriculum can be hindered by a lack of adequate resources and other relevant aspects.

There are however also factors that may contribute to the success of curriculum change, as was mentioned earlier in this paragraph. Ministry of Education, The National Institution for Educational Development (NIED) (2003) suggests that in order to implement the changes that the reformers proposed, teachers are required to have a clear idea of how to teach well in a learner-centred way. In contrast, Nyambe and Wilmot (2008:18–21) argue that teachers lack knowledge and skills in implementing learner-centred pedagogy, as well as confidence in their own professional ability to adequately interpret and practise a curriculum change or learner-centred approach.

This shortcoming might contribute to the lack of ability of teachers to implement curriculum change, and once teachers lack ability, knowledge of the subject and commitment to present curriculum change and apply a learner-centred approach, it may influence learners' academic performance. In this section the challenges in terms of curriculum change and implementation were discussed. Based on the review regarding the implementation of Namibian curriculum changes, it may have impacted on the teaching and learning process. For example, if teachers are not included in the process of the curriculum development it might be a big challenge to them to implement it successfully. Therefore, it is important to include teachers in the process of curriculum change/revision of their subject area of specialisation and to meet the demands of curriculum implementation.

According to the MoE (2013), policies are one of the factors that may contribute to learners' poor performance. It was therefore also important to investigate how policies have shaped the curriculum.

2.4 LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

2.4.1 Introduction

Du Preez and Reddy (2014:22) explain that policy appears in document form with a variety of names, including curriculum guides, guidelines and syllabus and course outlines. Therefore, this section describes the concept of policy, highlights policies related to this study and gives a brief discussion of legislation, including the Namibian Education Act. The Republic of Namibia has a supreme law called the Constitution of Namibia (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1990). Therefore, every law and regulation has to be constitutionally justifiable (Shaba, 1999:1). This advocates that every law, rule or regulation should be designed or established based on the Constitution of Namibia. The Constitution of Namibia is the foundation of all policies, including education policies. Chapter 3 of the Constitution deals with the Bill of Rights and has a direct impact on education; for example, Article 20, Section 1 emphasises that all persons have the right to education.

Furthermore, in the Namibian Constitution (Article 20, Section 2) it is clearly indicated that primary education shall be compulsory and will be provided free of charge. The researcher concurs with the above statement of free education at primary school level. It is also indicated in the Constitution that children shall not be allowed to leave school until they have completed their primary education or have reached the age of 16 years.

Moreover, the enshrinement of Article 20 in the Constitution, which states that all persons shall have a right to education, shows the country's commitment to providing education to all Namibians. Although the provision of quality education and high rates of underperformance in some subjects remain challenges, ensuring greater accesses, equity and quality is equally important to achieving education for all.

2.4.2 Education Act 16 of 2001

This section focuses on some of the major policies in the Namibian education system. It is important to understand what the concept 'education policy' entails in order to implement it effectively. The national policy that was launched at the start of the 21st century was the Education Act 16, promulgated in December 2001. The Education Act 16 of 2001 is a fundamental national education policy aimed at providing an accessible, equitable and high-quality national education service; to establish the National Advisory Council in Education, the National Examination Assessment and Certification Board, the Regional Education Forum and

school boards and teaching services committees; and to provide for incidental matters (Republic of Namibia, 2001:2).

According to Shanyanana (2011:98), the Education Act 16 reinforces and underlies participation as an essential democratic process to advance Namibian education. The establishment of education forums and school boards, in which various stakeholders and representatives are required to participate in dialogue concerning education (MoE, 2001:9), is an important contribution. The Act emphasises the process of consultation and participation in the belief that education is a participatory and partnership venture. The Act stipulates the establishment of various groups to participate in education law. However, there is no provision for including the committees or laws in debates on learners' performance in any school subjects.

One can raise the concern at this point that the Education Act 16 confines participation to the education policies without inclusion of poor performance in a way that would enable a contribution to the solution of such performance. This Act is silent on the inclusion of policies on learners' poor performance. The Education Act 16 also does not mention how the problem of learners' poor performance will be solved in terms of policy formation. There is no policy or act pertaining to learners' poor performance.

2.4.3 Language policy as a barrier to learning Social Studies

The language policy in Namibia refers to how the Namibia government intends to safeguard, develop and exploit language capacity among its people. According to the language policy document of the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC, 2003:4), English is the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards in all primary schools in Namibia. The policy was developed to enable learners to be proficient enough in English. Another reason why English became an official language in Namibian schools is because by the end of the primary school cycle learners might gain access to further education as well as to language communication. At the same time, Aston (2011:14) argues that English can be thought of as being a foreign language to the majority of Namibians. Therefore, this may lead Namibian learners to study and master English because it is not their mother tongue. The language policy in Namibia stipulates that every school-going child in Namibia should acquire adequate proficiency in English at primary school level so that learners can learn the curriculum content with ease (MEC, 2003:63). Government implemented the decision through a language policy for schools, which states that learners should be taught in their home language from grades 1 to 3, while from Grade 4 onwards, learners must receive instruction in English (MBESC, 2003). The

question here is why English is only introduced within schools from Grade 4 onwards and not from pre-primary stage onwards. Furthermore, if transition from teaching through local languages to English should start at Grade 5, is this might not have negative impact on learning other subjects, particularly Social Studies? The point is that learners may take longer to adapt to a new language of instruction. In this respect, they may not understand the content of the subject easily and their academic performance may be influenced negatively. In support of this argument, Aston's (2011:43) study suggests that policy writers may need to re-evaluate the policy and reintroduce English as a compulsory medium of instruction earlier, from the pre-primary stage onwards. In this regard learners may familiar themselves with the language earlier and hence study other subjects easier.

Moreover, Dhurumraj (2013:14) argues that language plays an important role in understanding technical terms in subjects. Dhurumraj (2013:19) claims that when learners learn in a language that is not their mother tongue, learning becomes more difficult because they may not understand the technical terms used. This in turns affects learners' academic performance. The main concern that people perceive is that this policy increases learners' poor performance in subjects such as Social Studies and Mathematics. In support of this argument, Harris's (2011:19) study discloses that learning subject content through English is one of the contributing factors to the high failure rates in Namibian schools. This may also be seen as a possible factor contributing to learners' poor performance in Social Studies at upper primary school level in Namibia.

Furthermore, for decades, learners in grades 5 to 7 performed poorly in Social Studies due to the fact that they lacked adequate proficiency in the language needed to cope with the curriculum. This problem has not been addressed or rectified. What the researcher experienced as Social Studies teacher is that sometimes some of the Social Studies test and examination questions focus on general knowledge but is related to the subject content, meaning learners may not be able to answer them and it may be difficult for them to understand these questions because of the language barrier. During the class and term tests as well as examinations learners may misinterpret the questions and provide incorrect answers due to the language problem. Therefore, the researcher raises the concern that English as the primary medium of instruction in the Namibian curriculum may need to be revisited to address issues of continuing high failure rates of many learners in Social Studies and other subjects. In support of this, Dhurumraj (2013) reports that the medium of instruction at schools affect learners' performance because learners

are unable to interpret the questions in examinations. This means that learners are unable to provide a correct answer due to language difficulties.

The linguistic researchers also indicated in their studies that learners would not be able to produce subject content knowledge due to the lack of language proficiency. It is clear that a lack of a suitable level of proficiency in English might indeed be one of the barriers that impact negatively on learners' performance in Social Studies.

2.4.4 Social Studies policy guide

The Social Studies policy guide is the official document for the subject Social Studies. This subject policy gives the basic requirements to administer Social Studies at primary school level in Namibia. This subject policy was designed to guide Social Studies teachers in the teaching and learning process (MoE, 2008:1). According to the National Policy Guide for Social Studies (MoE, 2008:1), the establishment of a Social Studies policy is aimed at making provision for a well-organised and practically orientated programme in the teaching and management of Social Studies in schools. It further states that the policy guide aims to provide guidelines for subject managers in controlling teaching and learning activities. It also guides teachers in organising their administrative duties and in planning teaching and learning to meet the expectations of the National Standards and Performance Indicators (NSPI).

Moreover, the Social Studies policy guide expresses the hope that the subject policy will relieve some of the problems experienced by teachers in Social Studies and lead them to an improved standard of teaching and learning throughout Namibia.

The policy guide deals with the following subject-specific issues: timetable, syllabus, scheme of work, homework, teaching and learning materials, and assessment tasks to be completed per term or per year, moderation, learner-centred education and continuous professional development. However, in this study, the researcher focused only on issues related to this study, such as time allocation; the use of time; different policies in education; implementing policies in schools; effectivity of school management, leadership and learners' performance; and teaching methods used in the teaching of Social Studies. The following section briefly discusses two aspects of the Social Studies policy, namely time allocation and the use of time.

2.4.4.1 Time allocation

The MoE (2008:1) states that teachers should be aware of the time allocation of teaching Social Studies, which is five periods per week in grades 5 to 7. In this study, the researcher investigated

whether the time for Social Studies was allocated according to the national policy and whether the time allocation is enough for the required teaching and learning activities.

2.4.4.2 Use of time

In some cases, learners accuse teachers of not coming to class on time and sitting and chatting in the staff room (Christie, 2007). Another major source of time loss in terms of teaching and learning activities is emergency staff and union meetings. Scheduled staff meetings also disturb classes because learners are sent home early. This loss of teaching and learning time may contribute to learners' poor performance in the sense that teachers may not cover the syllabus as expected. On the other hand, teachers may rush to finish the syllabus because they have to. Therefore, teachers should establish how much time to allocate to the implementation of Social Studies because learners' poor performance could be the result of the insufficient use of time. The following section will focus on different policies in education.

2.5 NAMIBIAN PROMOTION, REPETITION AND TRANSFER REQUIREMENTS

2.5.1 Promotion requirements

Sichombe, Nambira, Tjipueja and Kapenda (2011:18) state that promotion requirements might contribute to the underperformance of learners in Namibian schools. Hence, it is important to describe the requirements stipulated in terms of promotion, repetition and transfer. It is anticipated by the MoE that learners will progress through grades 1 to 9. According to the MoE (2010:36), no learner shall repeat a grade more than once at any of the primary and junior secondary levels. A learner who does not comply with the minimum requirements for the second time must be transferred to the next grade. Only in cases where the teaching team (grades 5 to 9), in consultation with the principal and head of department, is absolutely convinced that a learner would definitely not benefit from progressing to the next grade, should such a learner repeat a grade for a second time. Promotion committees of schools also discuss borderline cases. However, parents or guardians must be kept fully informed of the reasons for the child repeating a grade. Moreover, learners in grades 5, 6 and 7 should be promoted if they have obtained a C grade or higher in English and Mathematics and a D grade or higher in each of the remaining four subjects. Table 2.1 below shows the grading for grades 5 to 7.

Table 2.1: Mark range and grade description for grades 5 to 7 (Source: Sichombe et al., 2011:19)

Grade	Mark range	Grade description
A	80%	Achieved basic competencies exceptionally well. The learner is outstanding in all areas of competency.
B	65–79%	Achieved basic competencies well. The learner is highly proficient in most areas of competency, e.g. demonstrating rapid mastery of some competencies, being able to apply competencies to unknown situations and contexts or demonstrating new insight.
C	45–64%	Achieved basic competencies well. The learner has mastered the competencies to satisfaction in unknown situations and contexts.
D	30–44%	Achieved the minimum number of basic competencies to be considered competent. The learner may not have achieved all the competencies, or may sometimes need help, but has sufficient competency to go on to the next grade.
E	0–29%	Not achieved the majority of basic competencies. The learner has not been able to reach a minimum level of competency, even with extensive help from the teacher, and is in need of learning support.

Table 2.1 above shows the grading in grades 5 to 7 and provides the descriptions of promotional grading. The researcher is of the opinion that schools should implement these promotion requirements. However, in some cases, learners do not achieve the basic competencies, and in

such cases, repetition might be part of the solution. However, it is worth noting that most of the Namibian schools practise automatic promotion. Automatic promotion is the act of allowing learners to continue to the next year of study with the rest of their peer group despite them not having met the minimum requirements.

According to Sichombe et al. (2011:25), Namibian schools are faced with a problem of high rates of repetition and transferral of learners to the next grade without achieving the basic competences for the grade. This occurs because the automatic promotional policy allows learners to be transferred to the next grade although they did not meet the promotional requirements. As a result, learners might not perform well in the next grade. Therefore, this researcher's concern regarding automatic promotion is that this may contribute to learners' poor performance. Some learners might not work very hard because they may feel that they will be automatically promoted if they do not meet the basic requirements. The country is still faced with challenges of providing quality education for all, as was claimed after independence. Therefore, the researcher feels that learners who did not meet the basic requirements of promotion should be held back. This will motivate learners to work very hard and compete with one another. If Namibian schools continue to transfer learners up to Grade 10, they may never be able to succeed past Grade 10, which may contribute to high failure rates in Grade 10 and ultimately to unemployment among Namibian citizens.

2.5.2 Promotion policy

Mutorwa (2004) Makuwa (2004) and Nyambe (2015) single out serious problems in the Namibian education system, especially those related to learners' underperformance as compared to other countries. In comparing Namibia to other Southern African countries, the following research evidence is apparent: In Namibia there are high levels of failure and school dropout, lower levels of literacy and numerical skills and poor results in tests as well as in performance in primary and secondary education (Makuwa, 2004).

In its attempt to improve learners' performance, government approved and implemented a number of educational programmes. The 15-year strategic plan 2005/6- 2020-Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) is a comprehensive plan to reform the education and training sector in Namibia (MoE, 2006). The principle aim of this programme is to improve the education system based on the Ministry's strategic goals regarding the promotion of access, equity, quality and democracy.

Furthermore, the ETSIP calls for the establishment of a national inspectorate to assure quality and to review and monitor the performance of schools. According to Mutorwa (2004:7–8), from data available from national examination registers (grades 7, 10 and 12) and other sources such as the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality report, it is possible to identify schools that perform exceptionally poor or well with respect to certain criteria. The National Inspectorate was introduced in 2005 to evaluate the performance of schools and to execute quality-assurance functions. Another educational programme introduced with the aim of improving the education system was the NSPI, which outlines seven key areas, namely provision of resources for the school; curriculum and attainment; the teaching and learning process; the school as a social unit; management and leadership of the school and hostel; links with parents; and links with other schools and regions.

The aim of the NSPI of schools in Namibia is to develop the means of assuring quality across the country, as the quality of education varies from school to school and even from class to class. The MoE appoints members of the National External School Evaluation team, which comprises of education inspectors, senior officers and directors to oversee how schools are responding in terms of the NSPI and whether they are implementing governmental legislation for the benefit of all learners.

The NSPI are used to help schools to take a closer look at aspects of concern. If, for instance, it is felt that learners' progress is a problem area, each teacher would be asked to examine the quality of his or her teaching and learning process, range and appropriateness of teaching approaches, cooperative methods of assessment and recording, and so forth. When this is done, the findings are recorded and suggested actions are noted for immediate intervention to affect quick and positive change (MoE, 2004:1).

In addition, there are other measurements that have been set up by the Namibian government, such as the School Development Plan (SDP) and the Plan of Action for Academic Improvement (PAAI). Schools in Namibia complete forms of school self-evaluation and teacher self-evaluation annually and develop the SDP and PAAI. The researcher's concern is whether teachers note the negative impacts or factors that may contribute to learners' poor performance during the evaluation of their schools and the self-evaluations and if so, what they do to improve the situation. Schools are expected to respond positively and rapidly to education legislation and policies.

2.5.3 Continuous assessment policy

There are varying opinions regarding the meaning and aim of the concept of assessment. According to Brown (2004:304), assessment is any act of interpreting information about learner performance, collected through any of a multitude of means or practices. In the same line, Beets and Van Louw (2011) view assessment as the collection and interpretation of information that may be used to inform learners, and their parents or guardians, where applicable, about the progress they are making towards attaining knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours; and to inform various staff members who make education decisions (instructional, diagnostic, placement, promotion, graduation, curriculum planning, programme development and policy) about learners. This means that assessment does not only refer to one aspect of assessment practices, but involves a number of activities that a learner must do during or after the teaching and learning process.

Le Grange and Beets (2005:120) state that CA is a process that enables teachers to recognise learning difficulties. In the same line, Nyambe (2015:16) describes CA as a series of activities that are designed to measure what learners have learnt and how best the teachers can assist them to achieve the learning outcomes. Tanner and Jones (2003:12–13) describe the purpose of assessment information as follows:

- (a) Managerial – to demonstrate or test the effectiveness of government policy; includes holding schools, education management and development centres or teaching districts responsible for learners' progress. They need to manage learners' performance and control curriculum implementation.
- (b) Communicative – to provide information to parents about their children's progress against the learning outcomes.
- (c) Pedagogical – to evaluate the success of the teacher's teaching, analyse learners' learning and identify misconceptions, and support the teaching process by providing feedback to inform future planning. Furthermore, it aims to give learners an appreciation of their achievements and encourage success. The pedagogical aims of assessment information motivate learners, hold them accountable and support the learning process by identifying precisely what individuals need to do to improve. Moreover, this component encourages learners to develop skills of self-assessment and self-regulated learning.

According to Mutorwa (2004:7), the CA policy was introduced to provide criterion-based evidence of each learner's progress and level of achievement in relation to the minimum competencies specified in the curriculum and subject syllabi. In order to capture the full range and level of competence, a variety of formal and informal CA situations is needed to give a complete picture of learners' progress and achievement in all subjects. The National Curriculum for Basic Education (MoE, 2010:31) emphasises that CA must be clear, simple and manageable, and explicitly based on learner-centred principles and practice. The information gathered about the learners' progress and achievements should be used to give feedback to learners about their strong and weak points, where they are doing well, and why and on what they need to work harder and how. This means that learners should always receive information on their progress with clear feedback, including both positive and negative comments.

According to Warnich and Meyer (2013:119), feedback gives learners the opportunity to constantly monitor and regulate their own teaching and in doing so, evolve into independent self-directed lifelong learners. This means feedback to learners may assist them to progress in their learning. Parents should also be regularly informed about the progress of their children in all subjects on their school report.

Furthermore, the National Curriculum for Basic Education stipulates that formative and summative assessment should be used during the school year in order to ensure that the teaching and learning process is effective. It can also assist teachers and learners to improve in teaching and learning. Formative CA is any assessment done during the school year with the aim of improving learning and helping to shape and direct the teaching learning process (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1999:8). Formative assessment is assessment that monitors learners' learning to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by educators to improve their teaching and by learners to improve their learning. Summative assessment is explained as assessment done at the end of the school year based on the accumulation of the progress and achievement of the learner throughout the year in a given subject added to end-of-year test or examination results. The results of summative assessment are given in the form of a single end-of-year promotion grade.

Teachers should conduct assessment of learners throughout the year (MoE, 2011:29). Similarly, Nyambe (2015:13) explains that the grades (marks) obtained by learners through continuous activities should be recorded systematically through the year. This has to be done to inform the learners and parents of learners' progress and achievement in education. CA must be combined with the end-of-year marks, that is, examination marks, and entered into the promotion

schedules. This means that the CA and final examination marks have to be combined to obtain the final marks and determine the promotion or non-promotion of learners. This process is guided by the heads of departments and principals, who should monitor CA.

The promotion schedules are checked and approved by the inspectors for making decisions on the repetition of grades and transferring and promoting learners to the next grade. The inspectors of education are the last decision makers when it comes to the promotion of learners to the next grade. Parents do not have much say, as the child's results dictate the decision. However, in many cases, parents are contacted specifically if the child has to repeat a grade, and parents receive a report on the results of their children whether they have passed or not.

2.5.4 Learners' performance assessment

According to Etsey (2005:125), performance assessment measures learners' demonstration of what they can do. Awases (2015:33) argues that assessment plays a significant role in the teaching and learning process in providing teachers with evidence of what the learners know, understand and can do. Assessment researchers Cunningham and Cordeiro (2000:27) state that performance assessment should measure skills and abilities that learners will need to be successful in the world outside school. It can take the form of written tests, demonstrations or portfolios, where learners are measured on their ability to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of real-world contexts. Furthermore, Cunningham and Cordeiro (2000:27) state that the results of tests and examinations are used to determine learners' performance and can help educators when they do lesson planning to identify the areas learners find difficult, appraise achievement, assess competency and support learners in assessing learning in order to identify the difficult areas in the subject and ask for assistance in that particular area. In this study, the researcher investigated which kinds of assessment teachers of Social Studies use.

2.5.5 Conducting and recording assessment

The National Curriculum for Basic Education (MoE, 2010:3) stipulates that CA should be planned and programmed at the beginning of the year and kept as simple as possible. There must therefore be a year plan that schedules CA activities. Sound planning may provide good results, while poor planning may contribute to learners' poor performance in subjects. It is further stated that marks given for class activities, practical activities, project work, assignment homework and short tests on completion of a topic must be recorded as part of obtaining an overview of learners' progression during CA. A minimum of six formal CA activities per term has to be selected, graded and recorded. These CA marks will be added to examination marks to obtain

the final marks for learners at the end of the year. Evidence of the assessment has to be kept at school until the end of the following years. This can be a proof of further investigation or proof where it is needed. For example, this study used the learners' performance records for over six years as evidence for study. Teachers can choose to grade or record more than the required assessments if they deem it necessary for formative purposes. However, the end-of-year summative grade will be based only on the assessment tasks described in the syllabus. End-of-term tests should not contribute more than 30% towards the total term marks and not more than 40% of the summative grade may be based on tests.

Table 2.2 below shows the weighting of CA and examination in each subject syllabus.

Table 2.2: Weighting of continuous assessment (Source: MoE, 2010:32)

Subjects	Grade 5 CA	Examination	Grades 6 and 7 CA	Examination
Skills-based subjects: Basic Information Skills, Life Skills, Arts and Physical Education	50%	50%	50%	50%
Content subjects: English, Afrikaans, Social Studies, Mathematics, Natural Science, Technology and Home	65%	35%	50%	50%

Ecology				
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Table 2.2 above illustrates clearly that Grade 5 CA may count 50% of the summative grade in content subjects and 50% in skills-based subjects, whereas in grades 6 and 7, CA counts 50% of the summative grade in all subjects – both content and skills-based subjects. These are the recommended percentages for each subject per year. This means that teachers cannot exceed his or her CA with the given percentage. If a teacher gives more tasks and exceeds the given percentage, a choice on mark recording has to be made and only some tasks should be selected for recording and assessment. The reason for selective CA recording is because at the end of the year learners are required to write examinations, which should be combined with CA marks to determine their progression. However, teachers could put this requirement into practice if they are empowered and trained before the implementation of the policy. In Sichombe et al.'s (2011:25) findings, some teachers claimed that they did not receive proper guidance to enable them to implement a policy of CA. As a result, teachers may not be able to assess learners based on the CA policy, but may assess in the way in which they feel comfortable. Therefore, the MoE (2007:23–24) suggests that the process for using CA as both formative and summative assessment tools will be strengthened. ETSIP (2006) is busy developing improvement in various educational areas, including assessment of the Namibian education system.

Of concern to the researcher is the fact that teachers do not receive clear guidance on how to assess learners. Are they assessing learners in the way which is expected? Will the outcomes of assessment be accurate? In short, teachers need clear guidance on how to assess learners' learning progress as well as how to implement the assessment policy.

2.6 IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES IN SCHOOLS

Before discussing how policies should be implemented in schools, it is important to briefly explain what policy is. Most of the literature reflects diverse opinions regarding the concept of policy. According to Fataar (2011:49), policy is the result of compromise, negotiation and ideological and political contestation, and is interpreted differently by the various role players, depending on their particular position. Christie (2008:117) states that a policy is a joint social decision-making process that is undertaken by different participants whose concern is the whole of society rather than individuals alone. These participants, such as school governors or parliament, are considered to have authority to make decisions on behalf of society or schools.

The aims of these decisions are to reach the different goals and achieve positive outcomes as well as further the interests of learners and society.

According to Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012:4), policy is not made at one point in time, but is a process of becoming and changing from outside in and inside out of the school. This means that policies are reviewed, revised and amended. Furthermore, Ball et al. (2012:3) state that in order to understand policy, one should understand the concept of enactment. The concept of enactment involves creative ways of understanding and putting policy into practice. This means that when a policy is received, it should be understood and translated from text to implementation, using different and innovative ways. Therefore, in this study policies were analysed to determine whether they may influence learners in Social Studies negatively and how they contribute to learners' performance.

Based on personal observations by the researcher, in Namibia policies are not always implemented in the different schools as prescribed in the policies. Sometimes policies are received and understood in a particular way and implemented in the way they are understood. Unsuccessful policy implementation is often due to the understanding and translating of the text of those policies. Moreover, most often government develops policies based on its own interests, with no clear direction on what to do or how to do things at school. Policies that are drawn up based on what interested parties want and what they think is of value will sometimes not succeed. Ball et al. (2012:3) argue that policies rarely tell one exactly what to do and may narrow one's creative thinking, because the nature of problems and changes differs according to circumstances. Therefore, policies should not be enacted before people have an understanding of them and are able to translate them into action. If people are not prepared to translate policy into practice, policy will just be there without being implemented, because people do not understand them.

Moreover, there are increasing numbers of policies for schools that have to be enacted daily. However, some policies are forwarded to schools without clear direction of what to do. For example, schools are given syllabi or a revised curriculum, but these are not accompanied by guidelines on how they should be implemented. Therefore, schools may understand, interpret and translate the text in a particular way or in the way they want to.

Although some policies are written with the assumption that they would serve in the best interest of schools, these texts are not simple when they are to be translated from written text to action or

practice. Therefore, it is clear that putting policies into practice is a difficult, complex and unstable process.

There is a gap between policy makers and policy implementers. Government needs to bridge this gap by considering policy formation and policy implementation as one entity. By doing this they should consult and involve all stakeholders in policy development, especially teachers who are practitioners with experience of policy implementation. For more effective implementation of policy, it should be discussed, interpreted and translated before putting it into practice.

The next section expounds effective management, leadership and learners' performances.

2.7 EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNERS' PERFORMANCE

2.7.1 Introduction

Armstrong and Stephens (2005:3) describe management as a process of deciding what to do and when to do it and then getting it done through people, while leadership is explained as a process of developing and communicating a vision for the future, motivating people and gaining their commitment and engagement. In addition, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004:20) explain that leadership has two functions, namely providing direction and exercising influence. They reiterate that each of these two functions mentioned can be carried out in different way to distinguish many models of leaderships from one another. Based on the above descriptions, in the school context leadership helps to shape the nature of school conditions such as structures, cultures, goals and classroom conditions. Furthermore, Leithwood et al. (2004:13) argue that mostly leaders contribute to learners' learning indirectly, through influencing teachers, for example in terms of instructional practices of teachers, class size, participation in decision making, monitoring of learner progress and relations with teachers and parents.

2.7.2 Management and learner performance

When faced with poor performance, management needs to take a critical look at the reasons for underperformance. In Namibia, most often when learners are not performing well in schools, fingers are pointed to the school management as well as teachers at that particular underperforming schools. According to Gulting, Ndhlovu and Bertram (1999:6), school management has to ensure that teaching and learning are operating smoothly and structures are in place, and they should support the teaching and learning process and ensure that the school is operating effectively.

Much has been written on management and leadership, enough to know that there is a wide range of opinions and theories on this topic reflected in a variety of scholarly works, such as the work of Lumby (2013), Moloji (2007), Van der Westhuizen (2002), Gulting et al. (1999) and Fullan (1993). What makes a good leader is subjective, but most authors highlight that good leaders are good communicators. Most authors emphasise that more effective teams produce high-performance academic activities. Therefore, leaders' and management teams' behaviour needs to be examined and if found lacking skills and ineffective, they need to be trained into high-performance behaviour – behaviour needed to improve learners' performance. In support of this, Palestini (2005:92) argues that an effective principal has to master the skill of effective communication and management. The researcher is of the view that if a principal masters the skill of effective communication and management, it may contribute to more effective management of his/her school.

Furthermore, Hallinger and Heck's (1998:157) research reveals that in order to be effective, the principal has to have an indirect impact on the school's improvement and learners' achievements. The literature on effective management and leadership describes the overall progress of learners' academic achievement as a key of the measure of effective schools, leadership and management (Kormla, 2012:11–13).

Learners' academic performance cannot be separated from a well-managed school, because well-managed schools often have systems in place to measure and evaluate learning outcomes and learners' performance (Clarke, 2007:222). There clearly is a link between effective management and learners' performance. For instance, effectively managed schools are those schools that often produce high academic achievement consistently over time – for at least two consecutive years, according to Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989:201). English's (2005:442) study revealed that poor school management has been identified as a variable having an impact on learners' performance.

Literature on school management reveals that the principal's management and leadership plays a central role in the success of the school (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2007:3). School managers are tasked with the responsibility of making schools function (Moloji, 2005:96). Moloji (2005:2) further states that schools will function only if they are properly managed, which will subsequently improve the learning outcomes of learners. It is therefore the duty of the management of the school to focus on the core of their work, which is teaching and learning, in order to improve the quality of teaching for the success of learners (Moloji, 2005:2). Similarly, Harris (2012:14–16) argues that learners' outcomes are more likely to improve when leadership

sources are distributed throughout leadership and when principals develop the leadership capabilities of teachers, thereby contributing indirectly to learners' learning outcomes.

Moreover, the principal plays a pivotal role in providing support and guidance to teachers by encouraging them to work hard in order for learners to achieve good results. Teachers are therefore empowered to render effective teaching and learning to improve learners' performance in classroom practice (Hallinger & Heck, 1998:167–176). This advocates that the principal has an influential role to play in creating an environment and circumstances for teachers and learners to improve learners' performance and ensure that they perform well. Therefore, the researcher argues that school principals should be knowledgeable and skilful in effective management. On the other hand, principals should be well trained in managing schools in terms of motivating teachers in the teaching and learning process.

This section review has summarised a management and leadership on learners' performances. Literature shows that effective leadership provides both positive and negative impact on learners' performances, successful implementation of educational leadership. The following section will focus on challenges impacting effective learning.

2.8 CHALLENGES IMPACTING EFFECTIVE LEARNING

2.8.1 Motivation

Various theorists define motivation in different ways. Martin and Dowson (2009:328) explain motivation as a set of interrelated beliefs and emotions that influence and direct behaviour. In the same line, Goetsch (2011:89) explains that to be motivated means that one is driven to do something. Based on the above description, motivation can be explained as a way of influencing someone's behaviour. According to Bush and West-Burnham (1994:224), motivation is something that drives people and makes them feel good about doing those things. Hodgetts (1990:42) defines motivation as a force that pulls a person towards a desired objective. Common among these definitions is that it makes people determined and eager to do their work in harmony and to reach their desired objectives.

Children who perform low or above average academically need the desire or motivation to do well and to succeed at school. If children have a lack of motivation, coupled with low parental involvement in school work, this may cause poor performance. In support of this, Smit and Fourie (2010) state that learners do not learn if they are not motivated. Therefore, learners need to be motivated towards working hard at school, for example by giving them praise for doing well or working hard, and setting realistic goals and expectations and rewarding them if they

meet these expectations. Learners need motivation from both their parents and the school in order for them to perform well.

According to Palestini (2005:64), the theory and research in the area of motivation provide a systematic way of diagnosing the degree of motivation and of prescribing ways of increasing it. The principal has to motivate educators to work towards the achievement of the school's goals. Among the school's goals is learners' performance. Teachers also need to motivate learners to work towards the achievement of Social Studies goals.

2.8.2 Lack of motivating and rewarding individuals

According to Fox (2006:204), performance depends on the motivation and ability of individuals. He states that individuals must be willing to do the job, know how to do it, be able to do it and receive feedback on how they are performing. This implies that if there is a motivation and individual reward, there will be good performance. In support of this, Christie (2008:152) argues that implementation of policy depends partly on people's motivation. This means that people should be motivated to implement policy. Lack of motivation can be on the side of both teachers and learners. The literature reveals that there are reasons for lack of motivation, namely:

- Laziness
- Being too stressed or nervous
- Fear of what others might say
- Fear of failure due to failure in the past
- The feeling or belief that there are other, more important things to do.

The above-mentioned reasons may stifle motivation. Demotivation may contribute to learners losing interest in a subject, and may therefore be the cause of poor performance in that particular subject.

2.8.3 Lack of motivation and support among teachers

Teachers are key role players in the teaching and learning process, because they must play their role to lay a strong foundation for learners' education. Although teachers are regarded as the foundation layers of learners' education, they face challenges such as criticism, as parents and society often perceive them as uncommitted, irresponsible and not devoted. The issue of motivation among teachers is a great concern in Namibia, because if teachers are not motivated they may be inactive and unwilling to go the extra mile to assist learners to perform better. Of course, this influences learners' academic performance. Terhoven (2012:6) claims that

motivation is crucial for change and development. Therefore, teachers need to be motivated in the teaching and learning process. Hence, motivation is an important aspect in the teaching and learning process.

Adeyemo, Oladipupo and Omisore (2013:36) argue that the negative performance of learners in terms of educational goals and objectives can often be associated with the low motivation of teachers. They further state that efficient teaching and high morale will occur when there is strong motivation in terms of salary and innovation. Teachers must therefore be motivated through various ways, which may include education seminars, workshops, upgrading tests, providing the required subject facilities and incentives. This would go a long way in motivating teachers, which will in turn improve learners' performance.

In addition, the study of Adeyemo et al. (2013:36) found that teachers are unhappy with service conditions, uninspired and unmotivated. This means that the outputs and inputs are not adequate and this creates frustration and job disappointment, which in turn may affect the academic performance of learners. Teachers should therefore be allowed to attend conferences, training sessions, seminars and workshops in order to increase their growth and morale to produce at a high level. This may help to improve learners' poor performance, also in Social Studies.

It is clear that motivation has both positive and negative impacts on learners' performances. For that reason, teachers need to be motivated. If teachers are not being motivated, then classroom practice may have influence learners' performances negatively.

2.8.4 Classroom practice

According to Acharya (2009:9), open learning creates possibilities not only for changes in administration and management strategies, but also for the way in which education is designed in terms of content, teaching methods, support for learners and assessment strategies. It requires that learners become involved in what, how and when they want to learn. Furthermore, teaching and learning approaches as well as classroom practice serve as the only way of opening up learners' minds. Teaching and learning classroom practice approaches employed by teachers may contribute to learners' performance.

2.8.5 Overcrowded classrooms

The study of Legotlo, Maaga and Sebego (2002:16) focused on a specific South African context, but lessons can be learned from this. They indicated that overcrowded classrooms in some schools in Potchefstroom are a serious problem. Sichombe, Kapenda and Nambira (2011:92) argue that overcrowded classes contribute towards learners' poor academic performance. In the

same line, Shah and Inamullad (2012), Khan and Iqbal (2012) and Mboweni (2014) maintain that large classroom sizes affect the teaching and learning process, for instance teachers have to face different problems such as poor performance of learners, poor discipline, behaviour problems, noise, evaluation problems and uncontrolled and unmanageable classrooms. In general, in overcrowded classrooms learners are seated closely together, which lead to teachers and learners not being able to work and move freely. In the situation of overcrowded classrooms teachers are limited in terms of walking around the classroom and reaching each and every learner in the classroom. Legotlo, Maaga and Sebego (2002) argue that in the North Western province in South Africa, some schools' class sizes have been identified as a determinant of and a contributing factor to poor academic performance. It was noted that in some schools there are more than 40 learners in one classroom. These conditions lead to other problems, such as unacceptable behaviour, not paying attention to each individual learner, and poor discipline in the classroom during the teaching and learning process. A study by Kraft (cited in Legotlo et al., 2002) revealed that class sizes of above 40 learners have a negative effect on learners' achievement. This may be true, because too large class sizes may cause problems of ineffective classroom management, poor supervision and activities, and poor discipline in the classroom, while small classroom sizes are more manageable and allow individual attention. In addition, large class sizes may also have an influence on teacher performance, which might have a negative spill-over effect on learners' performance.

2.8.6 Lack of trained and qualified teachers

Shinovene (2015) reports that the Minister of Education, Hanse-Imarwa, informed her fellow parliamentarians during the budget discussion of her ministry in March 2015 that the continued shortage of teachers will haunt the country for a long period. She further announced that she is also investigating the number of unqualified and underqualified teachers in the government system and warned the parliamentarians (house) that they will be amazed by the number of unqualified and underqualified teachers in the system. This clearly indicates that Namibia is affected by a shortage of qualified teachers.

Research carried out by a number of researchers proved that Africa has a high shortage of experienced qualified and effective teachers in some learning areas such as Mathematics and Social Studies. Teachers who are untrained and underqualified do not know how to explain the content of Social Studies because they do not have any background to the subject. Therefore, inadequate teacher preparation and teachers' limited background to some extent may contribute

to poor performance in teaching and learning. This means that as a result, learners do not perform well in subjects taught by untrained or unqualified teachers.

2.8.7 Availability of teaching resources and use of teaching and learning materials

Adekunle (2001:2) describes teaching resources as anything that can assist the teacher in promoting meaningful teaching and learning. He gives examples of resources in Social Studies, namely humans, places, material resources and instructional material. This section deals with the availability of teaching resources and the use of teaching and learning materials.

Kandumbu (2005) identified a lack of resources as one of the challenges facing the primary education sector in Namibia. This refers to the lack of libraries; computer facilities; and teaching and learning materials, such as textbooks, atlases, maps and education posters, in some primary schools in Namibia. In addition, many learners do not have the required textbooks and sometimes a class of 40 learners is required to share a few copies of a textbook. This researcher concurs with Kandumbu's argument due to the researcher's own experiences in Namibia, 2011, when learners were required to share Social Studies textbooks as well as atlases, of which there were only 11 for the entire school.

As a Social Studies teacher the researcher often observed teachers trying to collect some resources on their own due to the lack of available, sufficient teaching and learning resources or materials at some schools. Similarly, Stodolysky (1998:9) states that Social Studies programmes place emphasis on learners' ability to find information in a variety of resources. This is because some programmes emphasise inquiry and critical thinking; others pursue social and affective goals along with cognitive outcomes. The researcher's argument in this regard is that if the Social Studies programme emphasises learners' abilities, this may not contribute towards the poor performance of the learners.

Some schools have sufficient resources, but teachers do not use them effectively. In some cases, teachers may have borrowed the effective materials from the subject head teacher, but do not adapt them at all. Teachers need to adapt teaching and learning materials to suit their learners, while the head of department and the subject head have to monitor how teachers are adapting the borrowed materials and implementing them. They should help teachers and encourage them to adapt the resources borrowed. The next section will focus on parental involvement in their children's education.

2.9 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

2.9.1 Parental involvement in learners' academic performance

A school is a unit within a community, and can only exist through the operation of the school community. Therefore, the establishment of a good community relationship is key to success, as is parents participating in decision making, school activities, and problem solving, providing assistance and offering services to the school.

Various researchers pose different philosophies in terms of what they understand parental involvement might be. Bracke and Corts (2012:191) argue that “parental involvement cannot be explained in a simple term since there is little consensus about what constitutes being involved”. In the same line, Young, Austin and Growe (2011) argue that the meaning of parental involvement may differ, because it depends on why and by whom the term is used. Deslandes and Bertrand (2005:165) refer to parental involvement as a parent's role in the lives of children at home and at school. Waterman (2008) states that parental involvement in the educational context is generally associated with methods in which parents become involved in schools, as well as how they support their children's education. This means that parents need to be involved in their children's academic activities at school and at home. Generally, although parents are expected to participate in their children's education, it seems not all them are doing so, and Behr (1998:2003) claims that only few parents visit the school in connection with their children's progress or behaviour. He further states that many parents, particularly in the lower-income groups, and especially if they have experienced school failure themselves, view schools as hostile and forbidding institutions. This means that some parents do not become involved in their children's education, for example by monitoring their children's school activities and motivating them to study for tests and examinations. When their children are not performing well, they start blaming the teachers.

Although teachers in Namibia may contribute to learners' poor performance, they are not the only cause of poor performance, as it could be caused by different issues. It is important for parents to find the reason for their children's poor performance, especially if they are failing, to come up with good suggestions for how to help these specific learners so that they can perform to their full potential. It is sometimes difficult to figure out what causes learners' poor school performance without proper investigation.

Parents' involvement is furthermore often lacking in terms of supplying the basic requirements of their children, such as stationery and food. This researcher speaks from experience that some

children come to school without pens or exercise books, and some come to school hungry. Another problem is parents not assisting their children with their homework. Some parents do not even care to look at their children's books, to ask them if they have homework or not and to help them study at home. Some learners refuse to study adequately for tests and examinations and perform well because their parents are not putting in more effort to help them with school activities and to encourage them to study hard. Some parents fail to fulfil their roles and responsibilities towards their children's activities. This may contribute to learners' poor performance. Mbugua, Kibet, Muthaa and Nkonke (2012:90) state that most parents and guardians did not receive any education above secondary school education, and therefore they may not be good role models for their children in academic matters. This implies that if parents' and guardians' education background is lacking, it may influence their lack of understanding of the importance of education. It may cause disinterest in their children's school activities. However, the researcher is not convinced that this is a valid reason for parents' and guardians' lack of involvement in their children's education process, as this should rather be a motivation to them to encourage their children to do well in school activities. They should help their children where they need assistance and uplift them to have a better future.

Parents need to become actively involved in their children's schoolwork by talking with their teachers, reviewing homework and helping their children study. First, however, the child's performance should be discussed with the teacher to ensure that the child does not have any learning difficulties that are causing poor performance. Parents should develop a daily study routine for after school, during which children can study and do their homework. They should communicate with their children about their school activities and help their children to understand that success has a lot to do with how much time and effort is put into a task or school activity. All these efforts can make a difference in their children's learning and may help them to perform better than before.

Acharya (2009:89) suggests that schools can bridge the distance between parents and schools by surveying parents to determine their concerns and opinions about the school, including learners' poor performance. After the survey, the schools should begin planning parent-involvement activities by asking the parents of learners about their needs, for example information, training and decision-making opportunities, to support their children's academic achievement. The researcher contends with the idea of a survey first and parents' involvement thereafter. The argument here is that it is best if parents start being actively involved from the day they enrol their children in the school, because waiting for teachers to do a survey may take too long.

Moreover, Kandumbu (2005:67) argues that when parents are informed about what goes on in schools, they can play a more active role in school activities and encourage their children to attend school and complete their homework on time. She further states that parents may also be able to encourage teachers to work hard and improve poor results. The researcher therefore suggests that schools should provide more flexible times for parents to visit the schools and meet with teachers in order to discuss their children's school or subject issues. Regular information sessions and meetings will make it worthwhile to contribute to their children's academic achievement. In such meetings, parents should be given opportunities to address learners on any important issues concerning their academic work. By doing so the researcher believes parents may develop greater competence as they learn to make decisions and take responsibility within the school.

In addition, school programmes might be designed to develop two-way communication between schools and parents, and to involve parents in decision making, planning, assessment and curriculum development. If parents are not given such recognition or if their participation is not facilitated and encouraged, effective teaching and learning are obstructed and hindered. Negative attitudes of parents towards parental involvement, lack of parent empowerment and lack of support of schools all contribute to a lack of parental involvement in teaching and learning. The inactive involvement of parents in their children's teaching and learning process contributes to the poor academic performance of learners.

2.9.2 Parental involvement in children's homework

Peters (2014:23) explains that parental involvement in school context often requires parents to attend general and specific meetings, meet their children's teachers and be involved in school activities such as sport and fundraising. In addition, parents can be considered involved in their children's education if they help their children with homework and monitor children's social behaviour. According to Frempong (2011:23), parental involvement is thought to decrease as children move from junior to senior school subjects. She further argues that this means that some parents in Namibia stop caring about monitoring the academic progress of their children because of the perception that they are grown up and can do their schoolwork on their own. This idea is totally contested by this researcher, as children should never be left on their own with their studies before they reach tertiary education, as they cannot study on their own without anyone monitoring them.

Therefore, children need to be monitored by their parents at home to see whether they are doing their homework. In addition, parents should check the academic progress of their children regularly. Researchers on parental involvement in children's homework (Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed & Jones, 2001, cited in Frempong, 2011) focus on understanding why parents become involved in their children's homework, which strategies they employ, and how such involvement contributes to their children's academic performance. The researcher supports the argument that parents choose to become involved in their children's homework because they believe they should be involved or because they want to be involved.

Moreover, Kandumbu (2005:67) argues that if parents are informed about what goes on in schools, they can play a role in school activities and encourage their children to attend school and complete their homework on time. She further states that parents may also be able to encourage teachers to work hard at improving poor results. Therefore, schools should regularly and consistently invite parents to school activities as well as keep them updated with information about school performance.

In this section the reviewed literature on parental involvement provided valuable insight into views regarding not only on their involvement in their children's education, but also the possible types of support parents they could offer regarding their children's educational needs such as providing stationary, assistance with homework and some school activities. The following section will discuss how attitudes may affect learners' academic performances.

2.10 ATTITUDES AFFECTING LEARNERS' LEARNING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Learners' learning may be affected by negative attitudes. 'Attitude' is explained by Hornby (2010:80) as the way one thinks and feels about something or somebody, or the way one behaves towards somebody or something that shows how one thinks and feels. Both teachers' and learners' attitudes may affect learners' learning and academic performance.

2.10.1 Learners' attitudes

Learners' attitudes towards their subjects, teachers and other learners are important in the academic learning process. Not only learners' attitudes towards the above-mentioned aspects are important, as their attitudes may also influence the introduction and implementation of the specific approach of the curriculum. Learners can develop a positive attitude towards teaching and learning if they are familiar with the topics and can draw from their own experience during

the teaching and learning process. It is therefore necessary that teachers determine and consider learners' attitude towards the subject before introducing lessons.

Moreover, learners' attitude towards the subject matter often leads to a process of selective attention. For instance, what the learner learns is determined in part by his or her readiness to receive the subject content. If learners show positive attitudes towards the teacher and subject, it may help the learners to concentrate during the lessons and to perform better in that particular subject. If learners show interest in Social Studies, for instance, it may influence them to participate in classroom discussions willingly and will enable them to do their best in that subject.

Not only do learners' positive attitudes contribute to their academic performance, their negative attitudes may also have an impact on the learning process. Negative attitudes may cause poor performance in schools. If learners do not like their teacher, or are irritated by the teacher's voice, for example, they may not be able to follow the lesson presentations and perform at their optimum level. These negative thoughts may influence the learners not to listen to the instructions of the particular teacher.

Some learners dislike the subjects Mathematics and Social Studies and therefore show no interest in the subjects. These negative attitudes towards the subjects can hamper the learning process. Learners' attitudes are not the only ones requiring scrutiny in terms of attitude issues. Teachers' attitudes also need to be studied, because they are important in learners' learning process.

2.10.2 Teachers' attitudes

Positive attitudes and actions employed by teachers can ultimately make a difference in the lives of their learners. Negative attitudes and actions of teachers will be emulated by their learners. Attitudes encompass a teacher's level of enthusiasm, resourcefulness, knowledge of the subject and willingness to help, and play an overall role in classroom performance. Gourneau (2005:3–6) argues that attitudes and actions include genuine caring and kindness of the teacher, willingness to share the responsibility involved in a classroom, a sincere sensitivity to learner diversity, motivation to provide meaningful learning experiences for all learners, and enthusiasm for stimulating learners' creativity.

Effective teachers willingly share information with learners, are enthusiastic and patient, care about their learners and are motivational and rewarding. They encourage learners to participate in classroom activities as well as to work very hard to do their best in their academic work.

Teachers' negative attitude towards Social Studies makes it difficult for them to create learner interest in the subject, motivate learners and influence learners' attitudes towards the subject positively.

Teachers should establish a sharing environment. Effective teachers should not overrule learners instead of encouraging the exchange of ideas in the classroom. It is also important to allow learners to participate and take responsibility to do their activities on their own. Both teachers and learners need to contribute to the learning process. Therefore, each individual teacher as well as the learners need to look at their own attitudes so that learning can make a difference in their lives.

Encouragement of learners relates to the importance of stimulating learners' creativity. Effective teachers may open learners' minds by teaching them to think critically and develop the ability of reasoning. Learners may appreciate and be motivated when teachers design lessons that consider their interests, skills and needs. Encouragement can help learners to work hard to follow their teachers' directions. Therefore, if learners are not encouraged to study or motivated by their teacher, they may end up not performing well.

Good academic performance or results are often obtained when the learning process is facilitated through a positive relationship between teachers and learners. In some cases, this good relationship becomes so intense that learners start to emulate and try to adopt the characteristics of teachers, such as speech, and experience the desire to be close to their teacher. However, if there is no sound relationship between teachers and learners, it may cause learners to hate the subject and not pay attention to that particular subject.

In the researcher's experience, some teachers show consistent negative attitudes towards subject preparation. Sometimes, these teachers become visibly angry due to frustration if they cannot handle the classroom and end up shouting instead of teaching. Some end up using "If only" statements, for example "If only I had enough time", "If only I had fewer learners" or "If only my learners come to class better prepared". Therefore, a shift in teachers' attitudes and perceptions may contribute to poor performance, because they are not taking action – instead of putting more effort into their teaching, they simply use "If only" statements, which will not solve any problems. Teachers should change their negative attitudes towards Social Studies as well as other subjects.

Attitudes are difficult to change, because they are such complicated constructs, but when teachers recognise the components of attitudes that negatively impact on them, they can take

action to address them. Being proactive and taking steps to improve their attitudes towards subjects can help teachers to be more effective, knowledgeable and enthusiastic Social Studies teachers. Positive attitudes make it easy to approach the content of Social Studies, while negative attitudes make it difficult to approach the content and implement the new curriculum. Therefore, teachers need to be influenced in order for them to positively change their attitudes towards the subject, for example by exposing them to the advantages of using a specific effective approach, offering workshops, or observing somebody using it and discussing the weaknesses and strengths after the observation. If teachers do not have positive attitudes towards implementing the recommended teaching learner-centred approach, they will experience difficulty in terms of allowing learners to participate in the lessons and do the activities. This may lead to learners' poor performance in the subject.

In this section, the negative attitudes of both teachers and learners were explained. For example, if teachers do not have a positive attitude towards implementing the recommended teaching methods then they will most probably experience difficulty in terms of allowing learners to participate in lessons and make them interested in the subject.

2.11 TEACHING METHODS USED IN TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES

There are several teaching methods that teachers can use to improve the performance of learners in Social Studies. The researcher drew on the work of Jacobs, Vakalisa and Gawe (2004:175) who, on the one hand, explain a teaching method as a particular technique a teacher uses to help learners gain the knowledge they need to achieve a desired outcome; and on the other hand, define teaching as a process by which one interacts with another person with the intention of influencing the learning of that person.

Jacobs et al. (2004:175) argue that there is a need for effective teaching methods for Social Studies. The need is seen in terms of making Social Studies a more interesting, vigorous and living subject as well as to overcome learners' poor performance in the subject. Jacobs et al. (2004:175), Mezeobi (2002, cited in Okogu, 2011), Jacobs, Vakalisa and Gawe (2004) and Adekunle (2011) identified many kinds of teaching methods that may be applicable in Social Studies. These include assignments, discussions, simulation, construction, laboratory work, lectures, inquiries, observation, questioning, problem solving, projects, reviews, sources, storytelling, supervision, textbooks and socialised classroom recitations. Although there are many teaching methods and techniques that can be used to teach Social Studies, no single

method is best for all situations. A few teaching methods for Social Studies are discussed in the section that follows.

2.11.1 Simulation method

The simulation method advocates the creation of a model of the real world in which participants assume different roles and make decisions about issues raised as well as difficulties encountered. This method is designed to reflect the existing and inherited problems of people in society.

2.11.2 Construction method

According to McCray (2007:7), the construction method is an approach of instruction based on a descriptive theory about the thought process involved in learning. According to McCray, in this method learners actively construct or build new ideas on concepts based on current and past knowledge. In the same line, Du Plessis and Muzaffar (2010:34) argue that in the constructivist classroom, there is a notable emphasis on social and communication skills as well as on the exchange of ideas. In short, the construction method allows learners to think critically and come up with new ideas to share with one another. Adekunle (2011:6) suggests the use of the construction method for topics in Social Studies such as the family structure, government systems, social organisations and cultural patterns. He further argues that there should be thorough supervision when the construction method involves the use of sharp objects such as knives and saws. The concern of the researcher with this method is that this method can be harmful if done without supervision. Another challenge of the constructivist method confirmed by Awases (2015:19) is that the implementation of constructivist pedagogical approaches is hindered by the lack of basic books and supplies, overcrowding of classes, lack of textbooks, low salaries, and administrative demands on teachers' time.

2.11.3 Project method

This method can be carried out by an individual learner or group of learners cooperating to produce something much larger than an individual learner project. Adeyemo et al. (2013) and Adekunle (2011) revealed that the project method involves doing concrete things and is self-motivated. However, this method requires extremely careful planning. This means that if teachers try to use this method without proper planning, it may negatively affect the learning process.

Although a great number of teaching method literature reveals a number of teaching methods that can be used in Social Studies, not all Social Studies teachers apply them. Many teachers still employ the teacher-centred approach, which does not allow learners to be actively involved in

the lesson through asking questions and sharing ideas about the subject matter. This view is also supported by Makuwa (2004) and Matjila (2004), who revealed that the majority of Namibian teachers hardly apply the learner-centred method due to laziness and lack of English proficiency. They further regard the teacher-centred method as ineffective, as it does not test the pre-knowledge of the learners and does not indicate learners' learning difficulties. The researcher agrees with these ideas in the sense that the teacher-centred method does not allow learners to think critically and develop the ability of reasoning, as with this method, the teachers are talking more than the learners.

2.11.4 Laboratory method

The laboratory method in Social Studies involves the employment of source material, supplementary references, mechanical devices, audio-visual aids and many other life-like activities to supplement textbook instructions. This method of teaching does not refer to a specific place or specific class period; it can occur anytime and anyplace, for example in the regular classroom, outside the classroom or in a specially designed room. The literature reveals that this method can be used for almost all the topics of Social Studies. It can be applied by both primary and secondary school teachers.

2.11.5 Lecture method

This method is the most commonly used by teachers. Teachers do all the talking throughout the lesson and learners are expected to sit, listen and take notes of the important subject matter. This method is mostly teacher-centred; hence there is little or no interaction with the learners. The teaching method literature argues that the lecture method is good for large class sizes, it can be used in the absence of instructional materials, it can be used in case of a shortage of manpower, and it can be used to cover the scope of the syllabus within a short period.

Despite these advantages, this method has the disadvantage of possible lack of understanding during the learning process. It also promotes the teacher-centred approach rather than the learner-centred approach. In the learner-centred approach, learners feel free to express themselves by contributing their ideas. The researcher argues that lessons become boring if this method is not combined with other methods and the use of teaching aids. Furthermore, this kind of method may lead to loss of interest by the learners if not properly organised. The concern in this study is that if this method is used more than others or is not combined with any method, it may cause poor performance in Social Studies.

2.11.6 Inquiry method

This method encourages different thinking, allows learners to find out information by themselves and generates enthusiasm for examining issues logically. The literature revealed that the process of the inquiry method involves the identification of problems and the analysis of information in order to reach possible solutions. For example, learners may be asked to find out the reasons for the fuel shortage and power failures in Namibia. This may require very desirable inquiry techniques to emphasise the use of high-level thinking.

According to Adekunle (2011), the inquiry method can only be successful if teachers are using it properly by explaining to their learners what to do or by formulating the steps or the structure of what to do for them. If learners are not taught ways of inquiring, they may use the wrong process and get the wrong information. This may affect their performance because they may not be able to do inquiries without a clear picture or good guidance.

2.11.7 Discussion method

Jacobs et al. (2004:176) define the discussion method as an essential teaching method in which the teacher uses a cooperative learning strategy. A cooperative strategy is a way of teaching in which the learners work together to ensure that all members in the groups have learnt and understand the same content (Jacobs et al., 2004:209). It can also be described as a discourse between two or more people with a definite purpose in view. In the discussion method, learners have to use the information they have previously acquired to express their ideas. Furthermore, discussion expands and deepens learners' knowledge and gives them opportunities to manipulate the information to suit their needs. This means that discussion serves the purpose of subject matter. Therefore, teachers need to learn how to work with groups and the activities need to be organised very well. The preparation of such activities requires considerable effort, time and attention.

The discussion method involves the use of small groups of learners, where each group will have a leader who initiates the discussion. Every member of the group should be given equal opportunity to make a contribution to any discussion. The researcher's concern regarding this method is the time required for each member to participate in the discussion, especially in large classes. If the time is up without all members having had a turn to say something, the teacher will not reach the lesson objectives, and this may affect the learning process. The discussion method emphasises the exchange of views between teachers and learners as well as among learners themselves.

The teacher should facilitate the group discussion in order to reach the objective of the group discussion as well as that of the lesson. In this way, the problem of poor performance in Social Studies may be overcome. This method supports the learner-centred approach. In a group discussion, every member of the group should share information about the subject content or a topic. The more learners are involved in group discussions, the more diverse the information and views that can be covered. It is important to have a group discussion because learners have different opinions that may be relevant to the lesson. Group discussions may be directed by learners' different historical backgrounds and cultures. For example, if a teacher is busy with the topic of culture, it might be a good idea to let the learners discuss and share in groups what they have experienced in their own cultures. Later on they may share as a whole class. In this way, learners can learn more about different cultures.

If teachers and learners do not discuss the Social Studies content and share ideas about the subject, and teachers let learners discuss these alone without facilitating them, it may lead learners to misinterpreting the content and ending up sharing the wrong information among them.

Jotia and Matlale (2011:119) report that teachers who did not receive special training in Social Studies indicated that they were not aware of any special ways of teaching methods in Social Studies. This shows that some of the Social Studies teachers do not know whether there are recommended teaching methods for Social Studies. In addition, Jotia and Matlale (2011) indicate that in their study, Social Studies teachers revealed that they are teaching the subject because they do not have a choice. This shows that these teachers may not be comfortable with teaching Social Studies. The concern here is, if teachers are only teaching because there is no choice, will this not affect the teaching and learning process as well as the academic performance of learners?

Apart from the teaching methods mentioned earlier, there are other teaching methods that can be used in Social Studies. These teaching methods in the Namibian context are called teacher-centred and learner-centred approaches. According to the discussion document titled *Learner-centred education in the Namibian context* (MoE, 2003:1), learner-centred education was introduced in 1991 as a foundation policy for the new education system in Namibia and replaced the teacher-centred teaching approach, which was the only teaching method used before Namibian independence in 1990. The document reveals that there have been different understandings of what is meant by learner-centred education and how to put it into practice. This means that teachers understand learner-centred education in different ways, and therefore

some do not know how to implement it and others find it difficult to implement it. Furthermore, the discussion document (MoE, 2003:1–2) reports that research done in Namibia on learner-centred education indicated that the circulars and syllabi, textbooks, teaching materials, assessment and examinations developed during the 1990s are not constitutively based on learner-centred principles. This means that circulars and syllabi for school are not revised based on learner-centred principles in the ongoing curriculum-development change process. As a result, teachers may not have clear ideas on how to implement the learner-centred approach.

following figure illustrates the teacher-centred approach versus the learner-centred approach.

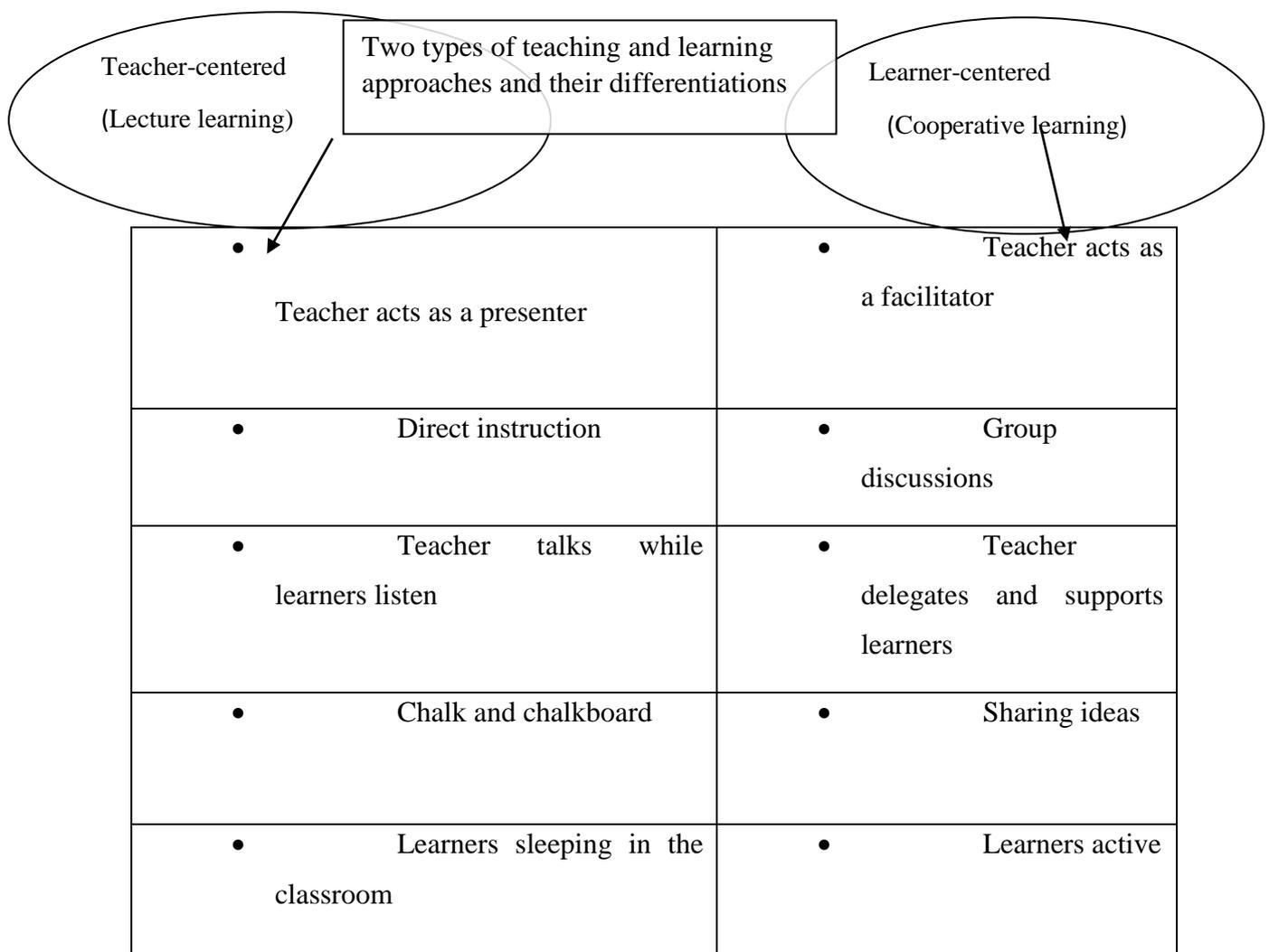


Figure 2.1: The teacher-centred versus the learner-centred approach

Bitzer (2001:43) defines cooperative learning as the utilisation of learner groups in order to enable learners to maximise their learning and that of their peers, while Hijzen, Bockaert and Vedder (2007:215) claim that learners of any age or ability can achieve more by working collaboratively than working alone or passively receiving information from the teacher.

Figure 2.1 above illustrates the two different kinds of teaching and learning approaches. In the learner-centred approach (cooperative teaching and learning approach), learners are required to participate in the teaching and learning process. In this approach, learners often work in groups and are encouraged to share their ideas with the teacher and among themselves. The approach advocates group discussion and teachers must delegate and support learners in their discussion. Killen (2010:221) states that teachers have to spend considerable time helping learners to develop skills which they need to help one another in their group discussions. This may require more time, to the effect that the teacher might not complete the syllabus.

In the learner-centred approach, teachers and learners play an equally active role in the learning process. Learners' learning is measured through both formal and informal forms of assessment, including group projects and classroom participation.

On the other hand, in the teacher-centred approach (lecture teaching and learning approach), teachers talk more while learners are listening. In this approach, learners are viewed as empty vessels that receive information through teaching and direct instruction. Sometimes teachers write on the chalkboard and learners are requested to take notes.

If teachers were taught in the lecture method, it is hard for them to use the cooperative method. Moreover, the researcher argues that some teachers are not trained during their certification process in the cooperative method, but rather in the lecture method. The teacher-centred approach may have a negative effect on learners' behaviour. For example, teachers may enjoy teaching, but this style of teaching can be boring to learners and in the process they lose concentration, which naturally might lead to poor performance.

In the light of this discussion, it is firstly important for teachers to learn more about the learners in their classrooms and to determine which methods will best suit all the learners in the classroom to enable them to learn at their best. Secondly, teachers should identify the learners who lose concentration during the teaching and learning process and move such learners to sit in the front of the class or near the teacher's desk. Lastly, the researcher points out that overcoming poor performance in the subject depends on the way in which teachers apply the methods recommended as suitable, appropriate and effective for teaching Social Studies.

Jacobs et al. (2004) state that there is a need for effective teaching in Social Studies. Mezeobi (2002, cited in Okogu, 2011) and Adekunle (2011) identified teaching methods that may be applicable in Social Studies, but none of them studied the factors that may contribute to learners' poor performance in Social Studies. However, Acharya's study (2009) revealed that schools can bridge the distance between parents and schools by surveying parents to determine their concerns and opinions about the school, including poor performance, but poor performance is not discussed in detail. In addition, during the literature review the researcher could not find any studies on learners' poor performance in Social Studies in the Namibian context. This is a gap worth addressing, and therefore this study investigated factors that may contribute to learners' poor performance in Social Studies in Namibia.

In this section, factors that could be associated with poor performance in Social Studies were discussed. For example, Aekunle(2001) and Adeyemo(2013) discuss different methods which can be used in teaching Social Studies, e.g. project,discussion, simulation, lecture, laboratory and inquiry methods. However, they did not explain the value and effectiveness of these methods. Jotia and Matlale (2011:119) made findings that some teachers are not aware of these teaching methods. It must be noted that some teachers are teaching Social Studies optionally and are thus not necessarily trained in the pedagogies and methodologies of the subject.

2.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher reviewed various literature related to the factors that may contribute to learners' poor performance in Social Studies. Adekunle (2011), Etsey (2005), Aston (2011) and Dhurumraj (2013) identified education policies, curriculum change, and ineffective management of schools, overcrowded classrooms, lack of trained teachers and other aspects as issues that may influence learners' academic performance. Teachers are expected to cope with the changes taking place in the Namibian education system, meet the requirements of different policies, and make them work. However, Kapenda et a.l reports that some teachers have not received any guidance on how to implement educational policies. The study also revealed that overcrowded classes contribute to learners' poor academic performance.

Principals and management are regarded as leaders in the curriculum change process. Therefore, their skills, attitudes and behaviour need to be developed to manage resistance to change in order to ensure the effective and successful implementation of the curriculum. It was noted that curriculum implementation fails due to ineffective management. Kandumbu (2005) argues that teachers lack subject content to implement educational programmes, including assessment

policy and teaching practice. This shows that there is a need for trained teachers. The review also indicated that a lack of trained teachers is one of the barriers to the successful implementation of assessment policy. This review brought the researcher to raise the question of how teachers assess learners' progress in classrooms. Furthermore, the researcher identified a gap between two educational policies, namely the promotional requirement policy and automatic promotion policy, as these policies are contradicting each other. For example, the promotional policy indicates that learners should be promoted to the next grade when they meet the basic competencies, whereas the automatic promotion policy stipulates that learners who repeat a grade or a phase more than once should be transferred to the next grade even if they did not meet the promotion requirements. However, there is no debate on this issue in the literature.

This chapter highlighted various factors that may affect learners' academic performance. However, these factors do not allow one to draw conclusions regarding poor performance in the Karas Region, Namibia, hence the purpose of this research was to determine the possible causes of learners' poor performance in Social Studies in this region. It is in this respect that this study hopes to make a modest contribution in the case of the Karas Region. The research design and methodology are outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reviewed the literature that forms the foundation for this research. The focal point now shifts towards the research design and methodology for this study. This chapter focuses on the research design, the research paradigm, the research purpose, as well as the research methods used in the data collection. A motivation and description are also given on how the research sampling was done, as well as how validity, reliability and ethical considerations were addressed.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a master plan that provides clear guidance on how the study is to be conducted. Mouton (2001) and Yin (2011) describe the research design as a blueprint for conducting research. Similarly, Yin (2009:27) explains that the research design is much more than a work plan, while Flick (2014:112) agrees that the research design concerns issues of how to plan a study. Mouton (2005:161) states that the research design is used to describe and evaluate the performance of programmes in their natural settings, focusing on the process of implementation rather than a quantifiable outcome. The main purpose of the design for this study was to ensure that the evidence addresses the initial research question.

Peshkin (1993, cited in Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:136–137) claims that qualitative research studies typically serve one or more of the following purposes. These purposes apply to this study.

- *Description*: The research can reveal the nature of certain situations, processes, relationships, systems or people. Description in this study reveals the nature of the situation of learners' poor performance in Social Studies at upper primary school level in the Karas Region in Namibia. Therefore, the research questions are set as a process to investigate the relationship of the factors that may contribute to poor academic performance in Social Studies. Furthermore, an appropriate research design was selected based on the research problem of this study to investigate the factors that may contribute to the learners' poor performance in Social Studies at upper primary school level (grades 5 to 7) in Karas Region, Namibia.

- *Interpretation*: The study may enable the researcher to gain new insight into a particular phenomenon, develop new concepts or theoretical perspectives about the phenomenon and/or discover the problem that exists within the phenomenon.
- *Verification*: This refers to the researcher being able to test the validity of a certain assumption, claim theoretical or generalisations within real-world context. This study relates to this purpose in the sense that the study tested the validity of the assumptions by drawing up a research question and sub-questions and through interviews, observations and document analysis.
- *Evaluation*: The research may provide a means through which the researcher can judge the effectiveness of particular policies, practices or innovations. In this study, the researcher investigated and evaluated the effectiveness of school management in terms of learners' academic performance.

See Figure 3.1 for a schematic presentation of the research design used in this qualitative case study.

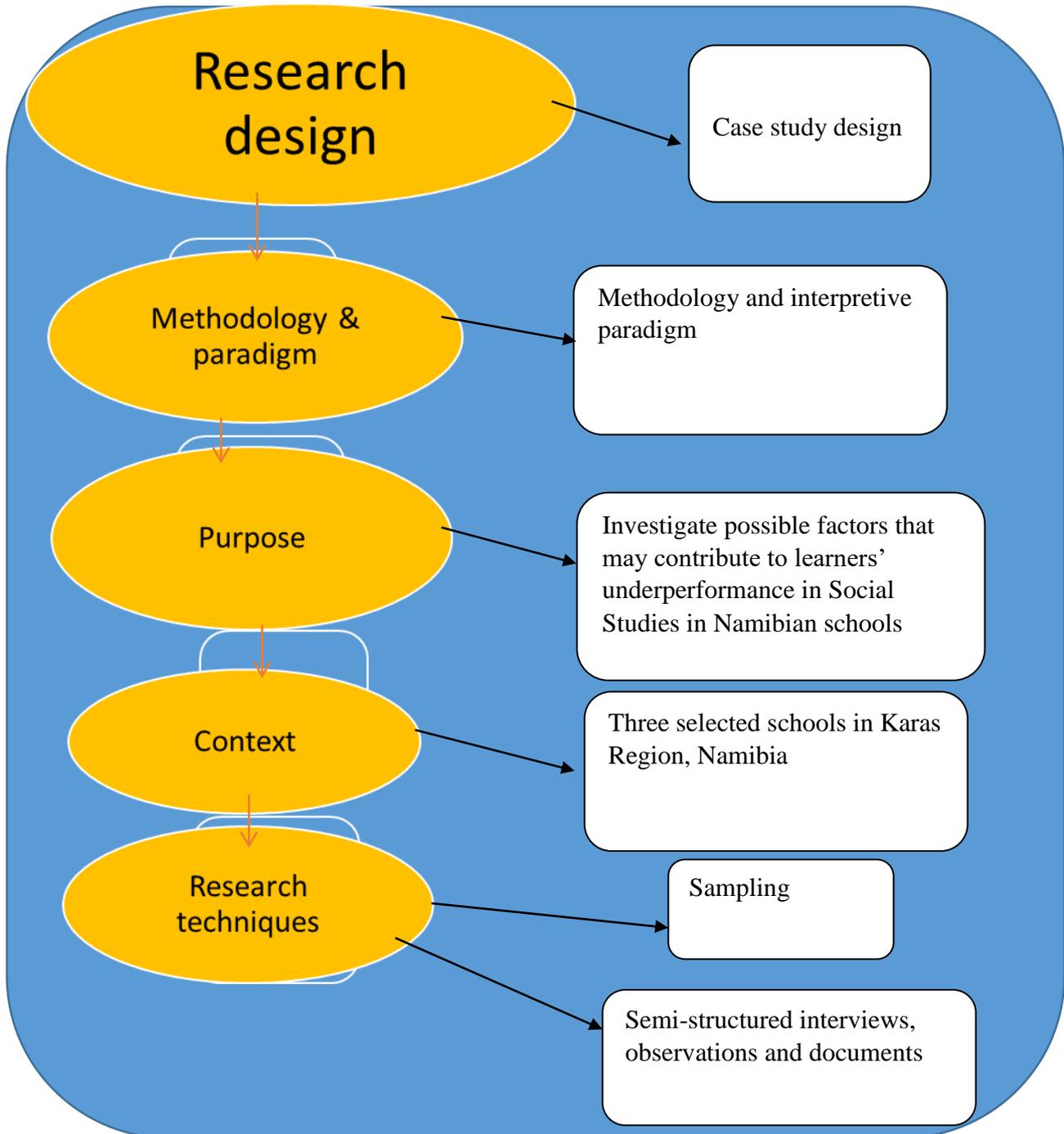


Figure 3.1: Schematic presentation of research design

Figure 3.1 illustrates the research design as an effective plan and foundation for this study. More details about the systematic research design are provided in the following section.

3.3 CASE STUDY DESIGN

This study had a case study design, involving three selected schools in the Karas Region, Namibia. Yin (2009:2) defines case study design as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context especially where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. In the same line, Rule and John (2011:15) define a case study as a systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in a specific context in order to generate knowledge. This means that a case study is an in-depth inquiry of a particular case within a real-life situation. In the context of this study, the case was underperformance in Social Studies in grades 5 to 7 in Namibian schools. Therefore, in this study the researcher applied a case study to investigate the possible causes of learners’ poor performance over a seven-year period in Social Studies in three selected schools in the Karas Region, Namibia.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Kandumbu (2005:30) refers to methodology as meta-theoretical narratives such as positivism, interpretivism and critical theory, which frame educational research. This means that methodology is a theory of knowledge and an interpretive framework guiding a particular research project. In this study, the researcher worked within the interpretive paradigm to investigate underperformance in Social Studies of three selected schools in Namibia. Maree (2011:715) argues that from the interpretivist perspective of a case study the researcher’s intent is to understand how participants relate and interact with significant others in a specific situation and how they make meaning of the phenomenon. In this regard, this study applied the interpretive approach as a research framework to assist the researcher during the data-generation process to understand the factors that may contribute to the phenomenon. Moreover, in this study, a case study methodology was used to explore the experiences and challenges of Social Studies teachers in their teaching in order to determine the possible factors that may contribute to learners’ underperformance in Social Studies. An appropriate interpretive methodology was chosen to guide the researcher to generate the data as well as to answer the research question. The methodology was shaped by the methods that were used in this study to generate data, namely interviews, observations and document analysis.

3.5 RESEARCH PARADIGM

In Chapter 1 of this study, it was evident that Grade 5 to 7 learners from three selected schools in Namibia have underperformed in Social Studies for the period of seven years (2008–2014). It was therefore necessary for the researcher to identify the appropriate paradigm to use in the research. According to Le Grange (2014:2), paradigms are frameworks that serve as maps or guides for scientific/research communities, determining important problems, issues for the members to address and acceptable theories as well as methods to solve identified problem issues. Similarly, Babbie (2004:33) refers to a paradigm as a framework of observation and understanding that shapes both what we see and how we understand it. This means that a paradigm is essentially a whole framework of beliefs and methods within which research takes place. Lather (1992), Connoles (1993), Mertens (1998) and Creswell (2007; 2009), they all researched on the four well-known types of research paradigms: positivist, critical, postmodernism and interpretive. Each of these paradigms intends to answer three fundamental questions: Firstly, what is the nature of reality and what is there to be known about it (ontological)? Secondly, what is the nature of knowledge and the relation between the researcher and participants (epistemological)? And lastly, how can a researcher obtain the knowledge, skills and understand the methodological?

An interpretive paradigm was selected as a framework to guide the researcher in this study. This paradigm was chosen as a framework for this study because it offers more flexibility for perceiving and understanding reality. The interpretive paradigm also allows one to interact closely with the participants. It created an opportunity for the researcher to attempt to gain insight and form a clear understanding of what the school principals and teachers' experienced during the educational transformation as well as curriculum change, including that of the Social Studies curriculum. The interpretive paradigm afforded the opportunity to the researcher to gain better understanding of the possible factors that may affect Grade 5 to 7 learners' performance in Social Studies in a specific context, namely the Karas Region, Namibia. By using an interpretive paradigm, the information gathered in this study was not deconstructed, but constructed from the experiences of the researcher, school principals and Social Studies teachers of the selected schools for the study and the dialogue that took place between them within a particular context.

3.6 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

3.6.1 Introduction

This study was conducted at three primary schools located in the southern part of the Karas Region in Namibia. The participants were teachers of Social Studies and the school principals of the selected schools. The study focused on investigating the possible causes of learners' poor performance in Social Studies at the upper primary school level in Namibia. The researcher decided to demarcate the study into two parts: the selected school principals and Social Studies teachers. This is because it was deemed that school principals may be able to provide relevant information about challenges towards the learners' academic performance, while Social Studies teachers may have experience of teaching Social Studies and may identify the challenges towards teaching and learning. As it was difficult to separate the phenomenon under study from the context of the specific schools, a qualitative case study within an interpretive paradigm was chosen as the research design. The following map shows where this study was undertaken. The highlighted part is of the Karas Region of Namibia where the three selected schools are situated.

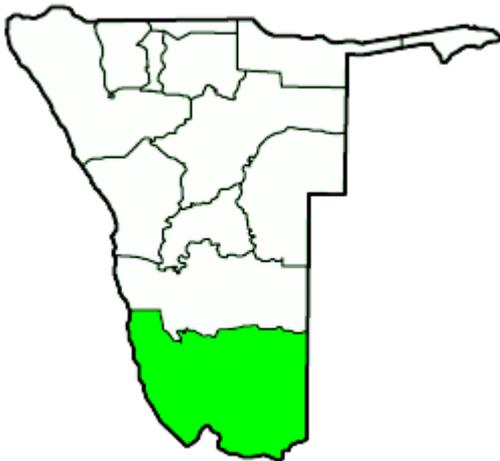


Figure 3.2: Thirteen educational regions in Namibia and location of the Karas Region

(Source: https://en.wikimedia.org/wiki//karas_region)

3.6.2 A brief description of the context of the study: Karas Region

This section entails a brief description of the educational region where this study was undertaken. The Namibian map above illustrates the 13 educational regions, including Karas Region where the three selected schools can be found. Karas Region takes its name from the Nama word *Karas*, which means quiver tree. This famous tree is the symbol of the southern Namibia Karas Region. The Karas Region is situated in the Namibian southern area, as can be

seen from the map (Figure 3.2), and shares a long border in the south and east with the Northern Cape province of South Africa. Domestically, it borders only the Hardap Region to the north of Namibia. This region also incorporates the following towns Lüderitz, Keetmanshoop, Karasburg, Berseba and Oranjemund. The Karas Region possesses large amounts of natural resources such as fish and diamonds.

The Karas Region offers easy access to travellers who wish to visit famous places such as the Fish River Canyon, the largest canyon in Africa; Ai-Ais, where one can find natural warm water; the Kalahari and Namib deserts; Lüderitz and other famous places. The Karas Educational Region has 49 schools with a total of 20 110 learners (www.Nantu.org.na/school.htm 2009-2015). Among these 49 schools, three schools were selected by the researcher to participate in this study.

3.7 SAMPLING

3.7.1 Introduction

It is very important for every researcher to identify and carefully select the appropriate sample for her or his study. According to Denscombe (2003:11), the sample needs to be carefully selected if there is to be any confidence that the findings from the sample are valid and reliable.

The school principals and Social Studies teachers were purposely selected as participants of this study because they have an influence on learners' academic performance. Johnson and Christensen (2004:215) define purposeful sampling as a type of sampling where the researcher specifies the characteristics of a population of interest. Flick (2014:80) argues that in qualitative research, sampling is a very important step because by sampling, researchers construct the cases they study in their research. Therefore, this researcher selected participants who are knowledgeable and well-informed regarding the phenomenon which the researcher investigated. Through purposive sampling the researcher was able to probe the cases that were selected as the sample.

3.7.2 Selected schools for the interviews and observations

Purposive sampling was used to identify three schools for this investigation. The three schools were selected on the basis of the following: they were easily accessible to obtain data; the availability of teaching and learning resources as well as the Social Studies teachers at the upper primary phase (grades 5–7). This made it easy for the researcher to access the schools and complete the task within the proposed time allocated for data collection and to complete the

research within the timeframe. There is evidence of learners' underperformance in Social Studies within the three selected schools, as discussed in Chapter 1. This evidence was also used as another reason for the selection of the three schools.

One school was a bit far from the researcher's living place, as it is 122 km away from the other selected schools. However, the reason for this school being selected was the learners' poor performance in Social Studies, as there is only one educator teaching grades 5 to 7. The researcher was interested in investigating the situation of a teacher teaching Social Studies for three grades at the same school.

The selected schools were easily accessible to the researcher, including their principals and Social Studies teachers. These selected schools were used for the teachers' interviews.

3.7.3 Selection of teachers

The five teachers of grades 5, 6 and 7 Social Studies who could possibly provide data were selected as possible participants in this study. These subject teachers were targeted because the researcher valued their experience and knowledge in the teaching of Social Studies.

3.7.4 Principals

Three principals were selected as possible participants in their capacity as the leaders of the selected schools. They were interviewed in order to obtain information on the school context and to determine their views of factors that may contribute to learners' academic underperformance. Their experience and knowledge in management and leadership are valued by the researcher, and it was deemed that they may contribute to this study. The other reason for the selected school principals was because they are responsible for moderating the examination papers and ensuring that teachers assess and teach learners according to recommended approaches by the MoE. They therefore could have insight into possible causes for the underperformance of learners.

3.8 TRIANGULATION

In this study triangulation was used to validate the findings of the study to make them more trustworthy. Briggs and Coleman (2007:100) explain that triangulation means "comparing many sources of evidence in order to determine the accuracy of information or phenomena". This means that triangulation is a mechanism used to ensure that data collected, as well as the findings, are valid. Triangulation is therefore a process of using more than one approach towards the same phenomenon to check and increase the validity of the findings. Adelman (1980, cited

in Cohen et al., 2007:143) states that triangulation is a useful technique where a researcher is engaged in a case study. According to Terre Blance, Durrheim and Painter (2006:271), “triangulation entails collecting materials in as many different ways from as many diverse sources as possible”. This means that triangulation involves multiple methods of collecting data. According to Rule and John (2011:7) multiple methods of collecting qualitative data are often used in case studies to facilitate in-depth, “thick, rich description of the case and illuminating to its broader context”.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010:99), the triangulation approach is especially common in qualitative research; for example, a researcher may engage in many informal observations in the field and conduct in-depth interviews, then look at the common themes that appear in the data collected from both methods. Denzin (1987, cited in Decrop, 1999:159) identified the following four basic types of triangulation:

- **Data triangulation:** This method involves the use of a variety of data sources in a study.
- **Method triangulation:** This method refers to the use of multi-methods to study a research question.
- **Investigator triangulation:** This method involves different researchers interpreting the same data.
- **Theoretical triangulation:** This type of method involves the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data.

In order to prove the validity of the qualitative data in this study, data, theoretical and method triangulations were applied. In this study, the triangulation approach entailed the use of multiple data sources and multiple methods to gain more understanding of the phenomenon. The multiple methods used in this study were interviews, observations and document analysis. The researcher used these multiple methods to gather corresponding information and strengthen the validity, as recommended by Cohen et al. (2007) and Yin (2011).

3.9 DATA-COLLECTION METHODS

3.9.1 Introduction

According to Mason (2002:30), the methodological design is the logic through which a researcher addresses the research question and gains data for the study. There are a variety of methods for data collection, such as interviews, questionnaires, observation and documents, as used in this study. These combined methods of data collection enhanced the validity of the

findings. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:157) and McMillan and Schumacher (2001:74) state that research encompasses the complete research process: the research approach, procedure and data collection or sampling methods used. Leedy and Ormrod (2010:137) state that in a case study, the researcher collects extensive data on the individuals, programmes or events on which the investigation is focused. In this study data were gathered through the use of multiple methods, namely interviews, observations and document analysis.

3.9.2 Interviews

Interviewing is a conversation between two people in which one is asking the questions. Savin-Baden and Major (2013:358) warn that when one chooses a type of interview, it should be directly related to the research approach that is guiding the work. Patton (1990:278) claims that the purpose of an interview is to find out what is in the interviewee's mind. In this study interviews were chosen to obtain in-depth information from the participants.

3.9.2.1 Rationale for selecting interviews for the research

The justification for selecting interviews rather than questionnaires is because of the former's adaptable nature. During the interviews the researcher were able to follow up on the principals' and Social Studies teachers' responses with further in-depth questions and to probe them to obtain further richer data and clarifications. The researcher could therefore probe responses and investigate the participants' motives and feelings; for example, through interviews the researcher could judge from the participants' voice tones, facial expressions and hesitations the hidden and genuine messages they were communicating. This information is difficult to generate if a questionnaire is being used (Bell 1993:91, 94). Interviews therefore provide specific in-depth information, which would not have been the case with a questionnaire (Cohen et al., 1980:242).

In spite of the shortcomings of this method, for example the fact that it is time-consuming, that it could be subjective and biased on the part of an observer and that participants may find it unfamiliar (Bell 1993:91; Cohen et al., 1980:252; Hopkins 1993:145), the researcher still preferred to use it in collecting data for this research.

A brief discussion of different types of interviews follows. Savin-Baden and Major (2013:358, 359) describe four types of interviews, namely structured, unstructured, informal and semi-structured interviews.

3.9.2.2 Structured interviews

According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013:359), structured interviews tend to produce consistent data. In order to obtain consistent data, the researcher should ask the participants the same and closed questions using the same words in each interview. However, this may not work in all studies, as each participant has a different background and different opinions and experiences.

In addition, this approach of interviewing restricts the exploration of issues that were not anticipated when the questions were written. Due to the limitations of structured interviews, this approach was not deemed appropriate for this study.

3.9.2.3 Unstructured interviews

Unstructured interviews are interviews in which questions are not pre-arranged. According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013:359), unstructured interview questions tend to be open-ended questions that require broad responses and that enable conversation about a specific topic. This means that some questions should be prepared in advance relating to a topic that the researcher wishes to cover. The authors argue that most of the questions arise from the context. This is because the unstructured interview requires that the researcher understands the interviewee's language and its meaning in the specific cultural context of the research setting (Fife, 2005). Moreover, Patton (2002) claims that unstructured interviews require a significant amount of time to collect the needed information. This is because each interview individualises the session and every interview may progress slightly differently. This approach was not deemed appropriate for this study because an unstructured interview requires that the researcher understands the interviewee's language and its meaning in the specific cultural context of the research setting.

3.9.2.4 Informal interviews

Savin-Baden and Major (2013:360) state that in an informal interview the researcher talks with people informally without any formal structure. According to the authors, informal interviews are often conducted to help develop more structured interview questions.

These authors explain that the researcher does not record the interview, but rather relies on memory and informal notes. This means that the researcher should remember what their conversation was and compare it with notes in order to analyse the data. However, this approach is not always useful, because researchers may forget what they have discussed with the interviewees. This type of interview was not deemed fit for this study because of its informal

approach, and because the researcher needed to capture all the relevant information during the research process.

3.9.2.5 Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview is the approach used in qualitative research to gather information the researchers are looking for. Bryman (2012, cited in Savin-Basen & Major, 2013:356) claims that semi-structured interviews are often used in qualitative research. A qualitative inquiry seeks to gain an understanding of and provide insight into the problem under investigation. Patton (2004:248) recommends that a rich variety of methodological combinations can be employed to illuminate an inquiry question.

Patton (2002) refers to the semi-structured interviews format as an interview guide approach. According to this approach, the researcher follows an interview guide that consists of two set of questions to guide the interviewer when particular information is required from each participant (Merriam, 2000; Patton, 2002). In this study, the first part contained biographical questions and the second part the main questions that aimed to explore the possible factors that may contribute to learners' underperformance in Social Studies in the selected schools.

Newton (2010:1) argues that an interview is a managed verbal exchange. Similarly, Ritchie and Lewis (2003:138) and Gillham (2000:11) have the common view that face-to-face interviews may be appropriate where depth of meaning is important and the research is mostly focused on gaining insight and understanding. The authors argue that researchers choosing to interview face to face should recognise the potential significance of context. The approach of this interview allowed the researcher to get the information that was regarded as important for the study. Semi-structured interviews are therefore consistent with participatory and emancipatory approaches.

This study employed semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The researcher selected semi-structured interviews to collect data because this method was deemed best suited to answer the research question of this study. This kind of interview allows one to have a conversation and allows interviewees to use their own words and develop their own thoughts (Denscombe, 2007:176). Interviewees may raise their own views regarding a particular subject. This helps the participants to convey and disclose information regarded as relevant to the topic. In addition, the advantage of using this interview method is that it is a powerful tool to gain insight into educational issues through understanding the experience of individuals whose lives centre on education.

During the interviews, this approach allowed the interviewer to ask follow-up questions to generate even more data. These characteristics made the semi-structured interview a suitable research method for this study. Apart from the interviewing, the other technique used to collect data was observation.

3.9.3 Observation

According to Patton (2015:28), the purpose of qualitative observation is to take the researcher into the setting observed. In this study, observation was chosen as a data-collection tool because this method, according to Cohen et al. (2011:456), affords a researcher the opportunity to gather ‘live’ data from real-life social situations. Cohen et al. (2011:296) argue that, in most case studies, observation takes place over an extended period, and researchers can develop more intimate and informed relationships with those they are observing and the environments in which they are conducted. Therefore, in this study, the researcher used observation to observe the physical environment of teaching and learning to see whether it is conducive. Teaching strategies, learners’ participation and the teaching and learning materials which the teachers use during Social Studies lesson presentations were also the objects of observation. This method provided the opportunity to the researcher to observe the teaching methods that were used by the teachers of Social Studies.

3.9.3.1 Rationale for conducting classroom observations

Lesson observations were conducted for the following six reasons:

- To observe which approaches teachers use in teaching Social Studies
- To identify/establish teachers’ training needs
- To establish the extent to which teachers implement the Social Studies curriculum
- To observe the class size of Social Studies
- To observe learners’ participation
- To observe learning and teaching materials which teachers use in teaching Social Studies.

By observing how teachers present their lessons, the researcher wanted to determine how teachers were implementing the prescribed approaches by the Ministry, for example, the learner-centred and communicative approaches that they were trained to use. The researcher agrees with Hopkins (1993:188), who claims that classroom observation is a fundamental strategy for evaluation. Lesson observations therefore enabled the researcher to determine the observed

teachers' training needs as she argues. In the same line, (Williams, 1989:92) argues that "Administrators and senior teachers want to know how to combine evaluation with staff development"

They should provide opportunities for teachers to develop their ability to assess and evaluate their own practices and judgements of what goes on in their own classrooms (Williams, 1989:85). This implies that lesson observations should make teachers aware of what their learners are doing and the interactions that take place in their classes. The researcher is in full support of Williams's argument that lesson observations should be developmental rather than judgemental. The researcher therefore used this as a means of teacher professional development.

Through observation this researcher hoped to discover more reliable information on what teachers say they do. As Bell (1993) claims, observation can reveal characteristics of groups or individuals that would have been impossible to discover by other means.

3.9.3.2 Field notes

According to Merriam (1998:92–95), field notes are the descriptions of the content and interactions that took place, made by the researcher during the process. Field notes are therefore descriptions of what the researcher has observed and noted in the field during the research process. Field notes contain everything the researcher noted regarding what people had said and the researcher's own feelings about the observation. Furthermore, field notes contain the reaction and reflections about the significance of what the researcher has observed. In this study, field notes were important, as it enabled the researcher to keep record and reflect on what was observed. It was also very useful during the data-analysis process.

Apart from interviews, classroom observations and making field notes, documents were also analysed to generate data.

3.9.4 Document analysis

Savin-Baden and Major (2013:403) define documents as written, printed, visual or electronic matter that provides information or evidence or that serves as an official record. Similarly, Cohen et al. (2011:249) describe a document as a record of an event or process, as such records may be produced by individuals or groups and take many different forms.

Cohen et al. (2011:250) make a distinction between primary and secondary documents. Primary documents are produced as a direct record of an event or process by a witness or subject involved in it. In this study the researcher analysed appropriate primary documents such as the

Social Studies subject guide, lessons that were prepared, CA record sheets, as well timetables and subject files. The researcher viewed the primary documents because they offer first-hand information. According to Cohen et al. (2011:250), examples of primary documents include policy reports, which are important for revealing the kinds of assumptions that underlie such policy forms. However, Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit (2004:99) states that any document, whether old or new, in printed format, handwritten or in electronic format, and which relates to the research question may be valued. This researcher concurs with Henning et al. because documents, whether old or new, can provide important clues for a researcher about the research context.

Therefore, this researcher analysed documents from the MoE such as the Social Studies curriculum, the Social Studies policy, marks sheet records, the assessment and promotion policy of primary schools in Namibia, subject files and other relevant documents. All these documents fall within the category of primary documents. Analysis results of Social Studies grade 5 to 7, from 2008 to 2014, mark sheets and schedules were analysed. These documents were used as references because they indicated the academic performance of the selected schools in the Karas Region, Namibia. The Social Studies syllabus, Social Studies policy, as well as copies of the scheme of work were also analysed because they are supporting materials of the subject.

In this study, document analysis was very important, because the documents convey a message of information, for example on learners' academic performance and learners' attitudes or behaviour in the classroom during Social Studies lessons. Documentary information was also provided by the participants.

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the process of making data more manageable by organising the information obtained from the data that were generated. In this study, data analysis was done by using the constant comparative method. Glaser and Strauss (1967, cited in Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:134) describe the constant comparative method as one of analysing qualitative data and combining inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all units of meaning obtained. The comparative method is used to compare one unit of information with another in order to look for recurring regularities and patterns in the data to assign the information into categories. This allows categories and patterns to emerge from the data collection. Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002:466) state that categories allow for the classification of similar ideas. Furthermore, the interview data were analysed using content analysis, which, according to

Kruger (1998), entails comparing the words using the answers of the respondents, field notes and observations.

Before data analysis, the researcher repeatedly listened to all the recorded interviews and reread the notes taken during the interviews to gain a sense of the whole conversation. While listening to the recordings, the researcher compared the interviewees' responses. The comparative approach was used by the researcher to ensure the identification of important constructs, themes and patterns that emerged from the data collection.

3.11 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF DATA

It is important for researchers to assess the validity and reliability of their studies in order to see whether the research instruments are reliable and the research findings trustworthy. Hamersley (1987:73) argues that there is no widely accepted definition of reliability and validity. Despite this argument, there is wide support for the view of validity as a test measure to test what it is supposed to measure (Le Grange, 2009:7). According to Best and Khan (2006:289), reliability can be described as the degree of consistency that the instrument or procedure demonstrates. Bush (2002:65) refers to validity as being used to judge whether the research accurately described the phenomenon which it intended to investigate and describe. This means that validity is that quality of data-gathering procedures that enables measurement of what was supposed to be measured. In support of this, Silverman (2010) argues that within qualitative studies, validity can be defined as a truth or the truthfulness of the social phenomenon that it represents.

Furthermore, in qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) recommend that researchers develop a set of criteria to which a study must adhere before it can be regarded as valid data and a good-quality study. These criteria are validity, transferability, reliability and trustworthiness. Golafshani (2003) also supports the aforementioned points by arguing that precision, credibility and transferability provide the lenses through which the findings of a qualitative research are viewed.

To ensure greatest validity and reliability in this study, the following strategies were followed. The researcher used triangulation interviews, observations and document analysis to gather the same information and strengthen validity. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Social Studies teachers and school principals. All interviewees were asked the same questions in the same way to ensure that the procedure is reliable. The responses were noted down and recorded via a mobile audio-recorder and voice-recorder and the participants' body language

was observed. The researcher used these two tools to record in order to have optional capturing tools. This helped to prevent the researcher from failing to capture all the data provided by the participants during the interviews. After development of the interview and observation schedule, it was given to an expert to determine whether the measurement tool effectively measures what it is supposed to measure. As there were a variety of methods for data collection, such as audio-recording, field notes and observation, these combined methods of gathering data may have enhanced the validity of the findings.

3.12 RESEARCH ETHICS

3.12.1 Ethical considerations

It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that ethical standards are adhered to. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:196), ethics are generally considered as dealing with beliefs about what is right or wrong, proper or improper, good or bad. In this study, ethical conduct research was taken into consideration to avoid any harmful actions during the process of conducting this study. This study focused on possible factors that may contribute to the underperformance of learners in Social Studies at selected schools in the Karas Region and interviews were conducted with Social Studies teachers and the school principals. The researcher was always open and honest with the participants and ensured that the research was carried out with due consideration of ethical procedures. This means that the rights and identities of all participants in this study are protected. The issue of confidentiality was highlighted and the participants were well informed that interview data had to be audio-taped in order to capture all the information and that the data generated from the interviews will be stored safely. They were also informed that their identity will be kept anonymous. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time during the research process if they so wished. This means that their participation was on a voluntarily basis. This right was part of informed consent, therefore the researcher explained it to them prior to engaging them in this study.

3.12.2 Permission

In this study, before conducting the interviews, observations and doing the documents analysis, application letters were sent to all the appropriate authorities to obtain permission to conduct the research. Permission was asked from the Director of the Education Regional Office of Karas, Namibia (see Appendix A1), while another letter was sent to the principals of the selected schools to grant permission for the researcher to conduct a study at their schools (see Appendix

B). Permission was granted to the researcher in writing from the Karas Regional Office, as well as from the selected schools in May 2015. Permission was obtained allowing the researcher to proceed with the study (see attached letters in Appendix C).

This study adhered to the ethical consideration procedures of Stellenbosch University. The researcher attached the acceptance letters from the Director of the Education Regional Office of Karas, Namibia, and the principals of the three selected schools (see appendices D–F). The proposal of this study and all related requirement documents were also submitted to the Research Ethics Committee, Stellenbosch University. This was done to ensure adherence to the ethical research procedures of the Faculty of Education and Stellenbosch University.

3.12.3 Confidentiality and ethical issues

According to Cohen et al. (2011:91), each researcher needs to consider confidentiality of participants' identity and the information provided by the participants. This means that the information provided by the participants should not reveal their identity. In this study the researcher ensured anonymity by not using the names of participants or any other personal identification. In this study confidentiality was taken into consideration as follows: The schools' names are protected as well as the identities of all participants in the research by giving them alphabetical letters instead of names. Ethical consent forms were signed by the principals and teachers.

The participants were informed that data collection will be anonymous and confidential, and that any information obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with the participants would remain confidential and would be disclosed only with their permission or as required by law.

The data were kept strictly on the researcher's private laptop, which was only accessed by the owner with a password. Confidentiality was still maintained in the process of writing the thesis and future journal articles based on the information gathered. However, the participants have a right to access or review their tape-recorded interviews, which were transcribed by the researcher.

3.12.4 Trustworthiness and ethical issues

The researcher conducted the interviews personally to understand the context of the study. The interviews were conducted in English, which was the preferred language for all the participants in which to communicate. This means that no translation took place during the interviews. All participants had been shown trust because their participation was obtained voluntarily. There

was cooperation between the researcher and the participants. The researcher ensured that all participants were treated with the utmost respect. Before the interviews, the participants were once again informed of the aims and the purpose of the study, and also reminded of the confidentiality of the study. The participants' participation in the study was flexible, as two participants were interviewed after school.

3.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the research design for this study was presented, which was a case study. The qualitative approach within the interpretive paradigm was outlined and the explanation why these approaches had been selected was given in this chapter. The chapter also gave a description of the site where this study was conducted. Furthermore, the methods of data collection were provided to show how information had been captured in this study. The process of data analysis, the two concepts of reliability and validity and the aspects related to them were described. The chapter showed that validity and reliability both contribute to the study's trustworthiness. To conclude this chapter, ethical conduct in this research was discussed and the researcher clearly indicated the process of gaining permission for conducting this study. In Chapter 4 the researcher presents the data collected. The data collected are presented according to the themes and categories generated by the researcher.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter described the research design and methodology for this study. Savin-Baden and Major (2013:570) argue that the purpose of the findings section is to provide an opportunity to present what has been discovered through the process of study. The purpose of this chapter is to present both the findings and an analysis of data collected. The chapter also explains how accumulated data were collected, how codes were assigned and how themes were identified. The chapter starts off by explaining the context of the study and provides a brief biographic description of the selected schools and the participants from each school. This is followed by a discussion of how information was obtained and a presentation of the findings according to the categories and themes that emerged.

4.2 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This case study focused on three school principals and the five teachers teaching Social Studies at the time of conducting the research at the selected schools. The teachers in particular made valuable contributions by describing their experiences and challenges in terms of teaching Social Studies. The principals also played a significant role in this study, as they managed the selected schools and therefore were in a position to provide information related to this study, which includes identifying the possible factors that may contribute to learners' academic underperformance in Social Studies.

4.2.1 Generalisation of findings from a case study

It is important that the findings of a case study be based on detailed information obtained from the data collected in order not to confuse the readers. According to Denscombe (2007:35), the starting point and arguably the defining characteristics of the case study approach is its focus on just one instance of the object that is to be investigated. He states that the value of a case study approach is in the fact that it has the potential to deal with the sensitivities and details of complex social institutions. Therefore, the possible outcomes from investigation are based only on that particular case and can therefore not be generalised.

Furthermore, De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2007:193) argue that the findings can only be generalised when one assumes that what has been observed in the sample would be observed

in any other group of subjects as well. This, however, was not the case in this study. In this study the researcher investigated the possible factors that may contribute to learners' poor performance in Social Studies in three selected schools.

The selected schools experience unique issues in terms of learners not performing well in Social Studies. However, the data generated indicated that the reasons were contextualised and that they differed from school to school. Reasons for not performing well differed even within the participating schools, and therefore generalisations from these data have to be made with care.

4.2.2 Biographical information

In this study biographical data were obtained from multiple sources, and entail information on the participants' background and personal information such as their gender, qualifications, teaching experience and the subjects and grades they are teaching. All this information is provided in Section 4.4 in table form, after which the discussion follows. Section 4.3 discusses the biographical information of the selected schools.

4.3 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE SELECTED SCHOOLS

This section contains the biographical information of the selected schools. It is important to note that codes instead of the schools' names are provided for ethical reasons. This study was conducted at three different schools in the Namib Circuit, Karas Region, in Namibia. These schools are referred to as schools X, Y and Z. In order to understand the context in which the study took place, a short description of each school is provided.

School X is a rural school situated 211 kilometres from Keetmanshop where the Education Regional Office of the Department of Education is located. This school has three blocks for classrooms plus a staffroom and offices. The office block contains the principal's office, the office of the school secretary, one storeroom and a small staffroom. The school staff consists of the principal, eight teachers, one secretary and one cleaner. Unfortunately, the school does not have a head of department, a library or a computer laboratory room. However, the school has one computer in the secretary's office, one photocopier machine and one laptop in the staffroom, which is utilised by all the teachers. This school has internet access, a fax machine and a landline phone. Among the eight teachers, only one teacher teaches Social Studies from grades 5 to 7. In general, the physical infrastructure of the school is not in a good condition.

School Y is situated in Lüderitz Township, 334 kilometres from the Education Regional Office in Keetmanshoop, Karas Region. This school has a principal, three heads of department, two secretaries, four cleaners and 31 teachers, of whom three teach Social Studies. The school has

six blocks, consisting of four classrooms in each block; however, these classrooms are not enough due to the large number of learners. Therefore, the school hall was also utilised as a teaching and learning space during the time that this study was conducted. The school has internet access, an overhead projector, a library, three photocopier machines and one computer with internet access in the staffroom, and each secretary has her own computer. There is also a computer laboratory at this school. Despite being a computer laboratory available, was not fully utilised.

School Z is also situated in Lüderitz township, 333 km from the Education Regional Office in Keetmanshoop. This school has a principal, two heads of department, two cleaners, 17 teachers and one secretary. School Z consists of five blocks, and these blocks consist of three classrooms in each, of which four are used as classrooms, and the remainder being the offices and staffroom. There is no computer laboratory at School Z. However, an overhead projector and two computers are available. The one computer is in the principal's office and the second one in the secretary's office. There is one laptop which the teachers may use.

All three schools experience similar challenges and they are all far from the Education Regional Office. The Education Regional Office is where the regional director, the inspectors and subject advisory teachers in the Karas Region are stationed. The subject advisor in the Namibian context is the person who is employed by the MoE to provide professional support, guidance and advice, as well as support materials, to teachers in a specific learning area. The subject advisor has extensive knowledge of the relevant subject area and his/her responsibilities are, among others, to ensure quality education through the rendering of liaison services and subject guidance (MEC, 2009:8). He or she is responsible for visiting schools in the region and to survey the challenges that teachers experience in their field of specialisation. Two of the principals have experienced the same problem of receiving fewer teaching and learning materials, while stationery and materials are not delivered on time.

Furthermore, these schools differ mainly with regard to staffing and inadequate teaching and learning resources. For example, School Y has computers available for teachers, while schools Z and X do not have any, and at School X teachers share one laptop provided by the school. However, none of the three schools have a computer laboratory for learners' utilisation. School Y has three heads of department, while School Z has two heads of department and School X does not have any. They therefore differ with regard to leadership structures. These schools have some common characteristics in that they all have a principal and secretaries.

4.4 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

4.4.1 Introduction

The background and personal information of the participants are described in this section. It was important to obtain biographical information on the participants in this study because they have different academic backgrounds. As was mentioned in Chapter 3, in this study ethical considerations had been adhered to and the participants' names are not revealed. In this section the real names of the teacher and principal participants were coded for confidentiality reasons. A, W and V present the principals, while C, E, F, J and S present the teachers of Social Studies. In this study the participants were assured that their identity and that the matters they raised during their participation would remain strictly confidential. Teachers J, S and E are female teachers teaching at the same school, while teachers F and C are male teachers teaching at the other two schools. The letter W represents the school principal's name of School Z, A refers to the school principal of School Y and V signifies the school principal of School X.

All five teachers and the three principals completed the interview process. Their profiles are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Profile information of the participants

Participants' code	Gender	Age	Years of experience	Position
W	Female	52	6	Principal
A	Male	55	5	Principal
V	Male	47	16	Principal
J	Female	39	10	Teacher
S	Female	25	2	Teacher
E	Female	41	15	Teacher
F	Male	45	12	Teacher
C	Male	37	5	Teacher

Note that in the case of the principals the years refer to the years experience as educational manager/leader, excluding the teaching experience as a classroom teacher.

4.4.2 Teachers' profiles

Teacher J in School Y is a female teacher, and is 39 years old. She completed Grade 12 and then furthered her studies at the International Open Learning Institution through distance learning, where she obtained a Senior Primary Diploma. She has five years of teaching experience in Social Studies and has been at the same school for 10 years. During the time this study was conducted, she was teaching Grade 5 Mathematics and Grade 6 Social Studies. She was also a subject head of Social Studies for grades 5 to 7. Although she was not originally trained as a Social Studies teacher, she now functions as the subject head as well.

Teacher E, from the same school, is a 41-year-old woman. She specialised in teaching Mathematics for grades 5 to 7, but at the time this study was conducted, she was teaching Social Studies Grade 5 and Mathematics Grade 5. She has 15 years' teaching experience, of which eight years were specifically in Social Studies. Teacher E also teaches Social Studies without being trained to teach the subject.

Teacher S is a young woman of 25. She does not have any teaching qualification. She completed Grade 12 and at the time this research was conducted, she was busy studying for a Diploma in Business Management at Namibia University of Science and Technology, previously known as Polytechnic of Namibia. She has been teaching Social Studies for three years at the time of the study.

Teacher F is a male teacher, aged 45. He completed Grade 12 and furthered his study at Windhoek Teachers' Training College. He specialised in Social Sciences grades 8 to 10. He had teaching experience of 12 years at the time of this research, of which seven were spent on teaching Social Studies at the same school, while for the other five years he taught English at a different school.

The last participant was Teacher C, a male teacher of 37 years. This teacher was responsible for teaching Social Studies after completing Grade 12 and joining the teaching profession without any tertiary qualification. However, during our conversation he promised to further his studies as he mentioned during our interview session that "To be honest with you I do not have any qualification but I will follow [in] your footsteps". Although Teacher C did not obtain any teaching qualification, he has been teaching Social Studies for grades 5 to 7 for five years at the particular school. He is the only Social Studies teacher at that particular school.

The study found that of the five teachers interviewed, only one teacher, Teacher F, had specialised in Social Studies. Other teachers, namely teachers E and J, are also qualified teachers

by profession, but they were not specifically trained to teach Social Studies. Teacher S from School Y and Teacher C from School Z are not qualified teachers because they are in the teaching profession with only Grade 12 as their highest qualification. Teacher S teaches Grade 7 at School Y while Teacher C teaches grades 5 to 7 at School Z. This study shows that out of five teachers only one was formally trained to teach Social Studies, while the others were not formally trained to teach the subject. The current study also discovered that over and above the fact that four participants were not formally trained to teach Social Studies, not one had attended any workshops that might enable them to teach the subject. It can therefore be concluded that Social Studies at the selected schools is taught by mainly untrained teachers.

4.4.3 Principals' profiles

Principal A is the principal of School Y and is a 55-year-old man. This principal had 27 years' teaching experience at the time of the study, including five years of management experience. He obtained a Diploma in Business Management. He taught for 22 years and then changed to another field, working for the National Union of Namibian for three years. After three years he returned to the teaching profession as a principal. He manages a large primary school that consists of 827 learners and 31 teachers. His school runs from pre-primary to Grade 7.

Principal W is a woman of 52 years and is the principal of School X. She had been teaching for 26 years, of which six years were in school management. This principal is also responsible for teaching grades 6 and 7. She had obtained a Senior Primary Diploma in Education, an Advanced Certificate in Education Management and an Advanced Certificate in Education Principalship.

Principal V is male and 47 years old. He had 26 years' teaching experience at the time of the study, of which 16 were as a manager. He is responsible for teaching Mathematics for grades 5 and 7 at his school. This means that his workload consists of both managing and teaching. He has been the principal of this school for 18 years at the time this study was conducted.

The three principals above had different profiles. For example, they had varying management experience as principals. Principal V had 26 years of teaching experience, of which 16 years were in management, while Principal A had five years of management experience and the third principal six years of management experience. Two principals were male and one female. According to the information they provided during the interview sessions, none of them teach Social Studies, but they all have management experience of more than five years. All three principals had done formal leadership training courses, namely Principal W and V held a

Diploma in Education, while Principal A obtained a Diploma in Business Management. More details about their managing experiences are given in the section on the interview outcomes.

4.5 ACQUIRING PERMISSION TO GAIN ACCESS TO SCHOOLS.

Gaining access to the selected schools to conduct this study was the first step to complete before visiting the schools. Sapford and Jupp (2006:64) argue that gaining access to a setting in order to conduct observational research is a problem for both more structured and less structured observation. This means that it is often difficult to get access to the site where one wants to conduct observational research. This, however, was not the case in this study, as gaining access was unproblematic. This researcher used the following three phases to gain access to the schools where this study needed to be conducted.

In the first phase, this researcher wrote a letter to the Director of Education in the Karas Region to request permission to conduct research at three schools in his education directorate region and the researcher's letter was accompanied by the supporting letter from the supervisor (see appendices A1 and A2) and it was approved (see Appendix B).

The second phase included sending out letters to seek consent from the three selected schools to conduct research (see appendices D–F). The request letters clearly indicated that the school principals and the Social Studies teachers were to be the participants of this study. All three schools approved these requests (see Appendix C).

The third phase included the researcher applying for ethical clearance from Stellenbosch University through the Ethics Committee in the Department of Curriculum Studies.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION

4.6.1 Introduction

The researcher began with informal visits during April 2015 to the identified schools. During this time, the researcher introduced the participants to the rationale and purpose of the investigation. Appointments were made with the participants over two days in the first week of June 2015, before the research process began. In addition, the researcher scheduled meetings with the school principals and the Social Studies teachers to schedule the individual interviews. The consent letter was given to the participants to confirm their participation after reading and understanding the contents of the letter. All the participants signed the consent letter.

Henning et al. (2004:99) state that the sources of evidence most commonly used in doing case studies include observation, interviews and document review or analysis. Based on Henning et

al. argument, data in this study were generated through triangulation, entailing interviews, observations and document analysis. The aim of using these multiple instruments was to minimise limitations and biased outcomes. Some of the information could not be acquired through interviews, hence observations and document analysis were also required. For example, the participants could provide their background information that cannot be easily detected through observation, whereas, through observation the researcher could get information from practical contexts such as on teaching methods and teaching materials used in the class. The participants may provide indirect information and biased responses, but this could be verified through triangulation. Another reason for using triangulation was to ensure objectivity and to enhance the internal validity of the data.

4.6.2 Observation

Mulhall (2003:303) describes observation as the process of capturing the whole social setting in which people function by recording the context in which they work. Savin-Baden and Major (2013:392) refer to observation as the key method for collecting data and a way for the researcher to note everyday practices of participants and to gain a better understanding of their actual experiences.

During the observations the researcher took detailed field notes, which described the context of teaching practices and the teaching environment. Observations were made of areas such as teaching approaches, learners' participation, classroom size, classroom space, teaching and learning materials and learners' activities. After each observation, the researcher summarised and reflected on the field notes to find areas of relationship between the interview responses and the research questions in addition to any categories that could be grouped together. The classroom observations, interviews and documents helped the researcher to identify emerging themes and categories.

4.6.3 Interviews

In Chapter 3 it was indicated that semi-structured interviews were employed in this study. Savin-Baden and Major (2013:357) argue that interviews are one of the most common methods used when gathering data for qualitative research and that it is an integral part of most research traditions. In the same line, Awases (2015:43) states that “[s]emi-structured interviews are sometimes called guided conversations where broad questions around a predetermined topic are asked in an informal way”. Therefore, in this study the researcher made use of semi-structured interviews as a primary resource of data generation. Furthermore, Babbie and Mouton

(2001:289) claim that in interviews, the interviewer has a general plan of investigation but allows the conversation to progress in no specific order of questions, although specific areas of interest are raised. In this study, this was not the case, because all interviews were guided by the researcher's schedule, which included a list of questions to be asked (except for the follow-up questions). In this study the follow-up questions are referred to as unplanned questions, because these questions were asked after the participants responded to the scheduled questions.

Each individual interview was conducted on the time it was originally scheduled. The researcher prepared well in advance, for example for recording during the interviews, by ensuring fully loaded batteries and a set of spare batteries for the audio-recorder as well as a cell phone as an extra recorder. This was done to prevent what McComish and Greenburg (cited in Groenwald, 2004:15) warn against, namely that equipment failure can seriously derail any research undertaken. In addition, a separate notebook was used for taking field notes on the information offered by the participants during each interview. Using a notebook also enabled the researcher to capture and reflect on what the participants said. The researcher wanted to prevent losing information during the interview because it is not easy to listen and write at the same time. It is for this reason that an audio-recorder was used as a back-up to capture the interview information. It was also important to capture the interviews so that the researcher would be able to reflect on the conversations and not omit anything the participants had said. On the other hand, it also helped the researcher with the data coding and theme identification. The participants were asked similar questions and in the same sequence across the interviews to allow the researcher to gain insight into and understanding about possible factors that may contribute to learners' underperformance in Social Studies.

The interviews were divided into two sections, namely Section A, during which Social Studies teachers were interviewed, and Section B, which focused on the school principals, as the researcher tried to get information on how management influences teaching and learners' academic performance. Each principal was interviewed once, but follow-up questions were asked directly after their responses where necessary for clarity. All questions were asked in English and responded to in English. There was no translation, as the interviews were conducted in the language in which the researcher and the participants understood each other.

4.6.3.1 Venue, time for interviews and atmosphere

Interviews were conducted in venues such as the staffroom, classroom and offices. Venues were organised in advance to ensure that they were free of background noise and disruptions that could jeopardise the depth and quality of the interviews. At School Y the interviews with the teachers were conducted in the school counselling office to allow privacy. This was regarded as a comfortable environment because nobody entered without an appointment. The interview with Teacher S was conducted during school hours in her free period, while Teacher E's and Teacher J's interviews were conducted after school. The principal of School Y's interview took place during school hours during his free period in quiet conditions.

For School X the classroom of Teacher C was used during his free period. Principal A's interview was conducted in her office at a time that she was not attending lessons or doing administrative work. The interviews at School Z with both the principal and Social Studies teacher were held in the staffroom during school hours, using free periods. All staff members were informed not to come to the staffroom during the interview session. The staffroom is not a big room, therefore the environment was conducive to conducting interviews. All interviews took place at the scheduled time and lasted between 40 and 45 minutes. No rescheduling of any interview was necessary. There were also no rescheduling of times for the interviews, as they were all conducted at the time at which they were initially scheduled.

4.6.4 Documents

In this study data were also collected through document analysis. Documents such as learners' record sheets of their CA marks and final marks, preparation files and subject files, i.e. the Social Studies policy document and promotion policy, were analysed. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011:249–250) make a distinction between primary and secondary documents. For these authors primary documents are produced as a direct record of an event or process by a witness or subject involved in it. In general, primary documents refer to records that are directly produced first-hand, for example transcripts of interviews, participants' observation and field notes.

In this study the researcher reviewed primary documents, namely the subject policy and teacher's guide, scheme of work, assessment record sheets for the marks obtained by the learners in Social Studies, and preparation files (with the permission of the teachers). During the data-collection process the researcher reviewed the preparation files to try to determine whether teachers presented their lessons based on their preparation. Apart from the record sheets and

preparation files, the subject file, which is well known as a teacher's resource file, was also reviewed to see whether teaching materials are available.

4.7 ANALYSIS OF DATA COLLECTED

4.7.1 Observation

The classroom observations were done with regard to the following aspects: classroom size and arrangement, environment of teaching and learning, teaching and learning approaches, teaching and learning materials used and the availability of Social Studies materials. The observation of the above aspects was done in terms of how they may contribute to or influence learners' academic underperformance. The findings that emerged from the observations were deducted from what the researcher recorded in the notebooks during the classrooms observations. The classroom observations were carried out with teachers who were interviewed so that the researcher could gain more information and compare data. In this study, teaching and learning processes that occurred in the classrooms were observed. The main focus was on teaching strategies and teaching materials that were used by the Social Studies teachers. The researcher also observed whether teachers were teaching according to their lesson preparations.

4.7.2 Classroom management

The researcher also observed the physical organisation in classrooms in an attempt to determine whether these arrangements might impact on learner success. The researcher found that in Teacher F's classroom at School X, learners' chairs and tables were arranged according to a teacher-centred approach. Each learner sits alone. They are not able to share activities in groups because they are too far from each other. The teacher's chair is in front of the classroom next to a few learners' tables.

Teacher S's learners' chairs and tables face the small chalkboard stand, while her table is beside one group of learners. Each learner sits alone, but they are close to each other. Although Teacher S uses the school hall as a teaching space, which is big enough, the learners' chairs and tables are arranged in such a manner that they cannot move around (see Figure 4.1). This kind of arrangement may affect the teaching and learning process because teachers are not able to move around the classroom or to walk through the rows to reach each individual learner. The researcher observed that Teacher S never walked around or between the rows of the learners, but only in front of the class from side to side. Although the school hall has more than enough space to move around, the arrangement of chairs and tables is too close to each other.



Figure 4.1: School hall used as a classroom (photo taken by researcher)

In addition, the researcher noted that in Teacher S's classroom, the boys sit at the back while girls occupy the front rows of the classroom. At this school, Teacher S is the only teacher who uses the main school hall as a teaching and learning space because learners rotate by going to teachers' classrooms.

Teacher J's classroom arrangement in School Y made interesting observations possible. In Teacher J's class, learners' chairs and tables are arranged into two groups, unlike in the other classrooms. In this arrangement learners are facing each other. However, this is not a proper arrangement, because some learners have difficulty reading on the chalkboard. Some learners complained and asked the teacher to change their seats. This showed the researcher that the arrangement might have been done specifically for the class observation. It was also clear to the researcher that the arrangement was not effective in the lesson, because the learners did not do anything in groups. Therefore, this arrangement was not efficient because the teacher presented the lesson by lecturing in front of the classroom and did not give group work.

Awases (2015:55) argues that learners should work in groups, in pairs, individually, or as a whole class in line with the demands of the tasks at hand. The tasks need to be relevant to either pair or group work, otherwise learners will be demotivated when they see that the tasks are not worthy of collaborative work. Physically, the mere arrangement of tables and chairs in groups

does not promote successful group work, as the value of learning lies in the group work process itself. The table and chair of Teacher J are positioned at the back of the classroom, which makes it difficult for the teacher to supervise the classroom effectively.

Teacher C was the next participant to be observed at School Z. The classroom arrangement of Teacher C was the common one which one finds in many schools, namely the learners' chairs and tables are arranged so that each learner sits alone, facing the chalkboard. If learners have to discuss activities, communication might be affected negatively, as they sit too far away from each other.

The findings indicated that most of the classrooms are arranged in the way of teacher-centred, learners sat in rows. They may be unable to work in groups and share ideas to better understand the content of the subject. Although the observations revealed that each learner sits alone, it is difficult for the teachers to move around the classroom and give attention to an individual learner due to the limited space. All three teachers from School Y mentioned that they had encountered challenges in using the learner-centred approach due to overcrowded classrooms. They complained about overcrowded classrooms that resulted in a lack of space, which made it difficult to arrange group learning, so they are forced to use the traditional way of teaching, namely the teacher-centred approach. In order to teach in a learner-centred way, teachers need enough space that can be used for group work. The findings also indicated that the Grade 5 learners in Teacher E's lesson were noisy, which might have been caused by the large number of learners in classroom. The researcher argues that if the teacher cannot reach an individual learner to explain and help him or her understand the content of the subject, it may affect learners with learning difficulties, because some learners might learn more easily if they receive individual attention.

4.7.3 Environment of teaching and learning

A healthy environment is very important to enhance effective teaching and learning. Therefore, in this study the teaching and learning environments were also observed to determine whether the places of teaching and learning are conducive to effective learning.

In School Z, the researcher observed that the classroom of Teacher C is clean, although there are no curtains for the windows. Some learners kept looking outside while the teacher was busy teaching. This kind of environment may interrupt the learning process, because learners may not concentrate on the lesson. Instead of listening to the teacher they might only concentrate on what is going on outside the classroom. At School X, some learners were also looking out, watching

other learners who were playing netball next to the classroom. It may be a minor aspect, but perhaps the fact that they could not pay attention due to the physical environment impacts negatively on learning.

The observation that took place at School Y indicated that Teacher S teaches her classes in the main school hall due to the lack of space and the large number of learners. The hall is too wide to be used as a classroom. With regard to teaching and learning materials, nothing were displayed on the wall of the hall. During the observation, the hall was dirty and it is unhealthy for the learners to learn in such a place. This condition can be seen as an uncondusive environment to effective teaching and learning. Although the researcher did not comment on the condition of the hall, Teacher S explained to the researcher that the hall is not clean because the school cleaners do not like to clean the hall due to the large size of the building. However, the researcher did not regard this as a good reason, because as a responsible teacher she should ensure that the hall she uses as a classroom is clean. This may contribute to a more effective teaching and learning process.

The third observation was done in the classroom of Teacher J at School Y. This teacher presented her lesson in an inadequate (non-permanent structure) classroom. This classroom is not conducive to teaching and learning at all because it has holes in the floor. The class is not tiled like other classrooms at the school. This classroom does not have enough lights, as it has only one small window in front of the classroom, unlike other classrooms at the school that have three big windows at the back and two in front. During the observation the researcher sat at the back of the classroom because this is where Teacher J placed her chair and table, but the researcher could not see properly. The researcher was concerned about learners experiencing the same problem of not seeing well on the chalkboard because of the poor lighting in the class. Unfortunately, the researcher could not determine whether the learners experience the same problem, because they were not the participants in this study. Teacher J experiences the same problem of not seeing well in the classroom, especially when the door is closed – she confirmed during the informal interview that her class is dark. Therefore, most of the time she keeps her classroom door open and only closes it due to cold weather.

It was found in this study that School Y has problems with the availability of permanent classrooms, as teaching takes place in two uncondusive places, as mentioned earlier, namely the school main hall and the non-permanent classrooms. In contrast to these teaching and learning spaces, the researcher observed that Teacher E's classroom at School Y is a good place for teaching and learning. The classroom has ample lighting and is well aired in that there are three

windows at the back and two in front of the classroom, and the classroom is tiled. Both windows have been painted, hence the learners cannot see through the windows and they can pay better attention. This classroom is therefore regarded as a conducive learning environment. There was, however, no sample of teaching materials displayed on the walls.

4.7.4 Teaching and learning methods

During the class observations, the researcher observed that most of the teachers employed Freire's teaching model, which is also known as the banking model (see Section 2.3.2). The teachers teach their learners by talking to them and merely transferring knowledge, while the learners simply have to listen to them. This means that there is no interaction between the teachers and the learners and obtaining alternative viewpoints from the learners' side is not possible. The following is an example of this approach. When the researcher observed Teacher C at School Z, he presented a lesson to Grade 7s. The topic was "Revolution and communication". He wrote the topic on the chalkboard and presented different kinds of resources for information such as television, radio and print media. However, the teacher did not explain properly how people get information through these resources and he was talking too much while the learners merely listened. This is typical of the teacher-centred approach. The teacher deposited his knowledge in the learners because he was the one who provided all the information about the lesson without considering the learners' pre-knowledge. He did not give the learners the opportunity to talk about the sources of communication, about which they might have existing knowledge. He did not even ask a related question, such as on how people communicate. In addition, after a long talk by Teacher C, he gave the learners an activity in which they had to design and draw any three types of information sources and write down what needs these sources meet. This was an individual activity. The learners were unable to complete the activity in the classroom due to insufficient time. However, they were given the opportunity to complete it at home because it would be used for assessment purposes. Afterwards the teacher announced that the given activity will be assessed and learners raised their concern by asking the teacher how he wanted the work to be done and how the mark will be allocated. This happened because there was no clear instruction or guidance on how to do the task or how the marks would be allocated. Teacher C replied that the marks were out of 20 and that good marks would be obtained based on the information and the quality of the work. The researcher sees this as motivation for the learners to work hard.

In the second observation of Teacher C's lesson presentation, the teaching strategy changed. In the second lesson Teacher C presented the topic of Namibian people and culture. He used a

laptop and overhead projector as teaching aids. The overhead projector was connected to the laptop and he projected slides of different people with their traditional outfits such as Vambo, Himba, Herero and Damara Nama. In this lesson the teacher used a teaching style where he involved the learners through the question-and-answer method. This time he asked the learners to talk about their culture. However, only two learners were actively participating because they were only the ones who raised their hands and the teacher kept his attention on them. In this lesson not all learners were involved.

Teacher E and Teacher S from School Y applied the same method used by Teacher C in his first lesson. They both wrote their topics on the chalkboard and presented their lessons by reading the short summary on the chalkboard. After reading the notes, the learners were instructed to copy down the summary in their books for study purposes. Among all these presentations the researcher observed, there was no group discussion or pair work.

Most teachers presented their lessons while the learners were listening. In this research, it was noted that learners were not considered or asked to give their views about the lessons. This approach may be demotivating and may impact negatively on learning. Learners may be bored if they are not given a chance to participate in the lesson and teachers cannot assess whether they understand the lesson that was taught. Dube (2012:55) argues that teachers are advised to use a teaching and learning process that recognises young people as active rather than passive participants. The effective teaching and learning process is one where learners investigate, explore and express ideas and skills to apply to new situations. This study regards this approach as learner-centred because in the learner-centred approach learners are expected to be more involved in the lesson by exploring and expressing their ideas and providing their views about the lesson.

During the presentation of Teacher S's lesson, the researcher observed that her teaching approach was slightly different from that of the other teachers E, J and F mentioned above. Teacher S used the question-and-answer teaching approach. She presented her lesson on the topic of the Namibian president, prime minister and ministries, initially questioning learners about the previous lesson such as to name the duties of the president and the prime minister. Thereafter she introduced the topic for that day, which was different from the previous one on the ministries in Namibia. Teacher S continued questioning the learners by asking them to relate the different types of ministries in Namibia to identify their duties. Although some information was provided by the teacher herself, the learners were actively involved because they also provided their ideas during question time. In this lesson only a few learners were not

participating. This approach may be regarded as a learner-centred approach because Teacher S asked more questions, involved the learners and learners provided information, and at the same time they were sharing ideas. In this lesson the learners were talking more than the teacher.

In the 10 lessons per teacher the researcher observed, most teachers did not provide their learners with group work activities. Those who gave activities, such as Teacher C and Teacher S, gave activities to be done individually. The researcher also observed that none of the teachers gave homework to the learners at any time. However, teacher C gave the learners opportunity to complete the class activity at home which was not planned as a homework. This was a concern to the researcher, as the aim of homework is to consolidate what was taught and learned in school. The researcher's other concern is whether the lesson presentations give enough information for the learners to understand the content of the subject, as learners are not always involved and little interaction occurred. This led to the question of how the teachers follow up to ensure that learners have understood the content of the subject and the given task.

4.7.5 Teaching and learning material utilised

According to the researcher's lesson observations, Teacher E and Teacher S in School Y were using chalkboards and textbooks as their teaching materials for both lessons. The chalkboards were used for writing short summaries for the learners, which the learners merely copied and wrote in their books. In the first lesson presented by Teacher E, she allowed the learners to read together at the same time from the textbook. There was no additional material or proper explanation after the reading. After the reading session, the learners were only instructed to copy down the short summary on the chalkboard. It seemed to the researcher that Teacher E was not well prepared to teach that day. The wall and the noticeboard of these classrooms were empty; there were no teaching aids displayed to stimulate the learners to learn effectively.

Another observation with regard to how teaching materials were being used was made at School Y in Teacher J's lessons. In her first lesson she used posters with questions on them. These posters were displayed on the chalkboard and the learners were instructed to copy the questions and answer them, as it would be used for assessment purposes. There was no feedback that day because the learners were instructed to leave their books with the teacher after completion of their work.

Teacher S from School Y did not use any additional materials except the chalkboard. The concern was whether the learners really understood what the teacher presented to them without the support of any teaching materials. Experience has shown that learners can learn more when

they see or touch objects. Therefore, it is always good if a teacher teaches with samples or materials related to the topic, as it may influence learners positively to get a better understanding of the topic.

It was also noted that the participant E did not use any additional teaching material in Grade 5, apart from the chalkboard. However, in Grade 7 he used the overhead projector, although it was not switched on. He only showed the learners that it is one of the kinds of technology that people are using nowadays. Although the school has a laptop and television, he did not use them as learning technologies. In the other lesson to Grade 7s, this teacher made a copy from his textbook because the learners did not have textbooks. This shows that the school lacks textbooks as the most basic teaching and learning material. It was very difficult for the learners to follow when the teacher read from the book. Participant J used a flipchart as teaching and learning material. However, nothing very interesting other than a summary was presented. This demonstrates that additional teaching and materials were necessary for the participants.

One can therefore deduce that the participating teachers in this study do not succeed in utilising appropriate teaching and learning materials that may assist learners to gain a better understanding of the contents taught.

4.7.6 Availability of Social Studies materials

During the review of the resource files, the researcher found that most of the files are not well equipped. The researcher did not find any teaching resources except for end-of-year Social Studies question papers of 2014 and an April term test of 2015. There are no materials to be used as teaching and learning materials. This was confirmed by the three participants who mentioned during the interviews that they do not have teaching and learning materials for Social Studies. Textbooks were also a major concern for the three participants. According to these participants there is a lack of teaching materials. They were therefore requested by the principals to create their own teaching and learning materials. This issue of creating teaching and learning materials has been supported by the MoE (2008:3), which states that teachers in Social Studies should be innovative and creative by developing their own teaching materials linked to their practice. During the classroom observations the researcher observed that learners from two schools did not have textbooks during the time the study was conducted. One of the participants argued that it is time-consuming to teach without textbooks. Therefore, teachers are forced to make copies because of the lack of textbooks.

4.7.7 Class size

Class size in this study refers to the number of learners in the classroom. Teacher F from School X was the first participant to be observed. During the first classroom observation, the researcher noted that he had a small class size of 12 learners in Grade 5, which was the same number that appeared on his class list. One can deduce that his classroom is not overcrowded. It is supposed to be manageable and controlled because there are only a few learners in the classroom. However, during the observation the learners were talking too much without permission. This was seen as an uncontrolled classroom. Another incident that occurred while the researcher was still observing that class was that one female learner stood up and took a broom to sweep while the teacher was busy teaching. Other learners reported the incident to the teacher, but he just ignored them and continued teaching. This may affect the teaching and learning process because learners are not concentrating on the lesson. In addition to a lack of concentration, the classroom was dusty and not conducive to teaching and learning. It was found that class size at School X was not an issue that contributed to learners' poor performance due to the fact that it was a small group of learners; however, the teacher failed to control them effectively.

In School Y, Teacher S was the next one to be observed. Teacher S has a large number of learners in her class. During the observation period, her Grade 7a class size had 40 learners, while grades 7b and 7c consisted of 41 learners each. This can be seen as overcrowded classrooms. The overcrowded classroom may affect the teaching and learning process because the teacher may not reach each and every learner in the classroom. The researcher observed that Teacher S did not move around the classroom or walk between the rows of the learners because of the very limited space. An overcrowded classroom may influence learners' performance negatively, because the teacher cannot give individual attention to every learner. Some learners are slow to learn in a large group. Therefore, their learning may be affected by the class size.

The next participant was Teacher J from School Y. Teacher J's classroom size regarding the number of learners is also large, as there are 42 learners in Grade 6a, 41 and 40 in Grade 6b. There is a bit of space to move around in Teacher J's classroom because she has divided her classroom into two big groups. This allows her to move around the classroom and reach each and every learner whenever they require individual attention. During the first observation of the teacher the learners talked too much. They were given an individual task to complete but they were talking as if it was a group activity. The noise may affect other learners' concentration.

The following observation was done at School Y in Teacher E's classroom. The researcher found that Teacher E's Grade 5c class size was also overcrowded, as she had 40 learners. This number may be too large for the teacher to control. This participant had difficulty in controlling this class because learners were making a noise. She tried to quieten them by telling them "Mrs Negumbo is here to observe your behaviour and give a report to the Director of Education in Keetmanshoop". However, this did not make any difference, as the learners were only quiet for a few minutes and then continued with their noise. This noise disturbed Teacher E in trying to present her lesson effectively. The Grade 5c class was uncontrolled and unmanageable.

Teacher E also had difficulty in moving through the rows to reach most of the learners who were making a noise. This was due to the limited space, as learners' chairs and tables are too close to one another. In the end she decided to give them an unprepared task as homework. The learners were asked to write down five points on rights and five responsibilities at school and at home.

4.7.8 Summary of findings

Through observation the researcher was able to identify the possible factors that could challenge learners to perform well in Social Studies. The findings indicate that in most cases there are large class sizes. Most classes were in the order of 40+ learners per class, which is very large and might impact negatively on learners' performance in Social Studies. These large class sizes hinder effective lesson implementation because of poor classroom management (see Section 4.7.2). Large classes also affect the quality of teaching, as teachers present their lessons according to a teacher-centred approach. Ineffective classroom arrangement is also among the identified factors that challenge learners to perform better in Social Studies. It was found that, because of the large number of learners, most of the classrooms are arranged in a teacher-centred way. Although each learner sits alone, it is difficult to communicate with each other, or to work in groups. Seating arrangement is still a challenge to the teachers, as they have arranged their classroom in a way in which they cannot reach each individual learner and assist when the learners have difficulties in understanding the work. The teachers cannot move functionally around the classroom due to the limited space between the rows. It was also found that the physical environment of teaching and learning is a big challenge that may contribute to learners' underperformance (see Section 4.7.3). Unhealthy and dirty classrooms at some schools are also not conducive to promoting effective teaching and learning and learners who perform well. It is clear that a combination of factors, namely class size, classroom management, the physical teaching and learning environment, resources and teaching materials may impact negatively on learner performance in Social Studies.

4.8 INTERVIEWS

Face-to-face, semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with all eight research participants (five teachers and three principals) for data generation. The interviews consisted of two main sections, namely the biographical questions and semi-structured questions. The biographical questions were important because they provided valuable insight into the backgrounds of the participants. These questions provided information on the teachers' teaching experience, their years of experience as well as information on their training. In addition, the data captured during the interviews explained and described the origin, perceptions and challenges of teaching Social Studies. Moreover, the biographical and main questions on principals' management experiences elucidated the challenges of leaders in terms of learners' poor academic performance and aided in sharing ideas on factors that may contribute to learners' academic underperformance.

All the interviews conducted were tape-recorded and this also afforded the researcher the opportunity to take field notes, which later helped to verify the information. During the interviews, the researcher could also ask follow-up questions in order to probe further and obtain more in-depth information.

4.8.1 Interviews with teachers of Social Studies and school principals

In Chapter 1 the main aim of this study was described, namely to investigate the underperformance in Social Studies at primary school level (Grade 5 to 7) in selected Namibian schools. The interview questions were divided into two sub-sections, namely interview questions for the principals and interview questions for the teachers of Social Studies. The interview questions were formulated as follows:

A: Principals' questions

1. What are the possible factors contributing to academic underperformance in schools?
2. What are the challenges for principals in terms of learners' performance?
3. The principal plays an important role with regard to developing and sustaining sound relationships and trust in the school. How do you experience it? How do you motivate and support teachers in accepting the changes and enable to meet the educational demands in school?
4. How often does supervising of teaching occur through class visits?
5. What can be done to improve learners' academic performance in the classroom?

B: Teachers' questions

1. What training programme did you attend with regard to teaching Social Studies?
2. How do you assist learners to learn Social Studies?
3. What teaching and learning strategies do you use in Social Studies?
4. What are the challenges of teaching and learning you have experienced in Social Studies?
5. How does educational reform contribute to the poor academic performance of learners?
6. How do government policies affect learners' academic performance?
7. What are the problems that hinder the teaching of Social Studies at primary school level?
8. What, in your opinion, may contribute to learners' poor performance?
9. Do the changes to the curriculum contribute to the underperformance of learners in Social Studies?

The participants responded to the above questions and the findings were derived from the data transcripts. These findings are discussed in the following sections.

4.8.2 Challenges which schools face in terms of learners' underperformance

This category relates how the participants responded to Question A2, namely "What are the challenges for principals in terms of learners' performance?" The participants explained that the challenges that their schools face in terms of learners' underperformance are mainly due to the automatic transfer policy. In this regard Principal W had this to say in response to Question A2: "One of the challenges is this automatic transfer story that is entering poor performances".

Similarly, Principal V explained: "You see, some of the requirement such as [the] automatic transfer story, that policy is not good because a transfer learner does not fit in that specific grade he or she has transferred to". Another response that revealed that the policy on the automatic transfer of learners to the next grade is a challenge at school was expressed by Teacher C in response to Question B6 as follows:

When it comes to the assessment policy I do not have problem but the automatic transfer, I do not support it because if learner fails, it is a fail. There must be a reason behind in this policy but it does not help to take learners to the grade if the level is the same.

Principal A has the same view as the other participants in his response to Question A2:

Learners [who] are transferred from one grade to another are contributing to academic underperformance in schools because they are transferred without reach the promotional requirements. This learner may fail the next grade because he or she did not qualify to be in such grade.

From these responses, it becomes clear that one of the major challenges school leaders face is the automatic transfer policy, which has a negative impact on learners' academic performance. The majority of the participants indicated that the automatic transfer policy is one of the factors that may contribute to learners' poor academic performance.

The participants' responses are in line with literature by Sichombe et al. (2011), as stated in Chapter 2. According to Sichombe et al. (2011:25), Namibian schools are faced with a problem of high grade repetition and the transferral of learners to the next grade without achieving the basic competencies for the previous grade. The non-promotion transfer policy may have a negative impact on learners' performance because learners are transferred without reaching the promotion requirements. This in turn leads to a high rate of underperformance in the next grades. The participating teachers were concerned about the automatic policy allowing learners to be transferred to the next grade although such learners did not meet the promotion requirements. Two participants were of the view that if learners fail a grade, they should repeat that particular grade because these learners will encounter problems in the next grades. Transferred learners do not perform well because they do not understand the concepts of the next grade. This view confirms what is argued in the literature, as mentioned above.

Apart from the non-promotion transfer policy there are other challenges experienced by Social Studies teachers, as they confirmed when they responded to Question B4:

There is a challenge in a certain topic especial in Grade 6, Geography.

Learners do not have a problem with [the] History part but [the] Geography part is more [of a] challenge to them.

Two participants, Teacher J and Teacher C, feel that the Geography part is a big challenge in Social Studies. What if the Geography part is questioned on more in the examination paper while teachers see as a challenge in Social Studies? This might be a challenge to the learners as well and it may lead to learners not performing well due to lack of understanding.

Teacher J's response to Question B4 was as follows:

Sometimes you cannot handle the kids. I have fast learners and slow learners in the class it is so difficult to balance teaching. It is difficult to understand some topics. Maybe Social Studies need a lot, if we have PowerPoint, learners may see what happened in the past.

The participants were asked to indicate the challenges they experience in teaching Social Studies. This question was necessary to establish whether there was a common response among the participants. In addition to the responses given above, the teachers also revealed that they did not attend any training or workshops in Social Studies. Such failure to train teachers in implementing the Social Studies curriculum might affect learners' performance.

4.8.3 Untrained teachers who teach Social Studies

Untrained teachers may influence learners' performance negatively. The participants were asked whether they experienced other challenges in teaching Social Studies. During the interviews some teachers, such as E, S and J, said they did not receive training to teach Social Studies.

In Section 2.4.4 it was stated that the National Policy Guide for Social Studies (MoE, 2008:1) claims that the establishment of a Social Studies policy is aimed at making provision for a well-organised and practically orientated programme in the teaching and management of Social Studies in schools. However, this does not apply in this study, because the researcher found that most Social Studies teachers who participated in this study were not trained to teach Social Studies.

Untrained teachers may be considered as one of the factors that may be contributing to learners' underperformance in Social Studies in some Namibian schools, as they do not have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to teach the subject. Nitko (1995) argues that the training of teachers could add value to the quality of teaching and learning outcomes in a school setting. In this regard, the researcher argues that if teachers did not receive training, they may experience difficulty in implementing the curriculum for Social Studies and as a result learners' performance may be affected. This argument is supported in the literature by a study by Jotia and Matlale (2011:116), who report that teachers who did not receive special training in Social Studies indicated that they were not aware of any special ways of teaching Social Studies. In this research, four out of the five participating Social Studies teachers confirmed that they were untrained. Teacher C noted as follows in response to Question B1:

There is a lot of challenges, as I did not specialise in Social Studies in university, I need to work hard. It is very hard to understand the topic before I present it to the learners.

[...] I did not attend any training in Social Studies, still waiting for programme from the Regional Office.

This means that the majority of Social Studies teachers who participated in this study neither specialised in Social Studies nor received any formal training despite teaching the subject for more than three years. This shows that some teachers at primary schools teach Social Studies without having specialised in the subject. The researcher argues that teaching a subject without the appropriate skills and subject knowledge may affect learners' performance negatively, as untrained teachers cannot effectively implement the syllabus as required.

Teachers who did not receive any training may not understand the content of the subject. They may also not be aware of the specific methods used in Social Studies to help learners understand the subject and the value of the subject in their lives. Teachers can only contribute to successful and effective curriculum implementation if they possess the appropriate knowledge and skills.

Teacher J responded as follows to the question on training: "To be truthful, I only attend once and it was last year. The urban and rural schools were combined, that was the only one I attended". Teacher S stated: "So far, I didn't attend any training, I only got training for Development Studies in Grade 12". These responses indicate that teachers face challenges in implementing the Social Studies curriculum due to lack of training. Teacher S did not want to be seen as an untrained teacher; she felt that she had received training for Development Studies in Grade 12. However, this training has nothing to do with teaching Social Studies.

As can be seen from the above responses, most of the participants were not trained to implement the curriculum of Social Studies. Consequently, the lack of formal training may influence learners' academic performance negatively, as confirmed by the literature (see Section 2.8.6).

This shows that Social Studies teachers need to be trained so that they may acquire the skill for teaching the subject. Teacher E clearly expressed this view, as in her responses she pointed out that: "Social Studies teachers require [training] that would [help them to] expand their knowledge and gain skills to implement [the] Social Studies curriculum effectively". The findings show that out of five participants who were teaching Social Studies, only one was trained to implement the curriculum of Social Studies. The researcher's view here is that teachers cannot effectively and efficiently implement the curriculum without attending any training. In order to implement the curriculum, teachers need to have a clear idea of how to teach the subject well.

O'Sullivan (2002:222) argues that the successful implementation of education depends on the extent to which teachers are prepared to implement change. If the educator lacks capability, knowledge of the subject and skills to implement the curriculum subject, this may negatively influence learners' performance.

4.8.4 Lack of parental involvement

Bertrand (2005:165) refers to parental involvement as parents' role in their children's education at home and at school. This category refers to parental involvement because most of the teachers mentioned that in their opinion lack of parental involvement may contribute to learners' poor academic performance. In connection with this aspect of lack of parental involvement, one of the participants, participant J, in response to Question A1, stated as follows:

Most of the things which are contributing to the learners' poor performance at this school are lack of parents' involvement, lack of motivation, time because most of the time children are just alone at home, their parents are always at work.

Principal A had the same view in response to this question:

One of the contributing factors really is the automatic transfer, lack of motivation, parental involvement, sometimes you may find children alone at home, their parents are working at other places. [...] Some parents [are] involved in alcoholism, so they do not pay attention to their children' education. Even the situations in our town, most of the parents are factory workers, sometimes when they go to work children are sleeping and when they come back from work they find them sleeping again.

This response clearly shows that parents at this school are not involved in their children's education due to alcoholism and the need to work. This helped the researcher to understand why learners are not performing well at this school.

Similarly, the response from participant S was as follows:

What contributes toward learners' academic performance are learners that are transferred from one grade to another, lack of parent's involvement: parental involvement always remains a challenge.

The researcher agrees that parental involvement is one of the problems in learners' underperformance, as was argued by most of the participants. The above responses show that parents do not have time to monitor their children's school work due to their own work. This was confirmed during the interview by one of the principals, who stated the following:

Parents do not like to come to school and they always excuse themselves with work. They would like to tell us that work won't allow them to come to school. This is a challenge to the school, therefore most of the time the school schedule the parents' meeting after hours.

In this category the majority of the five participants expressed the view that most parents at their schools are not involved in their children's education. The researcher cannot make the assumption that lack of parental involvement contributes to learners' underperformance in Social Studies, as it was not verified with the learners and the parents themselves. Only the views of the participating teachers and principals are applicable here and they are of the view that there is indeed a link. If parents do not monitor their children's schoolwork or motivate them to study, it may affect their results. These participants revealed that parents are not involved in their children's education due to the situation of their work and alcohol abuse. However, work is not a valid reason not to pay attention to their children's education. Proper arrangements might be made so that parents may assist their children with schoolwork. They may also have the opportunity to make an arrangement with the school concerning their children's progress instead of waiting for the report.

Most primary school learners are immature or lack self-discipline, therefore, they may not do their homework or study on their own. They need supervision from both teachers and parents. As was mentioned by two participants, the majority of the parents are factory workers, so they come and go to work while their children are still sleeping. This clearly indicates that they do not have time to monitor their children. Children may even play until late without doing schoolwork on their own and as a result, they may not perform well.

4.8.5 Motivation in teaching and learning

Apart from the above factors that may contribute to learners' underperformance in Social Studies, motivation was one of the concerns, as Teacher C commented as follows on Question B4: "Some of the challenges [are that] learners are not motivated to learn ...".

Teacher F has the same view that lack of motivation may affect learners' performance, as he argued that "[t]here is no motivation [among] learners themselves; that is why you may find them [not] studying on their own". This shows that learners are not performing well due to being unmotivated. However, there are factors that may hinder motivation such as personal character, life situation and institutional factors (Ahl, 2006:394). With regard to personal character, learners do not have self-confidence and they may lack interest in learning, time to study and

information. Furthermore, teacher S provided the same information about possible factors that may contribute to learners' underperformance: "Fair treatments, if learners are not motivated by both teachers and parents [they] may not perform well".

Another school principal (Principal A) has the same view, as he responded as follows to Question A3 on ways to motivate and support teachers in accepting the changes and demands of educational change in school:

It is a good question you are asking, but you know only when [the] principal is motivated, [he/she] can motivate teachers There are many ways teachers can be motivated, through teacher development programmes such as training, through peer teaching, general subject meetings and they may also be motivated to upgrade themselves. All these things depend on teachers themselves, teachers they can go for training but the output is the best.

This means that principals should be motivated so that they can motivate their teachers. However, if principals are not motivated, they cannot motivate their teachers. The same applies to the teachers. If teachers are not motivated, they cannot motivate their learners. However, in order for the learners to perform well, they need to be motivated. This argument is supported by Hodgetts (1990:42), as he claims that motivation is a force that pulls a person towards a desired objective. This means that it forces people to become determined and hard-working in reaching their objectives. As can be seen from the above responses, the participants were, to a certain extent, aware of the issue of motivation.

Principal V replied as follows to Question A3: "I used to motivate my teachers through team building and send[ing] them to the workshops when it is necessary." Principal W reacted as follows: "Continuous encouragement, send[ing] them to the workshop and praise will keep the teacher motivated".

During the interviews all of the school principals indicated that they motivated their teachers through training or workshops. This is a good idea, because training or workshops is where teachers may improve and develop their teaching skills. They may also learn how to improve their teaching strategies through training or workshops. However, the study found that out of five teachers, four indicated that they have never attended any training or workshops with regard to Social Studies. This clearly indicates that there is a contradiction between what the teachers and principals had said. There was a clear indication from the teachers' responses in this section that they are not motivated through workshops because they are never sent to workshops.

4.8.6 Lack of teaching and learning materials

In this category the participants indicated that lack of materials may be one of the factors that may contribute to learners' underperformance. The participants' responses to Question B4 show that there is a shortage of teaching and learning materials. One of the teacher, teacher J argued that "[t]he challenge is when we discuss lessons we do not have teaching materials. Yes, it is good to say we should make our materials but you must accurate to do the things (sic)". This clearly indicates that there is a lack of material at these schools. The above response shows that teachers have been asked to provide their own teaching materials and they experience difficulty in coming up with their own materials, as they have not received any training.

Teacher C stated as follows: "Some of the challenges are lack of materials, sometimes I have to go and make copies because learners do not have enough textbooks and it is time-consuming. You do not manage time". Based on this participant's response, it is clear that the school does not have enough textbooks for the learners and therefore teachers have to make copies. This happened during the researcher's class visit with this particular teacher. Learners may not produce good marks when learning without materials. It is not easy to learn without information, though teachers try to make copies, yet they cannot make copies of the entire textbook.

Teacher J stated as follows:

Social Studies is ... [about] learning and understanding the subject, what usually I do is present my lesson with the project, because most of the time we do not have some materials. Most of the time I use copy and paste from the internet to present the lesson.

Teacher F's view regarding textbooks was as follows: "Learners do not have textbooks, but we ordered them and not yet received". This was verified by Teacher C: "There is always a delay [in] delivering textbooks from the Regional Office. Therefore, sometimes we use the (UPE) grant to order some books and stationaries". The UPE grant is the money paid by government to each state school for learners from Grade 1 to 7. In general, each learner is allocated N\$411 for textbooks and stationery. The money allocated to each learner is not enough, because textbooks and additional materials such as maps and posters are expensive.

The researcher followed this response up by probing further and asked: "If I understand you correctly, you have mentioned that the principal has to ensure that teaching and learning materials are available at school. Do you experience any problems with teaching and learning materials?"

Then teacher F confirmed: “Yes, sometimes the delivery of textbooks and stationaries from the Regional Office side are delayed”. The above evidence also shows that lack of Social Studies textbooks is a big challenge at schools, and that teaching and learning can be negatively influenced due to the lack of textbooks. The participant provided information on the challenges concerning the lack and unavailability of textbooks. This was verified when the researcher did the classroom observations. Teaching and learning may be not efficient if there is a lack of materials. Materials and appropriate resources form the foundation that may be used by teachers when they are teaching to help learners to understand the content of the subject. Teaching materials also promote the efficiency of teaching and learning and helps the teacher to communicate with learners more effectively.

4.8.7 Delivery of teaching and learning materials

The delivery of teaching and learning materials is a big challenge for two participating schools. Two principals responding to Question A2 indicated that the Education Regional Office always sends their materials late. One of the principals, principal A responded to the question on the challenges they experience as principals as follows:

It is not easy but you see as a principal you have to make sure that everything is in place when school starts, like textbooks must be there, Human Resources means everybody must be there, staff, stationaries, writing books and finance in order for teaching and learning to take place at school effectively, so proper planning is important for the principal and also [to] make sure that all stakeholders [are] involved, like parents, and sometimes the delivery of textbooks and stationery from the Regional Office side [is] delayed.

This means that they experience a delay in the delivery of teaching and learning materials, and delays in the delivery affect the teachers’ lesson plans. Another principal, principal V commented on the issue of the delay of deliveries: “Most of the time we receive our teaching and materials late from the Education Regional Office ... we may place our orders for the textbooks and other educational and cleaning materials but they may reach us very late”.

It is clear that the school principals experience the late delivery of textbooks and other materials from the Regional Office as a huge challenge to learner success and performance.

4.8.8 Teaching strategies used in Social Studies

The participants were asked to identify the teaching strategies used in teaching Social Studies. The following question was posed to them (Question B3): What teaching and learning strategies do you use in Social Studies?

In response to this question, Teacher J answered as follows:

Mine is practical, because I do not know about Social Studies. Letting the learners do the practical that is how I do to fill them in [...] the way I [...] help my learners is just to motivate them to study very hard, encouraging them that we are all learning the subject.

This means that this particular teacher has a challenge with strategies or methods to be used in teaching Social Studies. In Chapter 2 different strategies or methods were identified that may be applicable for use in Social Studies, namely assignments, discussions, simulation, construction, laboratory work, lectures, inquiries, observation, questioning, problem solving, projects, reviews, sources, storytelling, supervision, textbooks and socialised classroom recitations.

Teacher F stated: “My method is a project which is a beneficiary to the learners. The other thing if we do map work I use a map to show pictures to make them understand the topic”. Participant S commented: “Most cases I do not use textbooks, what I do, I read a chapter at home and understand it, when I am teaching it is just telling them a story. This is my method”. Teacher E responded: “I let learners read from the textbooks the topic for the lesson and ask them questions about [the] reading”. Teacher F has the same view as the above participants, as she stated that she uses questioning and answering.

The researcher probed to get more information about teaching strategies. It was important to follow up questions, because teaching strategies may have a positive or negative impact on learners’ performance. The follow-up question was as follows: “Are you aware that there is another method you may use in Social Studies?” One participant, participant E responded that she was not aware of other teaching strategies which she may use to teach Social Studies due to being untrained. Two teachers, teacher E and F indicated that they use the strategy of questions and answers. As can be seen from the above responses, the participants only used one strategy to teach.

Although there are many strategies that could be used by the teachers to teach Social Studies, most of the participants did not apply them when they were teaching during the time of this study and observation. This is in line with the literature of Jotia and Matlale (2011). Jotia and

Matlale (2011:119) state that teachers who did not receive special training in Social Studies indicated that they were not aware of any special ways of teaching methods for Social Studies. This shows that some of the Social Studies teachers do not know whether there are recommended teaching methods for Social Studies. This helped the researcher to understand why they do not implement other recommended methods. In general, in some cases using only one method may not help all learners understand, because it may not be suitable for all of them.

The researcher also observed that none of the participants used a well-known teaching approach in Namibian schools, namely the learner-centred approach. As was indicated in previous chapters, in the learner-centred approach teachers and learners play an equally active role in the learning process. In general, the learner centred-approach leads learners to think independently and share their ideas as well as the topic or tasks with others. Learners are also empowered to be more active and independent to take responsibility for their own learning. Learners' learning is measured through both formal and informal forms of assessment, including group projects and classroom participation. In the teacher-centred approach (lecture style teaching and learning approach), teachers talk more while learners listen. In this approach, learners are viewed as empty vessels that receive information through teaching and direct instruction. Sometimes teachers write on the chalkboard and learners are requested to take notes. If teachers cannot use methods that may help learners to learn easier, it might affect their performance.

4.8.9 English as medium of instruction as a barrier in learning Social Studies

In Section 2.4.3 it was indicated that the language policy in Namibia stipulates that every school-going child in Namibia should acquire adequate proficiency in English at primary school level so that learners can learn the curriculum content with ease (MEC, 2003:63). With regard to this policy, this study found that some learners struggle with the content of Social Studies due to their poor proficiency in English. This is similar to the argument of Dhurumraj (2013), who reports that the medium of instruction at schools affects learners' performance in a subject because learners are unable to interpret questions in examinations. They may not understand questions due to the language problem.

During the interviews, two participants responded to Question B5 by arguing that learners have difficulty in reading and learning in Social Studies.

Learners have a problem with language, the majority do not really understand English.

So far learners whom I am teaching they cannot write English, some of the learners do not understand the content of the subject.

Sometimes learners do not understand English because most of the time they speak Afrikaans at home and at school when they are playing outside with others.

The above extracts demonstrate that English as the medium of instruction is a challenge to many learners and that many lack proficiency in using the language. Learners may have difficulty in understanding the content of the subject as well as the teacher's explanation due to the language barrier. This may result in learners not following and not expressing themselves when it comes to tests or examinations. The participants' views are similar to Harris's argument. According to Harris (2011:19), learning subject content in English is one of the contributing factors to the high failure rates in Namibian schools.

It is clear that a lack of a suitable level of proficiency in English might indeed be one of the barriers that impact on learners' performance in Social Studies. This issue of language requires further critical analysis by government, especially in terms of the language policy, which states that English should be the medium of instruction in Namibia. Namibian policy makers need to approach this issue from a multicultural point of view, as English is not the home language of most of the learners.

4.8.10 Management and learners' performance

The principals were asked the following questions to establish how often supervision is done. How often does supervision of teaching occur through class visits? This question also helped the researcher to ascertain whether management is controlling the teaching and learning process regularly. The principals responded to these questions as follows:

I do supervision once per term; and teachers do not have any problem with class visits. We compromise on the date of class visits.

If you want to see the results you must monitor and supervise. Do you know here at our school we have a new system for the responsibility? We [have] now divided the responsibilities among the management but the accountability goes to the principal. [The] principal is now responsible for head of departments and the counselling teacher while head of departments are the ones who [are] responsible for teachers. So far, we did not encounter any problem with teachers' attitudes.

Class visits take place every term by myself or the senior teacher; many teachers welcome class visits especially when they are well prepared.

We do not do class visits anymore but rather to allow the heads of department to monitor the teaching and learning process at the schools. We only monitoring the teaching and learning process of the Head of Departments.

The researcher probed to get more information, why do you not monitoring teaching and learning process of teachers anymore? Principal A responded: *“We were instructed by the educational office to monitor and supervise teaching and learning process of the Head of departments and allow the Head of departments to do for teacher”*.

The principals were also asked how they control teaching and learning. In general, supervision, monitoring and controlling are an everyday process. Therefore, principals should ensure that the teaching and learning process occurs effectively at their schools. The researcher further wanted to investigate whether the teaching and learning process as well as assessment is being controlled and monitored regularly. The aim was to identify whether the management style at the school may influence learners' academic performance negatively.

The researcher found that all the principals only do class visits once per term. The concern is how the principals will ensure that effective teaching and learning has taken place if the class visits are only done once every term. Therefore, supervision, monitoring and the control of teaching must be done regularly.

4.8.11 Summary of findings

In summary, it has become clear that the policy of automatic transfer is one of the challenges facing schools in terms of learners' poor performance. In this regard learners are transferred to the next grade even though they did not achieve the subject or grade pass requirement. Another factor that affects learners' performance is untrained teachers, in the sense that they are not trained to teach Social Studies. The researcher argues that untrained teachers have neither sound subject knowledge nor the required skills for implementing the curriculum of Social Studies. As a result, learners might not be performing well.

The teachers explained that English as language of instruction is a barrier that hinders learners from understanding the content of the subject due to Afrikaans mainly being their home language. The findings indicated that principals are not monitoring the teaching and learning process. In this regard, the issue of not monitoring teaching and learning process is regarded as a

lack of leadership and management. The next section discusses the findings collected through data analysis.

4.9 THEMES AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

4.9.1 Factors that may contribute to learners' underperformance in Social Studies in school context

Figure 4.2 below indicates the factors that may contribute to learners' underperformance in Social Studies in school context. The diagram is divided into four main sections and five subsections, all identified from the findings. A critical discussion of the themes that emerged from the data and the findings is given. Figure 4.2 helps one to conceptualise these themes. During the process of analysis of the findings, each theme was analysed separately, but the information is drawn together at the end of this chapter.

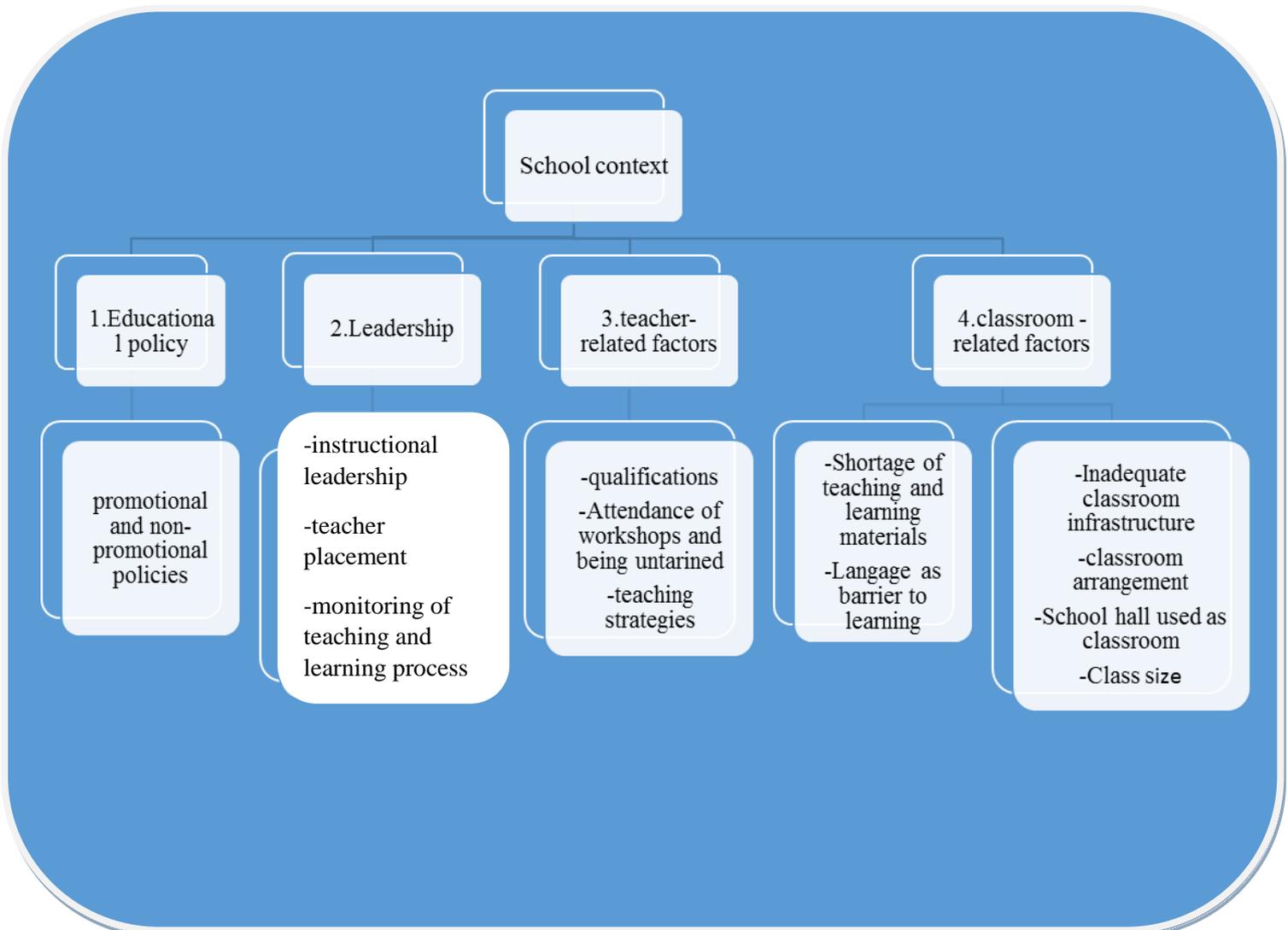


Figure 3.2: Factors that may be contribute to learners' underperformance in Social Studies in school context

Figure 4.2 shows four main factors that may impact on the success of learners in Social Studies, namely educational policy, leadership, teacher-related factors and classroom-related factors. All of the identified themes are connected and interrelated within the school context, and it is clear that the possible causes of poor learner performance are multifaceted.

4.9.2 Educational policy

In Chapter 2, the literature review made it clear that the promotional policy stipulates that learners should be promoted to the next grade when they have achieved the pass requirement of the promotional subjects or the pass requirement of the grade. However, the schools selected for the study do not put this policy into practice due to the non-promotional transfer policy, which is quite the opposite of what is required in the promotional policy. The idea of the promotional policy is that learners should be promoted when they meet the pass requirements, whereas the non-promotional policy stipulates that learners should be promoted to the next grade even if they have failed twice and therefore have not met the pass requirement. In this regard, the non-promotional policy advocates the idea of learners not repeating the phase or grade more than twice. This might lead to a high rate of failure in Social Studies, because if learners cannot cope with the subject in a particular grade, the chances are very good that they will not be able to cope with the subject in the next grade. It is clear that the application of both the promotional policy and the non-promotional transfer policy affects learners negatively, as these policies are contradictory. This definitely does nothing to enhance learner success.

4.9.3 Leadership

How do leadership and management of staff impact on learner success? In the analysis of the leadership dimension, the results indicated that, out of five participants teaching Social Studies, only one specialised in the subject. Principals' appointments are not always based on the appropriate qualifications of teachers. The Social Studies policy guide (MEC, 2008:1) stipulates that teachers who are trained in a particular subject should teach that subject. The National Curriculum for Basic Education (MEC, 2010:5) also makes it clear that for the successful implementation and provision of quality education, teachers should be appropriately and fully qualified to teach a particular phase, for example grades 5 to 7, in subjects with which they are entrusted. This study showed that inappropriately qualified and unqualified teachers were utilised to teach Social Studies in most of the schools that participated in this study. This may

create certain challenges for untrained teachers because they may encounter difficulty in implementing the Social Studies curriculum. Learners may not perform well in the subject due to teachers who are not adequately trained and who lack the basic subject knowledge and skills to teach and implement the Social Studies curriculum. It was not clear whether principals had succeeded in motivating teachers to improve themselves after teaching the subject for more than five years without the proper teaching qualification. The motivation of teachers to further their studies and to attend workshops to enhance their skills and knowledge could improve teaching and might influence learners' academic performance positively.

Monitoring of the teaching and learning process was also investigated. Two of the principals who participated in this study confirmed that they did not monitor teaching and learning activities anymore. They claimed that they did not do so anymore because they had been instructed by the educational office not to do so, but rather to allow the heads of department to monitor the teaching and learning process at the schools. This raises questions as to how school principals will identify the challenges facing the teaching and learning process at schools. It is also difficult for principals to monitor learners' progress because teachers only hand in the final marks to the principal's office by the end of the term and the year. Lack of monitoring of the teaching and learning process may also contribute to learners' underperformance in the sense that teachers may not deliver quality teaching because they know that their work is not supervised or monitored by the principal. The researcher argues that monitoring should go hand in hand with school management, so that the challenges impacting learners' performance could be identified and attended to in order to improve their academic performance.

4.9.3.1 Instructional leadership

Generally, school leaders must have the ability to lead schools and other educators so that educational transformation can occur. According to Carl, Bitzer and Beets (2006:32) teachers and principals are curriculum leaders, because they are actively involved in the school system as well as in subject curriculum. Hence, they should accept cooperative responsibility for the curriculum, within the present context of educational transformation and curriculum change. This means that all of the educators should be involved, including teachers who are ultimately implementing the curriculum. Carl et al (2006:32) continue to discuss that any vagueness and ignorance about curriculum development leadership responsibilities should be avoided as it may create stagnation and professional degeneration. Teachers should be involved in the whole process of curriculum development so that the teaching and learning process can be effective and streamlined. With regards to the principal as a curriculum leader, the principal can become a

curriculum developer by being involved and making meaning of what curriculum transformation is, and ensuring that teachers become agents of change.

In general, the principal as curriculum leader plays a vital role in the curriculum renewal and transformation, school curriculum, positive climate for renewal, staff development and eliminating resistance to change.

4.9.4 Teacher-related factors

Figure 4.2 also presents teacher-related aspects, namely qualifications, attendance of workshops and being untrained and teaching strategies as factors that may contribute to learners' underperformance. All five participating teachers confirmed that they did not attend any workshops regarding the teaching of Social Studies. Two out of the five participating teachers teach Social Studies without any teaching qualifications. After obtaining a Grade 12 certificate, they did not further their studies. These teachers are therefore implementing the Social Studies curriculum without any subject knowledge or any teaching skills. According to the National Curriculum for Basic Education (MEC, 2010:4), "teaching emphasises the varied process and learning experiences needed for the creation of knowledge, rather than relying predominantly on the transmission of knowledge by the teachers".

In this study it was determined that untrained teachers might be one of the factors that affect learners' performance because these teachers do not have adequate subject knowledge of Social Studies or the skills to implement the curriculum of the subject. Unskilled teachers might also affect the quality of teaching because they might be unable to provide quality teaching due to their lack of training. The question is that if learners are taught by untrained teachers, what should people's expectations of learners' performance be? It should definitely not be high. Hargreaves (1994: ix) states that "we have come to realise in recent years that the teachers are the ultimate key to educational change and school improvement". If teachers are not properly trained and well equipped, expecting improvement in learners' performance will be futile because teachers may simply be unable to improve learners' underperformance. With regard to the issue of untrained teachers, the researcher argues that Social Studies teachers, whether specialists or not, need to be trained in the best strategies for teaching the subject that will accommodate the needs and diversity of their learners. Failure to do so could adversely affect learners' performance in Social Studies.

In this study, it was observed by the researcher that most teachers used a traditional teaching method, namely the well-known teacher-centred approach. Their lessons were predominantly

teacher-dominated. The teachers explained the topic through observation by the learners instead of eliciting information from the learners, asking them to explain and share ideas with their classmates. During the observations, there was no pair or group work or class discussion. Learners did not sit in groups, but sat alone in rows. The researcher therefore concluded that the learners had a limited amount of opportunities to communicate with one another. The teachers did not support learners by, for example, asking them to work in pairs or in a group, although some learners may learn more easily through group or pair discussion. If learners are not afforded the opportunity to learn from group, pair or class discussions, they may not understand the topic and may underperform in the subject. In general, through the teacher-centred approach, learners study the subject content without real understanding. They may memorise the given notes instead of explaining the concepts and showing their understanding of the subject content. The researcher argues that effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum should be carried out by teachers by applying different teaching methods such as group, pair and class discussions. Such methods may accommodate all learners and may assist them to understand the subject properly and to improve their performance in Social Studies. Commenting on this issue, Lambert and Balderstone (2010:89) argue that teaching style is a product of the way in which the teacher relates to learners and the strategy that he or she identifies to bring about learning that focuses on learners' needs.

4.9.5 Classroom-related factors

Untrained teachers are not the only challenge pertaining to learners' performance in Social Studies; classroom-related factors are among the challenges impacting learner performance. The teachers in this study also experience problems regarding the shortage of teaching and learning material. Comments from three teachers at schools Y, X and Z indicated that there was a general shortage of teaching and learning material such as textbooks and maps. It was also affirmed by the researcher during the class observations that learners were not using textbooks. Grades 5 and 6 at School Y had textbooks, although not enough, because learners were sharing. The shortage of textbooks might result in learners not revising what was taught in class. Learners might perform poorly in Social Studies due to the lack of teaching and learning material. The issue of the shortage of teaching resources may not be easy to resolve, but teachers should not use this obstacle as an excuse for not teaching effectively. This study also found that most Grade 5 and 6 classrooms were overcrowded with 41 to 42 learners in one classroom, which might prevent teachers from reaching and paying attention to individual learners. All three teachers from School Y acknowledged that they encounter challenges in applying the learner-centred approach

to teaching due to the large number of learners in their classrooms. They complained that overcrowded classrooms result in a lack of space and force them to utilise the traditional way of teaching, namely the teacher-centred approach.

During the lesson observations, it was noticed by the researcher that the teachers were unable to move around the classrooms. Learners sat very close to each other due to the lack of space in the classroom. Most classrooms are arranged so that each learner sits alone, which does not allow them to share their ideas in groups or pairs, although they sit close to each other. This arrangement may cause poor communication during the lesson, which may lead to learners' not performing well.

A further classroom-related issue is the inadequate classroom infrastructure at School Y and the school hall being used as a classroom. Learners at School Y are taught in inadequate non-permanent classrooms. At the same school, the school hall was found to be an uncondusive teaching place during the lesson observation. Teacher S confirmed that they were operating in this untidiness due to the school cleaners who are not committed to doing their job. This study concluded that the untidiness and lack of cleanliness might contribute to learners' underperformance because they cannot concentrate in an environment not conducive to effective teaching and learning.

The study furthermore found that the use of English as teaching medium was one of the causes of learners' underperformance in Social Studies and therefore part of the challenges faced in the teaching and learning of Social Studies. Three of the participants confirmed that the majority of learners did not understand English due to Afrikaans being their home language. The participants indicated that learners experience difficulty with English as medium of instruction and that it takes time to make them understand the concepts being taught. Teacher S acknowledged that sometimes they have to use the children's home language during Social Studies lessons although they are not really allowed to do so because the medium of instruction at the school is English. The researcher believes that translating or explaining the lesson in the learners' home language may help learners to understand the content of the subject. However, learners may still struggle during the writing of tests and examinations because there will be no assistance in translating the question papers into their home language. The use of English as medium of instruction may affect learners' academic performance negatively because they may not understand the subject matter during the lesson presentation, and if learners experience problems with expressing themselves in English, it may also affect their examination results because they may not understand the questions.

The findings show that inappropriate teaching methods, ineffective classroom arrangement, lack of teaching material such as textbooks and extra resources, untrained teachers, lack of workshops, lack of parental involvement, promotional and non-promotional policies, leadership, English as a medium of instruction, and inadequate classrooms such as non-permanent structures and usage of the school hall as classroom are among the factors affecting learners' performance in Social Studies in selected schools in Namibia. In particular, unconducive teaching places such as school halls and non-permanent classrooms might affect teaching and learning activities.

Apart from the above school-related factors, there are factors related to the community that may also affect learners' performance in Social Studies.

4.10 Factors that may contribute to learners' underperformance in Social Studies in community context

Figure 4.3 below indicates the factors that may contribute to learners' underperformance in Social Studies in community context. The diagram is divided into three main sections, identified from the findings. A critical discussion of the themes that emerged from the data and the findings is given following the figure.

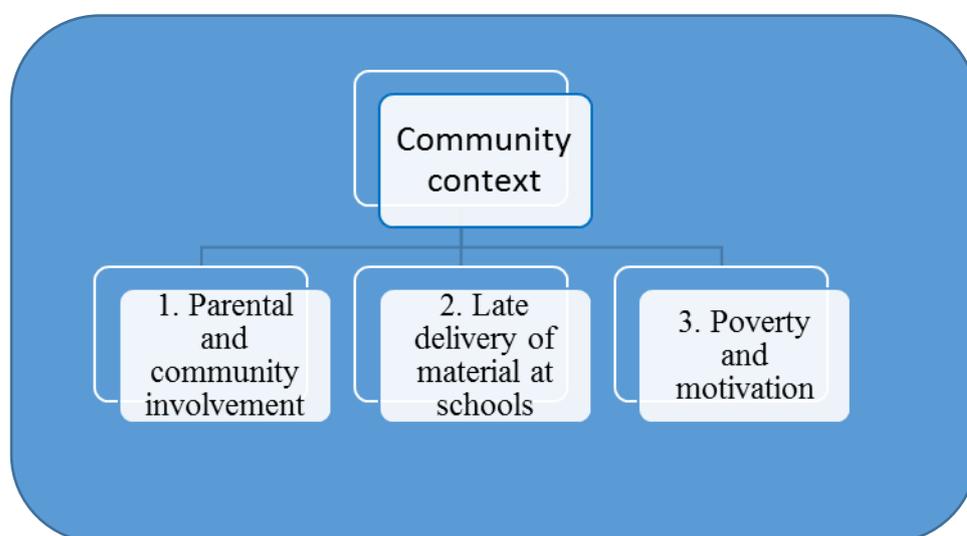


Figure 4.3: Factors that may contribute to learners' underperformance in Social Studies in community context

4.10.1 Parental and community involvement

In Section 4.8.4 it was indicated that there is a lack of parental involvement in the learners' academic performance. Four participants responded that schools are challenged because of a

lack of parental involvement in their children's education. Schools also do not receive sufficient support from the community. Parental and community involvement in the learning process is crucial for the academic success of learners. For schools to achieve their goal, the principals have to seek the assistance and cooperation of the community to improve the quality education provided by the schools. Parents should assist schools by providing children with basic needs such as food and school stationery and assisting their children with homework.

4.10.2 Late delivery of material at schools

In Section 4.8.7 it was indicated that according to two principals, the Education Regional Office always sends their teaching and learning material late. This late delivery of material may be an obstacle to teaching and learning because the teaching and learning process may be delayed due to unavailable material and teachers may not be able to complete the syllabus, while the end-of-year examination will cover the whole syllabus. The researcher argues that it is important to deliver the teaching and learning material on time to avoid delays in the teaching and learning process as well as to prevent learners' underperformance.

4.10.3 Poverty and motivation

The researcher noted that schools were also faced with poverty and lack of motivation of teachers and learners. During the interviews, two principals confirmed that social problems beyond the control of the school, such as poverty, contributed to learners' poor academic performance and that some learners also needed to be in a special school. Although the school Y have a feeding scheme in place, this school does not really have enough food for all the learners, as they only receive one box of fish as donation once a week from one of the local fish factories for the soup that they serve to the learners. This shows that if schools do not receive any food donations to feed learners, they may attend lessons on an empty stomach. This may cause learners to be unable to concentrate and to perform poorly. Poverty is an issue that is beyond the control of schools because it is caused by parents who are unemployed or who are only temporary workers.

Lack of motivation may create high rates of learner absenteeism. For example, if learners are absent from school without alert the parent. The head of the department at School Y revealed that they had been facing a high rate of learner absenteeism from school, in some cases even more than a week, at the time of the study. This is of concern to the researcher because if learners are absent from school for a week or more, it will be very difficult for them to catch up on their studies.

The participants also pointed out that there was no motivation on the side of teachers and learners. A lack of motivation of teachers leads to a lack of commitment and poor-quality teaching, and as a result, learners may end up not performing well.

The findings show that lack of parental and community involvement, late delivery of teaching and learning materials at school, poverty and motivation may affect learners' performance in Social Studies. Lack of parental involvement in their children's education may have negative effects, because if parents are not willing to assist their children with homework, provide food and school stationery, one cannot expect learners to perform well. Late delivery of teaching and learning materials delays the teaching and learning process, as teachers may be unable to complete the entire syllabus. With regard to poverty and motivation, the findings indicated that poverty and motivation may negatively contribute to learners' performance. Although the findings show that School Y has a feeding scheme where they provide porridge and soup to the learners, the school only provides porridge once the local fishing donate a box of fish in a week. This means if the schools do not receive donations, they are unable to provide food for learners. This issue of the lack of food may affect learners' concentration during the lessons, negatively.

4.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the data obtained from three types of methods, namely interviews, observations and document analysis, utilised in this study that investigated underperformance of learners in Social Studies. All of these methods provided the researcher with a deep understanding of and insight into the factors that contribute to underperformance in Social Studies. These approaches of interviews, observations and document analysis enabled the researcher to report on the different responses of the participants. The findings of this study show that teachers are likely to have a different understanding of the subject and experience common problems, which might indeed contribute to learners' underperformance. It was found that the teachers are mostly untrained in Social Studies, and the common view was that they experience challenges in teaching this subject.

During this study, it was noticeable that some teachers were only teaching Social Studies optionally, as was clearly indicated by one of the participants during her response to the following question: "Why have you chosen teaching as your career?" Teacher S replied: "I have patience [with] kids and this is not really my career but I am just teaching while I am studying Human Resources". It is clear that this teacher is only teaching the subject while she is studying what really interests her. Once she completes her studies, she might quit the teaching profession.

Most of the participants in this study did not specialise in Social Studies. Four out of the five teachers had never received training in Social Studies. Therefore, they struggle to teach the subject. This provided the researcher with new insight into and understanding of why teachers face challenges in teaching Social Studies and why learners are not performing well in the subject. This study suggests that Social Studies teachers need to be trained properly so that they may gain the required skills and knowledge to implement the Social Studies curriculum effectively.

Apart from teachers being untrained, the researcher identified many other factors that might contribute to learners' underperformance in Social Studies, namely lack of parental and community involvement, lack of teaching and learning material such as textbooks, class size, the use of English as medium of instruction as a barrier to learning, late delivery of teaching and learning material, teaching strategies used in teaching Social Studies, the non-promotional transfer policy and poverty. A future study should consider undertaking an investigation of alternatives that may assist learners to improve their performance in Social Studies.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a reflection on the research process, a summary of the findings, the limitations of the study, recommendations and a conclusion to the study.

5.2 REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

This study aimed to investigate the factors that might contribute to learners' underperformance in Social Studies in grades 5 to 7 in the Karas Region, Namibia. The study was motivated by the researcher's experience as a teacher of Social Studies as well as by an analysis of learners' performance in Social Studies for the past eight years. The researcher attempted to determine the challenges in the teaching and learning of Social Studies, the strategies used by teachers of Social Studies in teaching the subject and their perceptions of various topics that they presented in their lessons.

The study attempted to answer the following research question: What are the possible causes of underperformance of learners in Social Studies in Grade 5 to 7 at primary schools in Namibia? In the literature review in Chapter 2, different viewpoints with regard to these factors, such as those of Mutorwa (2004), Makuwa (2004), Sichombe et al. (2011) and Nyambe (2015), were discussed. Some of the factors that may contribute to learners' underperformance identified in this study are similar to the ones mentioned in the studies by the above authors.

5.3 Summary of the research findings

5.3.1 Environment of teaching and learning

It was found that some of the classrooms at schools' Y and Z are not conducive to effective teaching and learning. Most of the windows of the classrooms are very low and do not have curtains. During the classroom observations, learners were distracted by movement observed through the windows while the teachers were busy teaching, leading to learners not focusing on the lessons. At School Y, the researcher found that the teacher used the school hall as a classroom and that it was untidy, dusty and too wide to be used as a classroom

5.3.2 Class size

The study found that most of the Grade 5 classrooms were overcrowded. There were more than 40 learners per classroom, which could prevent teachers from paying attention to individual

learners. The classroom observations confirmed that teachers and learners could not move freely because learners' chairs and tables were arranged too closely together. It was also discovered by the researcher that teachers teach according to the traditional teacher-centred approach, which could be a result of the lack of space. Learners also did not have the opportunity to engage in group or pair activities and share ideas due to the inappropriate seating arrangement (learners sit in rows behind each other). Moreover, during the classroom observations, Grade 5 learners were making more noise compared with other grades that had fewer learners per classroom, creating a lack of control over learners during the lesson presentation. Large class sizes might be one of the causes of ineffective class management, poor supervision of assignments and ineffective teaching, leading to learners' poor performance in Social Studies. Classes with smaller numbers of learners may allow for individual attention and may improve learners' academic outcomes.

5.3.3 Teaching strategies used in Social Studies

Based on the findings articulated in Chapter 4, none of the participating teachers have demonstrated the learner-centred teaching approach as required in the Social Studies syllabus. There was no opportunity for learners to engage in group or pair work. Teachers showed a lack of understanding of the use of the learner-centred approach. As teachers struggle with the implementation of a learner-centred approach, it might affect learners in terms of learning the subject easier and, as a result, learners might perform poorly in the subject. It was noted that two teachers only used chalkboards as teaching material. Most of the participants did not make a use of the suggested Social Studies teaching strategies, as mentioned in Chapter 2. However, one teacher used one of the suggested approaches, namely storytelling. It was also noted that some teachers used Social Studies textbooks while others used an overhead projector as teaching material. The researcher suggests that teachers of Social Studies should use different types of teaching and learning material and strategies because different teaching strategies may assist learners to understand the content of the subject better and make the lessons more practical and relevant to the learners' environment. The use of appropriate teaching approaches may address the variety of learners' needs that may have a connection with the subject. Teachers are advised to use a variety of teaching approaches and demonstrate deep understanding of the subject content.

5.3.4 Availability of teaching and learning material

The teachers indicated that they experience problems regarding the shortage of teaching and learning material. The researcher noted during the classroom observations that none of the

learners had Social Studies textbooks in two of the teachers' classrooms. During the lesson presentations of two other teachers, only a few learners had Social Studies textbooks. Two teachers confirmed that learners do not have textbooks because none are available at the schools. The researcher argues that the lack of teaching and learning material may make it difficult for the learners to understand the lessons and may lead to poor performance in Social Studies. The school may not function effectively if teaching and learning material is insufficient. The researcher recommends that the Namibian government provide the necessary teaching and learning material and that the school principals ensure that sufficient teaching and learning materials such as work schemes, maps, textbooks, Atlas and other required materials, available at the schools before classes commence. Government can also liaise with local publishing companies and increase the publishing of textbooks.

Apart from the lack of teaching and learning material, the participants experience a challenge of late delivery of this material in the Karas Region, which might prevent teachers from working through the Social Studies syllabus during the allocated time. The researcher recommends that the Regional Office send the teaching and learning material on time and that principals ensure that educators receive this material on time.

5.3.5 Educational policies

The participants indicated that the non-promotional policy affected learners' academic performance because learners are being transferred or promoted to the next grade without meeting the pass requirements of the current grade. This happens because the non-promotional policy stipulates that learners should not repeat a phase or a grade more than twice. The practice of automatically transferring learners may result in a lack of motivation to study because they know that they will be transferred without reaching the pass requirement. Learners should therefore be motivated to study and to master the basic concepts of the subject.

In addition, this study analysed documents relating to the promotional and non-promotional policies. It was found that these policies contradict each other because the promotional policy stipulates that learners should be promoted to the next grade after they have met the pass requirement of the current grade, whereas the non-promotional policy stipulates that learners should not repeat any phase or grade more than twice. Educational policy makers should revisit the non-promotional policy and amend it. Learners should only be promoted to the next grade when they have met the pass requirement of the current grade. Those who do not meet these requirements, may be given the opportunity to repeat the grade or the phase.

5.3.6 Untrained teachers

The findings showed that four of the five participating Social Studies teachers had not received training in the subject or participated in any workshops in preparation for the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum. The study also discovered that among the five participating teachers in this study, two were not even trained as teachers and were teaching with only a Grade 12 qualification. Unqualified teachers cause concern because their lack of subject knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and teaching skills may contribute to learners' underperformance. The researcher suggests that teachers who have no teacher training be properly trained, while those who have been trained receive further training or attend workshops, because the Namibian curriculum is revised every five years. Through proper training, teachers may gain the skills required for effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum.

5.3.7 Lack of parental involvement

The participants confirmed that lack of parental involvement contributed to the academic underperformance of learners. Some parents, for example, use their work as an excuse for not being involved in their children's education. Learners might perform better if parents are actively involved in their school activities, assist them with homework and motivate them to study hard. Parents should be motivated to attend parent-teacher meetings and discuss their children's progress at school to gain ideas on how to support their children and to provide suggestions that may lead to a better teaching and learning environment. Communication between parents, teachers and learners will enable parents to support their children and to understand the importance of their education. Commitment of parents to their children's education is essential to the performance of learners as well as to the effective functioning of schools.

5.3.8 Motivation in teaching and learning

This study showed that the participating teachers and learners were not highly motivated. One of the principals raised a serious concern that if principals are not motivated, they cannot motivate their teachers. Most of the teachers revealed that they had not been trained to teach Social Studies and that this might be a demotivating factor. They were not motivated to further their studies, as two participants teaching Social Studies for more than two and four years do not even have any teaching qualification. The two qualified teachers who are teaching Social Studies did not specialise in this subject, and also have not attended any workshops on the implementation

of the Social Studies curriculum (they were trained in other school subjects). One could ask how teachers can be expected to motivate learners if they themselves are not strongly motivated or supported by their principals. Motivation should start with the head of the school and trickle down to the learners. The researcher therefore recommends that principals identify and address teachers' needs. Motivation could give teachers and learners the opportunity to improve learners' performance.

5.3.9 English as a barrier to learning

The participants indicated that learners had difficulties with the use of English as medium of instruction. One of the participants stated that the majority of learners do not understand English, and another participant commented that the learners whom he was teaching could not write in English. These two participants did not explain the cause of these language difficulties. However, another participant assured the researcher that learners' problems with English were due to the majority having Afrikaans as home language. The participants believe that learners only use English in class and therefore find it difficult to understand the content of the subject. This might cause learners to underperform.

Based on the Language Policy for Schools in Namibia (MBESC, 2003:3), English has the following roles to play in Namibian classrooms:

- (i) As a compulsory subject in the basic education process. This means that it is a compulsory subject to be taught from Grade 1 to Grade 12.
- (ii) As the primary language in which teaching and learning take place. This means that it is the main language (medium of instruction) that should be used in teaching and learning in grades 4–12 and in tertiary or higher education.

Even though English was approved by the Namibian government as a compulsory subject and the medium of instruction in teaching and learning in grades 4 to 12, learners may have difficulty in understanding the content of the subject due to their lack of proficiency in English. This issue was affirmed Namupala (2013:88), as she confessed about the ongoing high failure rates at Omusati region caused by learners' lack of proficiency in the language of teaching. This is also confirmed by Harris (2012:19), who states that learning subject content through English is one of the contributing factors to the high failure rates in Namibian schools. This means that learners are underperforming not because they do not understand the subject, but simply because they experience problems with English. Therefore, teachers should be trained to use a wide

variety of activities that would allow effective learning to take place. Teachers should also simplify the language and vocabulary through which they present Social Studies. This means that they should identify a core vocabulary of key concepts that they can use accurately and that can be learnt easily by learners.

5.3.10 Assessment record sheets

It was stated in Chapter 4 that a minimum of six formal activities per term has to be selected, graded and recorded. However, this did not apply in this study. Although the MoE designed the assessment forms for Social Studies, teachers use assessment forms designed by themselves. It was evident that the participants are not using the same criteria to assess learners. It was also noted that most of the participants evaluate fewer activities than required by the assessment policy. This may be a result of the lack of teaching skills. The researcher recommends that Social Studies teachers be motivated and empowered to develop and enhance their assessment skills. Principals are responsible for the effectiveness of the schools, including learners' performance, and should therefore empower teachers by affording them the opportunity to enhance their assessment skills. Principals should also provide staff-development programmes to ensure that teachers are assisted to understand curriculum implementation, including assessment.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main limitation of the study was that the causes of learners' underperformance in Social Studies were investigated only in grades 5 to 7 in three selected schools in the Karas Region, Namibia. The findings are not generalisable beyond the study entities.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations regarding changes that need to take place are made based on the research findings of this study:

5.5.1 Recommendations regarding the role of the Department of Education

It is recommended that appropriately trained teachers are appointed to teach Social Studies by the Department of Education. This study revealed that four of the five participating teachers of Social Studies had not been trained to teach the subject. The education officers therefore appointed untrained teachers and also appointed teachers to teach a subject in which they did not specialise. The researcher recommends that the education officers appoint properly trained teachers and that teachers be appointed in their area of specialisation. It was also acknowledged by the participants that they had not attended any workshops. The researcher suggests that the

education officers provide training and workshops for Social Studies teachers to enable them to implement the Social Studies curriculum effectively.

A further obstacle to implementing the curriculum effectively is the large number of learners in some classrooms. The researcher recommends that the Department of Education review the number of learners per class to be no more than 40. This would enable teachers to handle learners efficiently and effectively during lesson presentations as well as to pay individual attention to learners. This would go a long way towards improving learners' performance.

5.5.2 Recommendations regarding teaching approaches and teacher qualifications

The researcher recommends that teachers use multiple teaching strategies in the teaching of Social Studies. Enhancing the training of Social Studies teacher with regard to developing a strong content knowledge, may also lead to the improvement of success rates. Making use of multi-teaching strategies might provide opportunities for learners to learn the subject easier. It is also recommended that in-service training be provided to ensure not only professional development of teachers, but also continuous upgrading of the skills of teachers with regard to their subjects. Learners will, for example, not be able to acquire the historical understanding by merely discussing or by doing group work. They need a teacher who has good content knowledge and is familiar with the skills required to analyse the content. They need a teacher who is able to direct class discussions and group work. It is also important for the learners to have a teacher who is empowered to ensure that learners' interpretations of historical events are accurate and well-founded on evidence derived from historical sources. Furthermore, if teachers do not have adequate training as a Social Sciences teacher, one cannot expect learners to acquire a high standard of content knowledge or skills with no guidance from the teachers.

It is recommended that unqualified teachers further their studies to ensure that they are competent to teach the subject. Teachers could also request training by voicing their training needs to the Education Regional Office. Teachers should therefore be provided with professional development programmes offered by educational support institutions such as the NIED. Through professional development programmes, teachers may attend workshops, receive inductions, be encouraged to further their studies and become empowered to implement the curriculum of the subject they are teaching. Professional development activities may assist teachers to implement the curriculum effectively.

5.5.3 Recommendations regarding leadership

It is recommended that school leaders critically analyse their school results on a regular basis to determine possible causes of learners' failure. When a school is faced with poor learner performance, the school leaders (principals) need to take a critical look at the reasons for this underperformance. Once the possible causes have been identified, remedial steps can be taken. It was evident from the comments by the principals who participated in this study that they for instance do not conduct class visits to monitor the teaching and learning process at their schools. Supervision was done only by the heads of department. The researcher encourages principals to ensure that the educational officers appoint properly trained teachers according to their area of specialisation. It is also recommended that the school principals and heads of department monitor and carry out effective supervision of the teaching and learning process at their schools to ensure that teachers implement the curriculum as stipulated in policy. This supervision forms part of quality assurance and can impact positively on the pass rate of learners. It is during the process of class visits where they may identify the different challenges teachers encounter in teaching Social Studies.

The researcher also recommends that the school leaders should ensure that all learners have all the appropriate curriculum materials, because if learners do not have the materials it will have a negative impact on their success.

5.5.4 Recommendations regarding educational policy makers

It is recommended that educational policy makers revisit the language policy with regard to using English as the medium of instruction. From the study it is clear that learners are struggling with the content of Social Studies because of a lack of proficiency in English. The researcher therefore recommends that the language policy in education reconsidered, which will facilitate the learning process.

It is also recommended that educational policy makers review the promotional and non-promotional policy, as these policies are contradicting and clearly have a negative impact on learner success.

5.5.5 Recommendations for further research

The researcher recommends that further research be undertaken in the following areas:

- Language as medium of instruction in Namibia and its impact on effective learning
- The role of Namibian principals and other school leaders as curriculum leaders

- The professional development of subject teachers in Namibia
- Possible contributing factors to the lack of parental involvement in children's education
- Teaching strategies that may assist improvement in academic performance in Social Studies.
- To investigate how the Bantu education system influences/d the teaching styles and methods of teachers who teach in democratic era.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study focused on possible factors that might contribute to learners' underperformance in Social Studies in selected schools in the Karas Region, Namibia. This study has achieved its aim of identifying possible causes of learners' underperformance in Social Studies and answered the following research question: What are the possible causes of underperformance of learners in Social Studies in Grade 5 to 7 at primary schools in Namibia? This study has the potential to benefit Social Studies teachers in that they may gain different perspectives that may assist them to determine the hindrances to the teaching and learning of Social Studies.

It may also bring to the fore new perspectives on the challenges that may obstruct the teaching and learning of Social Studies of which the Department of Education was not aware. Further research and the resultant recommendations could assist in progressively improving learner performance in Namibia.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A1: Application letter to the Education Regional Office for permission to conduct research in Karas Region

P.O Box 1223

Lüderitz

Republic of Namibia

31 March 2015

The Director of Education

Regional Directorates of Education

Karas Region

Private Bag 2160

Keetmanshoop

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Mr // Hoeseb

I Theopolina A. Negumbo, a Master Degree student at University of Stellenbosch hereby kindly requested to grant me a permission to conduct my research in three selected schools in your region namely, X, Y and Z Schools. The study is to be conducted between June and July and normal classes will be not interfered. A requirement of Master degree is that students should conduct a research. Therefore, in order for me to be able to complete project I have chosen three schools from your region to conduct my interview with teachers of Social Studies and principals of those schools. If you agree to grant this permission, please notify me by writing and address to the above postal address or email:tan.negumbo@gmail.com.

I thank you in advance

Yours faithfully



Theopolina A.N. Negumbo

Appendix A2: Supporting letter from my supervisor

24 February 2015

The Principal

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

NAMIBIA

[REDACTED]

INFORMATION REGARDING MS T NEGUMBO (STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY NUMBER 18071406)

This is to confirm and verify that Ms TAN Negumbo (SU-number 18071406) is currently full-time busy with the process of writing her research proposal for the MEd in Curriculum Studies (full thesis). She has indicated that she will be doing the thesis full-time.

Please contact me should you require more information.

Yours sincerely

PROF AE CARL

Vice-Dean (Teaching) & Supervisor

Appendix B: Approval letter from the Director of Education to carry out research in the Karas Region

 **||KHARAS REGIONAL COUNCIL** 
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION

Tel: (063) 227000
Fax: (063) 223800/224503

Private Bag 2160
KEETMANSHOOP

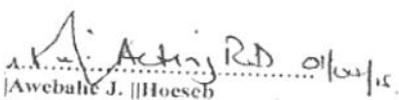
Enquiries: P.D Titus
Ref: 18/8/1

1 April 2015

Ms. Theopolina A.N Negumbo
P.O Box 1223
Lüderitz

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SELECTED SCHOOLS IN LÜDERITZ IN THE NAMIB CIRCUIT

1. Conditional approval is hereby granted to you to conduct research at the Marmer Primary School, Diaz Primary School and the Nautilus Primary School.
2. The Directorate of Education in the ||Kharas Region requires that all ethical principles normally associates with research must be adhere to.
3. All communication must be made via the Principal of the school and his/her consent must be acquired to use documentation (data or any intellectual property whether published or not).
4. It is imperative that all communication such as personnel or learner information be kept confidential.
5. The scope of your research should also be clarified to the Principal of the school before the commencement of the project.
6. The Director of Education will appreciate feedback on findings that may help to improve the quality of Education in schools.
7. We wish you well with your endeavours.


Awebulu J. ||Hoeseb
Regional Director of Education
||Kharas Regional Council



cc Principal of Marmer Primary School: Mr. E. Franz
Principal of Diaz Primary School: Mr. G. ||Garob
Principal of Nautilus Primary School: Mr. J. Van Rooy

Appendix C: Institution's application letter to conduct research

PO Box 1223

Lüderitz

Republic of Namibia

31 March 2015

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Lüderitz

Karas Region

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear [REDACTED]

I Theopolina A. Negumbo a student at University of Stellenbosch hereby kindly requested to grant me an access at your school for at least four days. A requirement of Master degree is that students should conduct a research. Therefore, in order for me to be able to complete the project I have chosen your school to conduct my interview with Social Studies' teachers and the principal as well as do the classroom observations.

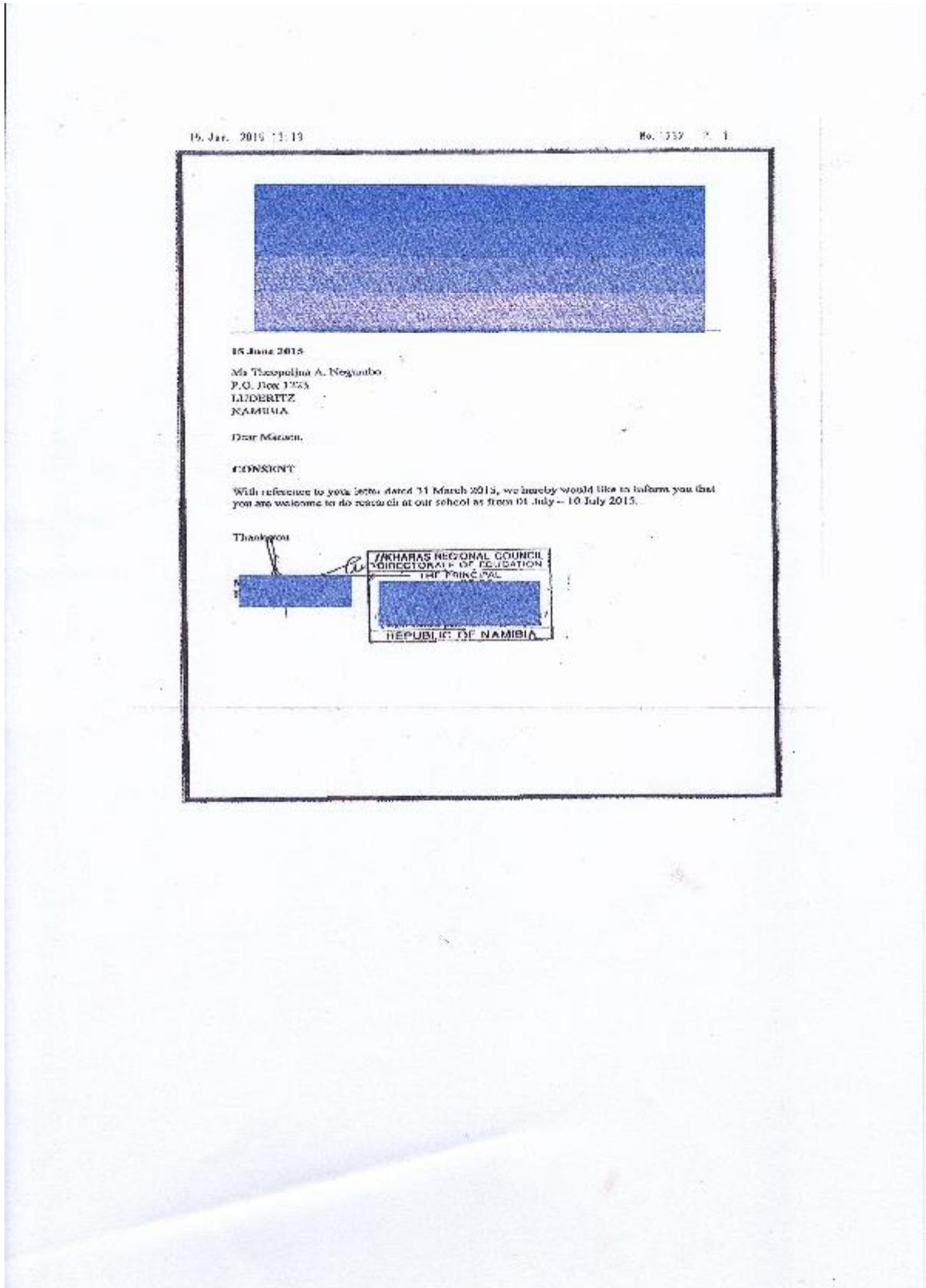
If you agree to grant this permission, please notify me by email:tan.negumbo@gmail.com.

I thank you in advance.

Yours faithfully

Theopolina A.N. Negumbo

Appendix D: Approval letter to conduct research at school X



Appendix E: Approval letter to conduct research at school Y



SCHOOL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

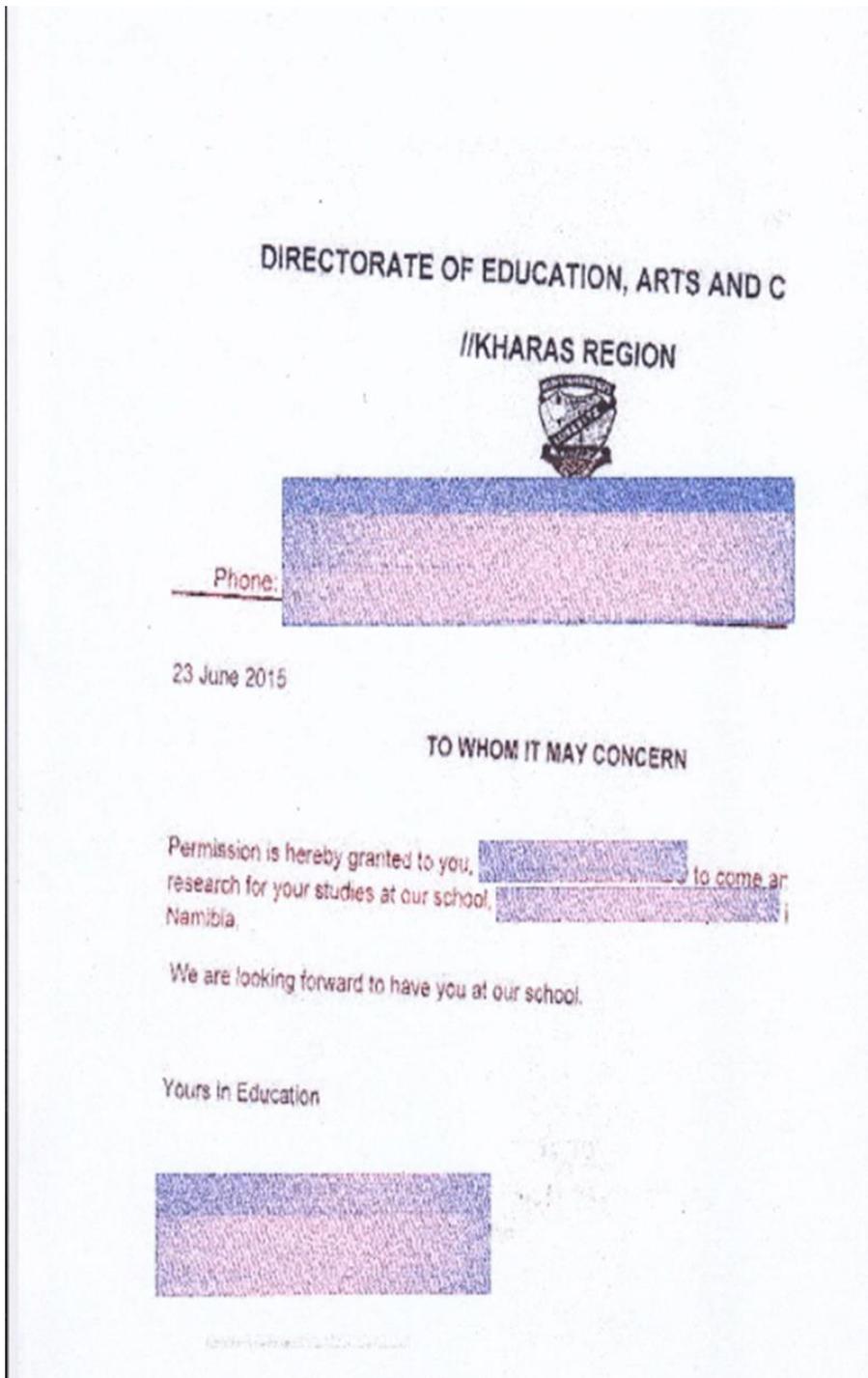
Dear Theopolina A.N. Negumbo

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that I give Theopolina A.N. Negumbo permission to conduct the research at [REDACTED], this also serves as assurance that will give our full support and co-operation as the staff (Teacher and Principal) during this research project.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Yours In Education
[REDACTED]
Principal

Appendix F: Approval letter to conduct research at school Z



Appendix G: Interview guide

A: Principals' questions

1. What are the possible factors contributing to academic underperformance in schools?
2. What are the challenges for principals in terms of learners' performance?
3. The principal plays an important role with regard to developing and sustaining sound relationships and trust in the school. How do you experience it? How do you motivate and support teachers in accepting the changes and demands of education in school?
4. How often does supervising of teaching occur through class visits?
5. What can be done to improve learners' academic performance in the classroom?

B: Teachers' questions

1. What training programme did you attend with regard to teaching Social Studies?
2. How do you assist learners to learn Social Studies?
3. What teaching and learning strategies do you use in Social Studies?
4. What are the challenges of teaching and learning you have experienced in Social Studies?
5. How does educational reform contribute to the poor academic performance of learners?
6. How do government policies affect learners' academic performance?
7. What are the problems that hinder the teaching of Social Studies at primary school level?
8. What, in your opinion, may contribute to learners' poor performance?
9. Do the changes to the curriculum contribute to the underperformance of learners in Social Studies?

Appendix H: Observation form

<p>School:</p> <hr/> <p>Components</p>	<p>Time: _____</p> <p>Gr Date: _____</p> <p>Lesson topic: _____</p> <p>Grade: _____</p>
<p>Components</p>	<p>Comments by researcher</p>
<p>Link with other knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson starts with a link to learners' existing knowledge or pre-knowledge about topic. • Focus is on only in Social Studies or integrated with other subjects' topic. 	<p>Components</p>
<p>Learning and teaching materials used:</p> <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there enough textbooks? • How are the teaching and learning materials used? • Are the teaching and learning materials used to involve learners? 	
<p>Seating arrangement in classrooms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sitting in rows and predominantly working individually • Sitting in pairs and predominantly working in pairs <p>Sitting in groups and predominantly working in groups</p>	
<p>Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the learners assessed directly or indirectly through classroom performance? 	<p>149</p>

<p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are learners given homework activities every day to ensure consolidation of what was taught/learned at school?•	
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Appendix I: Participants' consent forms

Form I (a) for teachers

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Investigation into the possible causes of learners' poor performance in Social Studies in upper-level Grades 5–7 in the Karas Region of Namibia

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by me, Theopolina Anna N Negumbo (BEd(Hons) in Policy Studies from Stellenbosch University; Basic Education Diploma from Ongwediva Education College, Namibia; Specialised Diploma in African Languages from the University of Namibia; Specialised Diploma in Management from the University of Namibia.) You were selected as a possible subject/participant in this study since you are a Social Studies teacher. As such, I value your experience and knowledge in teaching the subject. This experience will enable me, as the researcher, to obtain the information required to achieve the goal of this study.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to investigate the possible factors which may contribute to the learners' poor performance in Social Studies in Grades 5–7 in the Karas Region, Namibia.

2. PROCEDURE

Three schools have been purposefully selected based on my knowledge of the specific circuit and environmental context of the schools. This will enable me, as the researcher, to have easy access to the schools and their teachers. I live in the town in which the three schools are situated – which will make the study economically sustainable. I have identified the Social Studies' teachers to participate in this study on the grounds of their experience and knowledge in the field of teaching and learning of Social Studies and on the valuable contribution they may make towards achieving the research goal. I have written a letter to both the Director of Education in the Karas Region and the three selected schools to request permission to conduct the research, and permission was granted.

Willingness to participate

If you, as a selected teacher, are willing to participate in this study, you are requested to take part in an interview. The interview will take no longer than an hour. The session will be recorded, with your permission, in order for me to capture all data suitable for analysis. The aim of the interview is to gain insight into the challenges that teachers encounter in the teaching and learning of Social Studies, as well as to identify possible causes of the learners' underperformance in this subject. I will also observe your presentation of Social Studies lessons, only with your permission. The observation will focus on the physical environment of teaching and learning, teaching strategies, and the teaching and learning materials which teachers use during the presentation of Social Studies lessons. This information will be used only for research purposes and anonymity and confidentiality is guaranteed.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There is no risk associated with this study and full confidentiality will be maintained (see 6). I will try to conduct the interview in such a way that it will not create discomfort and inconvenience to the subject/participant.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This study has the potential to benefit Social Studies teachers as they may gain different perspectives that could assist them to determine the hindrances to teaching and learning Social Studies. Furthermore, this study could bring to the fore new perspectives regarding challenges which affect teaching and learning of Social Studies. The study also has the potential to identify those factors which may contribute to the causes of learners' underperformance in Social Studies.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntarily. There is thus no remuneration for participating in this research.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be traced to you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by the use of codes or pseudonyms when I refer to you or your school in this research. Therefore, you may rest assured that your identity and the matters you raise during your participation in this study will remain strictly confidential.

Furthermore, the data will be kept strictly on my private laptop and on a memory stick, which are accessible only by me with a password. During the process of thesis-writing, some direct quotations may be used, but anonymity will be preserved to protect the identity of participants.

Since this study is of an educational nature, there is a process that will be followed relating to the writing of the thesis and journal articles based on the information gathered. In this case, confidentiality will continue to be maintained.

You have a right to access or review your tape-recorded interview in case you wish to edit the information you provided in the initial interview.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You have a choice whether or not to participate in this study and you are free to withdraw. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, while still remaining part of the study. The researcher may remove you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher will ensure that the research is carried out with due consideration to ethical protocols of Stellenbosch University. This implies that the rights and identity of all participants in the study will be protected. Confidentiality will be maintained by using codes or pseudonyms when the researcher refers to respondents or to their schools in this research.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me: Theopolina Anna N. Negumboby e-mail tan.negumbo@gmail.com or cell no +27 73 184 4946.

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS/PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject/participant, contact Maléne Fouché (mfouche@sun.ac.za; +27 21 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development, Stellenbosch University.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/PARTICIPANT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by Theopolina Anna N Negumbo in English. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby provide voluntarily consent to participate in this study for both the observations and the interview. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative

Date

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant*]and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into* _____ by _____].

Signature of Researcher

Date

Form I (b) for the school principals



UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Investigation into the possible causes of learners' poor performance in Social Studies in upper-level Grades 5–7 in the Karas Region of Namibia.

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by me, Theopolina Anna N. Negumbo (BEd(Hons) in Policy Studies from Stellenbosch University; Basic Education Diploma from Ongwediva Education College, Namibia; Specialised Diploma in African Languages from the University of Namibia; Specialised Diploma in Management from the University of Namibia.) You were selected as a possible subject/participant in this study since you are the principal of a school. As such, I value your experience and knowledge in management and leadership. This experience will enable me, as the researcher, to obtain the information required to achieve the goal of this study.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to investigate the possible factors which may contribute to the learners' poor performance in Social Studies in Grades 5–7 in the Karas Region, Namibia. The study will be based on data obtained during interviews with principals and teachers of three schools.

2. PROCEDURE

Three schools have been purposefully selected based on my knowledge of the specific circuit and environmental context of the schools. This will enable me, as the researcher, to have easy access to the schools and their principal and teachers. I live in the town in which the three schools are situated – which will make the study economically sustainable. I have written a letter to both the Director of Education in the Karas Region and the three selected schools to request permission to conduct the research, and permission was granted.

The following procedures will be explained to principals and teachers:

If you, as a selected principal or teacher, are willing to participate in this study, you are requested to do the following: Participate in an interview. The interview will take no longer than an hour. The session will be recorded, with your permission, in order for me to capture all data suitable for analysis. The aim of the interview is to gain insight into the challenges encountered in managing and leading this school, as well as to understand the challenges that the principals and teachers face regarding learners' performance, especially in Social Studies.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There is no risk associated with this study and full confidentiality will be maintained (see 6). I will try to conduct the interview in such a way that it will not create discomfort and inconvenience to the subject/participant.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This study has the potential to benefit principals as well as Social Studies teachers, as they may gain different perspectives that could assist them to determine the hindrances which impact negatively on teaching and learning Social Studies. Furthermore, this study could bring to the fore new perspectives regarding challenges which affect the effective teaching and learning of Social Studies. The study also has the potential to identify those factors which may be possible causes of learners' underperformance.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is thus no remuneration for participating in this research.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be traced to you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by the use of codes or pseudonyms when I refer to you or your school in this research.

Therefore, you may rest assured that your identity and the matters you raise during your participation in this study will remain strictly confidential.

Furthermore, the data will be kept strictly on my private laptop and on a memory stick, which are accessible only by me with a password. The interviews will be transcribed. Both the transcriptions and the field data will be secured simultaneously. In the thesis which will flow from this research, some direct quotations from the interview might be used, but I will ask for permission to do so. The information will not be released to anyone else other than my study supervisor. The information will also be erased as soon as the research project is completed. Since this study is of an educational nature, there is a process that will be followed relating to the writing of the thesis and journal articles based on the information gathered. In this case, confidentiality will still be maintained.

You have a right to access or review your tape-recorded interview in case you wish to edit the information you provided in the initial interview.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You have a choice whether or not to participate in this study and you are free to withdraw. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, while still remaining part of the study. The researcher may remove you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher will ensure that the research is carried out with due consideration to ethical requirements and the protocols of Stellenbosch University. This implies that the rights and identity of all participants in the study will be protected. Confidentiality will be maintained by using codes or pseudonyms when the researcher refers to respondents or to their schools in this research.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me: Theopolina Anna N. Negumbo by e-mail tan.negumbo@gmail.com or cell no +27 73 184 4946.

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS/PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject/participant, contact Maléne Fouché (mfouche@sun.ac.za; +27 021 808 4622) at the Division for Research Development, Stellenbosch University.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/PARTICIPANT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

Appendix J: Ethical clearance



STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
SUN.ac.za

Approval Notice Response to Modifications- (New Application)

01-Jul-2016
Nogumbo, Thabopolina TAN

Proposal #: **DESC/Nogumbo/June16/1**

Title: **An investigation into underperformances in Social studies at (primary school levels) grade 5-7 in selected KwaZulu Schools: case study**

Dear Mrs Thabopolina Nogumbo,

Your **Response to Modifications - (New Application)** received on 22-Jun-2016, was reviewed by members of the Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) via Expedited review procedures on 27-Jun-2016 and was approved.

Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: 27-Jun-2016 - 26-Jun-2017

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your proposal number (DESC/Nogumbo/June16/1) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-650411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 218035132.