PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF IMPLEMENTING ASSESSMENT POLICY IN SOCIAL STUDIES IN THE KAVANGO REGION OF NAMIBIA

by

Thomas Nyambe Nyambe

A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master's in Education

in the

Department of Education Policy Studies at Stellenbosch University

Supervisor: Doctor Jerome Joorst

Co-Supervisor: Professor Peter Beets

Stellenbosch University

March 2015

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own, original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

SIGNATURE------------------------------- DATE------------------------------------

Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate primary school teachers' experiences of implementing assessment policy in the Social Studies learning area. After adopting the new learner-centred schooling to replace the old teacher-centred education system in Namibian schools in 1990, the Ministry of Education made it mandatory to implement assessment policy in the schools. During the implementation of assessment policy teachers were forced to change their assessment practices from traditional testing and evaluation to continuous assessment.

The study employed an interpretive research design to construct data during the exploration of the teachers' experiences in teaching. Document analysis, lesson observations and in-depth interviews were used to collect the data. One of the main findings of the study is that teachers do not use assessment to inform their own practices, but rather only to record marks. Despite a world trend towards assessment for teaching, assessment, in this case, was only used as an instrument of teaching.

It was also found that assessment policies did not take local contextual circumstances of schools and communities into consideration. As a result, of the de-contextualization of these policies, teachers are negatively positioned in the system because they have to adhere to departmental demands and policy prescriptions on the one hand while, on the other, working in contexts that are not conducive to effective teaching. Schools in such contexts therefore, need to be provided with the necessary infrastructure, guidance and support to facilitate the effective implementation of assessment policies.

KEYWORDS: Teaching, policies, implementation, continuous assessment, teachers, assessment

Opsomming

Die doel van hierdie studie was om laerskoolonderwysers se ervarings van die implementering van assesseringsbeleid in die Sosiale Studies leerarea te ondersoek. Na die goedkeuring van die nuwe leerder-gesentreerde onderrig om die ou onderwyser-gesentreerde onderwysstelsel in Namibiese skole in 1990 te vervang, het die Ministerie van Onderwys dit verpligtend gemaak om 'n nuwe assesseringsbeleid in die skole te implementeer. Onderwysers was dus genoodsaak om hul assesseringspraktyke aan te pas vanaf tradisionele toetsing en evaluering na deurlopende assessering.

Die studie het 'n interpretatiewe navorsingsontwerp gebruik om data tydens die verkenning van die onderwysers se ervarings te konstrueer. Dokument-analise, les observasies en in diepte-onderhoude is gebruik om data te versamel. Die vernaamste bevindings van die studie is dat opvoeders nie assessering gebruik om hul eie praktyke te informeer nie, maar eerder net op punte op te teken. Ten spyte van 'n teenoorgestelde wêreld-tendens, was assessering, in hierdie geval, nie aangewend vir onderrig nie, maar slegs van onderrig.

Daar is ook bevind dat assesseringsbeleide nie plaaslike teenwerkende kontekstuele omstandighede van skole en gemeenskappe in ag neem nie. As gevolg van die de-kontekstualisasie van hierdie beleide, word onderwysers negatief geposisioneer in die stelsel omdat hulle moet uiting gee aan departementele voorskrifte binne kontekste wat nie bevorderlik is vir effektiewe onderrig nie. Daarom moet skole in sodanige kontekste voorsien word van die nodige infrastruktuur asook leiding en ondersteuning ten einde die implementering van assesseringsbeleide meer effektief te maak.

SLEUTELWOORDE: Onderrig, beleide, implementering, deurlopende assessering, onderwysers, assessering.

Acknowledgements

It is with great pleasure and humbleness in giving that I acknowledge my incomparable love for the almighty God for giving me life and the wisdom that guided me during the course of this study, Glory be thy Name, Amen!

To start with, I would like to express my immense pleasure and gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Namibia, Ministry of Education, Kavango Region, for providing me with special study leave and an opportunity to pursue my studies. Special thanks go to the Director of Education, Mr A. Dikuua, for his encouragement and moral support during my studies. I wish to thank Mrs S. Hausiku, the Inspector of Education in the Ncuncuni Circuit, for allowing me to do my study in her circuit. My thanks also go to the principals of the schools and teachers who participated in my study. Thank you for your hospitality.

A special and wholehearted thank you goes to my supervisor, Doctor Jerome Joorst, for his encouragement, moral support, patience, commitment and invaluable critical guidance from the inception to the completion of this study. Thank you! I would like to express my special thanks to my co-supervisor, Professor Peter Beets, for his valuable expertise, experience, guidance, insight and moral support provided to me during my study.

Special thanks go to my beloved wife, Laurentia Nyambe, my children F. Mereki, V. Kaunda and E. Katiku, and my brother in-law F. Mankunda, for your love, support, understanding and patience. Thank you for overseeing the home front with such inestimable affection, and your visit during my stay at Stellenbosch was very special. My special thanks go to my parents, Mr Petrus Nyambe and Mrs Veronica Nyambe. My heartfelt thanks go to my sisters and brothers A.K.N. Makanga A. Nyambe, C. K. Nyambe, M. Mataya, M. Mutiramo, M. Nyambe, V. Muronga, L. Shampapi, E. Muyamba and J. Kamonga. I am indeed indebted to Bertha Ndambu Dinyando Nyambe (my best friend), for your financial support as well as your encouragement, consistent and moral support: I cannot imagine how I would have finished my study without your assistance and endless support. Thank you!

A special thank you goes to Mrs Jennifer Feldman, for her endless help in editing my chapters. Thank you! Many thanks go to Dr Akuupa, Dr Likuwa, Dr Shanyanana, P. Haingura, E. Simanu, E. Katewa, S. Shiremo, P. Musore, R. Nangura, G. Kangueehi, C. Awases and G. Jawali, for your untiring support and encouragement in the process of pursuing knowledge.

I would like to express my thanks to my brother Haingura Steven, for taking this expedition with me as we studied together at Stellenbosch University; your support throughout this process was priceless. Special thanks go to my colleagues at work: Mr Mbambo, (RTRC) manager, for your excellent motivation and for allowing me to come to Stellenbosch University for the study, Mr Muruti, for taking up my work, Muyenga, Tovoro, Nganzi, Nkandu and Shuuya, for continuing with the work during my absence.

I wish to express my gratitude to my BEd Hons and Master's lecturers, the Faculty Librarian and the Faculty Secretary in the Faculty of Education, Department of Education Policy Studies, as well as my classmates for being there for me in pushing the frontiers of knowledge and adding value to my professional development. Lastly, my thanks go to the Faculty of Education, Department of Education Policy Studies, for financial support.

Dedication

I am greatly indebted to a special woman, my grandmother, the late Shihungu Kaunda Nkuru, for all the hardship endured during my upbringing. May her soul rest in eternal peace!

Acronyms and abbreviations

APSP : African Primary Science Programme

AT : Advisory Teacher

BETD INSERT: In-Service Basic Education Teacher Diploma

BETD : Basic Education Teacher Diploma

CA : Continuous Assessment

MBEC : Ministry of Basic Education and Culture

MBESC : Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture

MEC : Ministry of Education

NEC : National Education Certificate

NIED : National Institute for Educational Development

RTRC : Rundu Teacher Resource Centre

SEPA : Science Education Programme for Africa

SA : Subject Advisor

TRC : Teacher Resource Centre

UK : United Kingdom

USA : United States of America

Table of contents

CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the introduction, the aims, rationale and the problem statement of the study, and ends with an outline of the thesis.

1.2 Aim and importance of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate primary school teachers' experiences of implementing assessment policy in the Social Studies learning area. This study scrutinised teachers' assessment practices in conjunction with learners' tasks. It is hoped that this study will help to contribute to a better understanding of some of the key challenges that Namibian teachers encounter when implementing assessment policy in their schools. The study then suggests ways in which teachers can improve the implementation of assessment policy.

The findings of the study attempt to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and literature in the field of assessment. In addition, this study serves to inform policy makers about the challenges teachers face in effectively implementing assessment policy in schools. The study endeavours to add to the argument of Uiseb (2009:13) that, although critically important information is provided about continuous assessment in the assessment manual, information alone may not adequately address the impact in terms of how effectively and efficiently teachers can implement assessment policy in their classrooms. One of the implications is that there should be some intervention that helps teachers to implement assessment policy effectively in their teaching practice.

1.3 Rationale of the study

The study was inspired by two things, namely my personal experiences and my professional interests. This came about from my familiarity with the challenges facing Namibian teachers in terms of implementing assessment policy in teaching the Social Studies learning area. The new Namibian government has been transforming the colonial South African education system, in line with global "international" education systems since March 1990 (Nekhwevha, 1999:491). This has led to the implementation of the document titled "*Toward Education for All*" by the Ministry of Education and Culture [MEC] (1993:2). The main aim of this new education policy was,

among others, the abolition of racial discrimination in education; the establishment of a compulsory education structure from age seven to sixteen; and a marked shift in assessment practices in teaching, etc. This suggested that the issues of the colonial education system, such as description, being examination-driven, memorisation and punitive discipline, were targeted for immediate eradication (MEC, 1993:120–121).

In view of the possibility of the changes, and since the policy was moved from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred frame, the strategy was hailed as instructive transformation by the government and the Namibian people (MEC, 1993:122–123). In the teacher-centred approach, teachers were regarded as experts in the discovery of facts and their responsibilities were to transmit knowledge to the learners, who were expected to reproduce what they had learned (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998:6). Learning took place through rote learning, which requires learners to memorise facts without understanding (MEC, 1993:121).

Hilya (2007:12) argues that the learner-centred approach is a process of personal knowledge creation, rather than learning through memorisation. In other words, knowledge is constructed in the mind of the learner, rather than transferred from the teacher to the learner (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998:6). This means that each learner brings his or her own prior knowledge and experiences to learning situations, and these influence what new knowledge learners will be able to construct in the learning processes. In addition, learners use their experiences and linguistic construction to create new meanings and contexts (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006:195).

The Ministry of Education and Culture in Namibia expected a learner-centred approach to promote access, equity, quality and democratic participation that would encourages values and practices in the classroom (MEC, 1993:34–41). In this regard, the implementation of assessment in teaching was to help teachers cater for the needs of all learners, irrespective of their backgrounds and their ability to learn. However, the new assessment strategies had implications for the teachers' traditional practices. Teachers who were trained before independence were only exposed to the traditional type of assessment, which was examinations based, and the new assessment became a challenge in the new teaching practices. In support of the sentiment above, Shilongo (2004:4) argues that, during the National Education Certificate (NEC) offered in the colonial era, there were no clear written guidelines on how assessment was to be conducted, nor were there documents on assessment policy directives, describing how assessment was to be

5

carried out in teaching. This led to the situation where teachers had inadequate capacity, skills and knowledge to implement the new assessment policy in schools (Shilongo, 2004:4).

In the post-independence era, I received teachers' education training at Rundu College of Education (RCE) through a learner-centred pedagogy, but we were not taught how to implement assessment policy in teaching, and this also adds to the challenge of assessment implementation in teaching. However, Hilya (2007:26) claims that continuous assessment (CA) is a powerful tool designed for teaching practices. Similarly, continuous assessment activities support the teaching processes, which help teachers to understand the learners' progress in the classroom. As a result, assessment policies were introduced to provide standard evidence of each learner's progress and achievement in relation to the teaching practices in schools (Mutorwa, 2004:7). One of the envisaged ideas with continuous assessment was to provide feedback to the learners and self-assessing instruments for the teachers on how they performed and what is required in order to improve their teaching practices.

My experiences as a Social Studies teacher and observations as a regional facilitator in the area of Social Studies suggest that learners are not given clear instructions on the expected outcomes and methodologies they need to employ in order to realise the expected goals of classroom learning activities. For example, continuous assessment activities given to learners are not properly explained in terms of what the learners should do and how to do the tasks. Teachers do not provide proper guidelines and criteria for assessing the learners' activities. In addition, certain teachers struggle to implement assessment policy because of inadequate knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers do not tell learners whether the tasks given to them will be assessed for the purpose of improvement, or that their participation in the classroom may have a positive impact on the teaching process. In this case, teachers do not communicate the expected outcomes to the learners. I also noted that learners' marks are often recorded with no accompanying proof of how the marks were obtained. Teachers do not have record sheets to show where the continuous assessment (CA) activity marks are recorded. Sometimes learners obtain higher symbols in continuous assessment tasks than in the examinations. For example, a learner may obtain an E symbol during examinations, while he or she may be awarded an A or a B for tasks. These discrepancies, and my commitment as an education officer to improving the quality of teaching in schools, motivated me to explore and analyse the challenges teachers experience in implementing assessment policy in schools.

1.4 Problem statement

From independence in 1990, education reform was regarded as a priority in the transformation of the education system in Namibia and a curriculum was developed, which includes the new learner-centred teaching method and a specific continuous assessment practices. However, many scholars, including Hilya (2007), Uiseb (2009), Iipinge and Kasanda (2013), argue that the implementation of these policies at schools was not effective. In other words, some teachers are unable to implement the assessment policy successfully in their teaching practices. The circulation of an assessment policy document, *"Towards Improving Continuous Assessment in Schools"*, was aimed at improving and transforming the formative and summative assessment in schools (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture [MBEC], 1999:2). On the contrary, the situation at schools suggests that many disparities are occurring in the results of assessment tasks and examinations, which do not reflect the progress and competence of learners. I build on previous studies in order to understand the gap in the implementation of assessment policy. Subsequently, this study considered assessment in Social Studies in order to explore and analyse teachers' experiences of implementing assessment policy, and to determine the reasons that led to the inability of some teachers to effectively implement assessment policy in schools. The study addressed the following main question and sub-questions:

Main research question

1. What are the experiences of teachers in terms of implementing assessment policy in the Social Studies learning area?

Sub-questions

1. How do teachers assess learners in the teaching process?

2. What are the challenges experienced in implementing assessment policy in the classroom?

3. How are teachers empowered to implement assessment policy in the Social Studies learning area?

1.5 Chapter outline

- Chapter 1: Introduction: This chapter presents the introduction, aims and rationale of the study. It also provides a brief account of the problem statement and chapter outline.

- Chapter 2: Literature review: This chapter provides a detailed review of the literature on teachers' experiences of implementing assessment policies in teaching, both locally and internationally.

- Chapter 3: Research methodology: A qualitative research design was used to explore how teachers implement assessment policy in the Social Studies learning area.

- Chapter 4: Data presentation: This chapter focuses mainly on the qualitative descriptive data that was constructed from the study.

- Chapter 5: Data interpretation: The data is interpreted and analysed based on the findings in Chapter 4.

- Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations: This chapter summarises the findings and conclusions are drawn from the internal and external factors that play a role in teachers' implementation of assessment policy. Recommendations are presented at the end of the chapter.

1.6 Summary

This chapter has provided a roadmap for the study by outlining the topic under research. In terms of the hypothesis of the study, it seems that there are challenges with regard to the implementation of assessment policies in teaching practices. The literature reveals that certain teachers are unable to implement assessment policy in teaching. I regard this issue as urgent and crucial, and it needs attention from both government and stakeholders to be addressed sufficiently in order to improve the quality of education in Namibian schools. In the next chapter, an in-depth review of the literature on the implementation of assessment policies in teaching, both locally and internationally, is presented.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the relevant literature on the implementation of assessment policy both internationally and locally. The literature is based on my research question, which deals with the experiences of teachers regarding the implementation of assessment policies in their teaching practice. The context of this study provides a systematic overview of the issues surrounding the assessment implementation process and its practices.

2.2 Assessment in teaching

The word assessment is derived from the Latin word *assidere*, meaning, "to sit beside or with" (Lorna, 2003:3). It therefore serves as a communication tool between teachers and learners. Over the past decades, the debate on the issues and ideas of assessment has been explored and developed by a number of key role players, including Wood; Walkerdine; Messick; Willis & Goldstein (in Gipps, 1995:1). However, in this study I will draw on the work of Gipps (1995:1), who notes that assessment has undergone a major paradigm shift. Gipps uses the concept of a paradigm shift as a set of unified concepts to provide the framework within which she observes and understands the particular phenomenon under discussion. These shifts took place from the traditional psychometric assessment to a broader model of educational assessment, from a testing and examination custom to an assessment culture. She describes this paradigm shift or 'scientific revolution' as occurring when the old paradigm is unable to deal with the new situation in an education system (Kuhn, in Gipps, 1995:1).

In considering the transformation of assessment I shall first discuss the traditional assessment of the psychometric model, which is where testing in education began, after which it moved towards what is called educational assessment, and explain how this differs from the psychometric model. The traditional examination as a type of assessment will also be considered. Gipps (1995:5) notes that the development of the science of psychometric assessment derived from the aptitude test and measuring the intelligence of learners in the process of teaching. This notion of intelligence was regarded as inborn, and included fixed inherited characteristics such as skin and colour. Intelligence therefore could be measured and, based on the result, individuals could be assigned to streams, groups or schools that were appropriate for their intelligence (Gipps, 1995:5).

Traditional forms of psychometric testing have essential limitations. Firstly, the test measures a property of individuals. Critics argue that children do not perform well in class as a result of problems within the child or from his/her home and parents, rather than due to problems in the teaching or in the curriculum in schools (Mercedith, Wood & Walkerdine, in Gipps, 1995:7). Secondly, the key feature of reliability requires standardisation of the administration, tasks and scoring of tests. Tests that are based on psychometric theory are required to measure properties that are amenable to statistical analysis only. This limits the ways in which tasks can be explained to the learners, and assessors are not allowed to interact with the learners during the assessment process. In spite of having to meet these requirements, issues of validity and the usefulness of teachers have been overridden or ignored in the process. Thus, these limitations are viewed as a major disadvantage of the psychometric approach in teaching (Gipps, 1995:7).

An examination tradition has played a major role in education systems. Examinations have served many functions, and the most important one has been to select learners for sequential levels in the education system or learners who pass and progress from one grade to another (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2004:9). It has been observed that examinations are limited in the areas of knowledge and skills that they assess. The content examined often holds little relevance to the knowledge and skills that the learners need in their life out of school. The validity of examinations is considered to be biased, as they only test the competencies needed by a minority of learners who are continuing with their education, without adequately reflecting the goals in the curriculum for those learners who will fail (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2004:9).

Traditional examinations and the psychometric model of assessment limit the learners' ability to think critically and to use external tools in their learning areas (Gipps, 1995:27). Vygotsky (in Gipps, 1995:27) suggests that there is a need to develop assessment that allows the use of supplementary tools in the assessment process in order to reduce the emphasis on the ability of memorisation and rather increase the emphasis on active learning participation, thinking and problem-solving skills. This has led to several countries taking steps over the past two decades to improve the quality of assessments in their schools. They have opted to use diverse modes of assessment that include testing higher-order thinking skills to assess the ability of learners to apply their knowledge and skills in situations outside schools as well as in the academic context (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2004:9).

In attempting to understand assessment in this study, I will focus mainly on the purposes of diverse assessments, such as summative and formative assessment, as these are used to gather evidence of learning from different sources, using a variety of techniques to determine how it is implemented in schools and what assessment is in general. Lorna (2003:3) suggests three purposes (or uses) of assessment, namely assessment of learning (summative), assessment for learning (formative) and assessment as learning. Assessment of learning is the dominant form of assessment in schools, because it is intended to certify learning and report to the parents the learners' relative position compared to others. This assessment takes place through examination or tests where teachers score the learners in the process. Assessment for learning shifts the emphasis from summative to formative assessment, which makes judgements to create descriptions that can be used to improve teaching practices. Assessment as learning is the ultimate goal, where learners become involved in their own assessment practices and become the best assessors in the learning process (Lorna, 2003:3).

Assessment therefore is viewed as a process of gathering information about the learners' learning progress (MBEC, 1999:2). It also refers to the process of decision making about a learners' performance with the view to observing what the learner has achieved in the classrooms. The information gathered shows what learners know and demonstrates as a result of their learning processes (MBEC, 1999:2). It is also viewed as a process of gathering and evaluating information on what learners know, understand, can do and cannot do in order to make an informed decision about what needs to be done to change the situation in teaching practice (Clarke, 2012:1). Moreover, assessment should be viewed as monitoring teaching activities to determine what both a teacher and learner are doing and what needs to be improved. Le Grange and Reddy (1998:37) define assessment as "gathering of information about a learner to measure and make decisions about his or her performance". "Assessment therefore, is the instrument used by teachers to develop a reliable picture of each learner's progress and level of achieving the basic competencies of the syllabus and life skills" (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture [MBESC], 1996:32).

2.3 Assessment methods in the Namibian context

In this section I will focus on the purposes, methods and practices of assessment by explaining aspects of assessment, such as formative, summative, formal and informal, as well as assessment and evaluation. The significance and the roles of teachers in assessment implementation will also

be considered. This will help us to understand the distinction between the purposes and methods of assessment activities, as well as teachers' roles in the assessment implementation process.

Formative assessment is viewed as any assessment made during the school year to improve, shape, mould, craft and direct teaching practices is schools (MBEC, 1999:8). The purpose of formative assessment is to motivate learners to extend their knowledge and skills, to establish sound values that promote healthy habits of study, to help learners to solve problems intelligently by using what they have learned, and also to assist teachers to use information gathered to improve teaching methods and learning materials (MBEC, 1999:8). Shepard (2005:5) defines formative assessment as an assessment that is carried out during the instructional process for the purpose of improving teaching practices. This also refers to the regular interaction that take place between a teacher and learners. When a learners' progress is assessed it helps teachers to adjust their teaching appropriately. Le Grange and Reddy (1998:4) argue that formative assessment is sometimes seen as being the opposite of summative assessment, which is carried out to enhance both teaching and learning practices. In order to meet learners' needs in the process, a teacher adapts the information obtained from the teaching practices in the classroom (Dufresne & Gerace, 2004:428). In this process, teachers are required to involve learners explicitly in teaching activities in the classrooms situation. This helps teachers to assess learners within different competencies, depending on what areas they want to assess during the teaching process.

Summative assessment is normally regarded as assessment conducted at the end of a term or a course with the purpose of summarising learners' progress in a particular learning area during the year (MBEC, 1999:8). It usually takes place by way of a test or a series of tests or examinations. Dufresne and Gerace (2004:428) caution that summative assessment encourages rote learning unless it is used on a minimal scale by the teachers to outline instruction in a constant and active way. The main aim of summative assessment therefore is to determine how much of the subject's content learners know and can demonstrate, as well as to give an overall picture of the achievement of a learner (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998:4). If a learner passes the examination, he/she can be promoted to the next grade. When a learner fails, then he/she will have to remain in the same grade. This is done on a regular basis and is called Continuous Assessment. Continuous assessment is integrated with teaching in order to improve learning that shape and direct the teaching and learning process (MBEC, 1999:7). Continuous assessment occurs as an ongoing process that involves motoring of learner's performance in a systematic way and collection of

marks into final score to determine the abilities of a learner over the period of time (Le Grange and Reddy, 1998:34). Therefore, continuous assessment is used to inform learners and parents about the learners' progress and achievements in education. In other words, the continuous assessment (CA) mark and the final year examination mark have to be combined to get the final grade, which gives an indication of the possible promotion or non-promotion of learners.

In addition, the grades obtained by learners through continuous assessment activities should be recorded systematically throughout the year. These grades are used to inform the learners and parents about the progress made by and achievement of the learners, and they also guide the compensatory teaching practices (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2007:38). Examples of the continuous assessment tasks that need to be carried out for the proper implementation of assessment policy in teaching include practical investigations, topic tasks, a project, topic tests and end-of-term test, as well as end-of-year examinations. These tasks are described below:

- Practical investigations: These are the activities given to the learners to assess their practical skills, where learners are required to plan, carry out investigations, collect and report on, as well as analyse and synthesise information. These activities are done in three terms and count between 10 and 15 marks in the first and second term, and the marks should be converted to 30 marks. In the third term it should count 20 marks when entered into the final mark sheet. Practical investigation consists of four activities, two in the first term, one in the second term and the last one in the third term.

- Topic tasks: These are tasks given by the teachers to the learners during the day-to-day teaching practices. These activities are recorded for the purpose of assessment, which counts between 10 and 15 marks, and these marks should be converted to 20 marks when entered into the final mark sheet. The topic tasks consist of six activities, two of which are done in each term.

- Project: This is a longer assignment than a topic task or investigation activities. This gives learners an opportunity to complete an investigation into one of the themes or topics outlined in the syllabus. The project is only done in the second term and counts 15 marks.

- Topic tests: These are written on completed topics to indicate the achievement of learners in these topics. There are two topic tests in each term and they count 20 marks, which need to be recorded on the mark sheet.

- End-of-term test: This is a comprehensive test on the whole term's work; however, it is not regarded as the end-of-year examination. The end-of-term tests are written in the first and second terms and these count 30 marks that are entered in the mark sheet. The end-of year examination is written at the end of the year and counts 50 marks. Finally, the average term mark and the end-of-year examination mark are combined to obtain the final grade of a learner.

Formal continuous assessment consists of tasks and activities that have been planned for the specific function of assessing certain competencies. These activities are recorded for the purpose of progression and promotion (MoE, 2010:37). During the formal assessment, teachers therefore are expected to teach issues that match with basic competencies in the syllabus in order to assess the learners. The use of oral and written tests tends to assess only a limited range of competencies and learners therefore should be assessed using different methods. Once the results are recorded, these should contribute 50% of the final mark.

Informal continuous assessment is generally carried out on a day-to-day basis. Many of these assessments are done occasionally during normal classroom activities and are not recorded formally (MoE, 2010:37). Informal assessment tasks are assigned as homework based on the worksheets that teachers should incorporate into their daily lesson planning. Teachers' personal day-to-day records about learners' behaviour, class participation or motivation are also regarded as informal assessment. These are useful activities that help teachers if the learner is absent from formal assessment and examinations (MoE, 2010:37). Teachers should be able to assess how well each learner masters the basic competencies in order to gain a complete picture of a learner's progress (MoE, 2010:37). In addition, teachers are expected to provide learners with verbal or written feedback on the informal assessment tasks given to them, which serves as motivation. Informal continuous assessment tasks that are assigned to learners as homework should be assessed and evaluated daily.

Assessment and evaluation form an integral part of everyday life (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998:3). Every decision or action taken is based on certain forms of judgement of a particular situation. The terms assessment and evaluation therefore are often used interchangeably. In maintaining a distinction between these two terms in the education system, Le Grange and Reddy (1998:3) argue that the word:

14

Assessment is used when judgements are made about a learner's performance and evaluation is used on wider elements that influence the learners' performance in teaching process. Both assessment and evaluation are essential for authentic learning to take place. Once a learner is assessed, the factors that influenced his or her learning should be evaluated in order to determine what further educational experiences should be developed for these learners to achieve the set objectives.

2.4 Significance of continuous assessment in general

In order to understand the significance of continuous assessment it is imperative to explore the theories underpinning assessment reform practices. The theoretical shift in the education system was necessitated by the change in educational development from a positivistic to a constructivist theory of assessment. Hilya (2007:10) suggests that it would be fitting for teachers to know why and how assessment has shifted. It therefore is necessary for teachers to understand the two epistemological positions of positivism and constructivism, which shaped the Namibian curriculum system. I will briefly make a distinction between positivist and constructivist theories that influenced the pre and post-independence education system as well as assessment practices in schools.

Hilya further argues that the positivist theory of assessment suggests that knowledge from books is viewed as fact or truth. For this reason, teachers were considered as experts and their responsibility was to transmit knowledge to the learners, who were expected to reproduce what they had learned. Learners were also required to memorise facts without understanding, and no opportunities were provided for them to discover new information on their own, because learners were considered to be empty containers into which teachers pour knowledge. The learners then had to master the subject content for examination purposes, which was the only form of assessment that was used to achieve the objectives in teaching (MEC, 1993:121).

The above is in contrast to constructivist views of learning, which regard learning as a process of personal knowledge construction, rather than memorisation of learning content. In other words, the learners construct knowledge in their mind, rather than the knowledge simply being transferred from the teacher to the learner and, in return, it exposes the learners to the world of information (Hilya, 2007:12).

Chulu (2013:403) explains the significance of continuous assessment as one way of improving educational quality through teaching. It helps to build learners' understanding within day-to-day lessons and also provides information on the learners' achievements to those who are outside of the learner and teacher relationship, for instance parents and institutions who need to know what teachers are doing to improve the quality of teaching in schools. Le Grange and Reddy (1998:3) suggest that assessment is a valued strategy that plays a key role in providing a favourable learning environment in which learners can learn with understanding. In other words, teachers should create an atmosphere in which learners are given support and encouragement to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Teachers need to be able to facilitate the teaching process and use assessment as an instrument to assess learners' activities, as well as be able to explain the concepts to the learners during the process of instruction in order for them to comprehend the work they are doing.

Shepard (2005:5) goes a step further to offer some recommendations on the meaning of continuous assessment in educational practice. Classroom assessments are regarded as a guide for learners to judge what is important to be learnt and focuses on deep learning, rather than a memorisation approach to learning. It is stated further that teachers should provide feedback during their teaching practice to minimise the challenges experienced in the process. This will result in continuous assessment having a more profound outcome on learning than any other typical educational intervention. Formative assessment practices tend to help low-achieving learners rather than high-achieving learners (Shepard, 2005:5). These findings suggest that formative assessment helps to develop metacognitive skills. These enhance motivation differently for low-achieving learners, because high-achieving learners have natural resources of motivation and the teacher tends to support low-achieving learners rather than those who have the ability to learn for themselves.

Le Grange and Beets (2005:120) extend the discussion and suggest that the importance of continuous assessment is the involvement of the teachers with the learner in every step and being able to recognise learning difficulties in a peaceful and dignified manner. For this reason, the sharing of the acquired skills and knowledge with compassion leads to the achievement of the intended outcomes. Continuous assessment therefore is a series of activities that are designed to measure what learners have learnt and how best the teacher can assist them to achieve the learning outcomes. Curriculum policy in Namibia (MEC, 1993:128) states that the main purpose

16

of continuous assessment in basic education is to develop a reliable picture of each individual learner's progress and the level of achievement in relation to minimum competencies specified in the syllabi. In the next section I will discuss the teachers' role in the implementation of assessment in schools.

2.5 Roles of teachers in continuous assessment implementation

In every sector, a member of staff is expected to perform his/her duty explicitly and humility and therefore it is important that teachers are informed about what is expected from them. I now will explain the expectations and roles of teachers in assessment implementation in the teaching process. Teachers are expected to use the Continuous Assessment Manual for Social Studies as a guiding document in implementing assessment policy in their teaching practices. As stated by the Ministry of Education (2008:1), the purpose of the manual is to guide teachers in how to carry out continuous assessment activities in Social Studies. Continuous assessment is both an integral and mandatory practice that requires teachers to provide a certain number of continuous assessment tasks in the course of the year, and each learner should have marks in continuous assessment tasks. Teachers are encouraged to provide as many tasks as possible in different activities in the manual, if time permits, and they are also encouraged to develop their own activities.

Shepard (2005:5) states that teachers should use continuous assessment in teaching to motivate learners to learn and do well in the classroom. Teachers are expected to use all methods possible to encourage learners to participate actively in the teaching process. Shepard (2005:5) also points out that teachers are expected to be the facilitators and leaders for the learners, and to encourage them to learn actively. In the same way, teachers advocate learning, which engages learners in the subject matter to connect new ideas to their existing world. The lessons they plan should be in accordance with curriculum requirements, but taking into account the learners' needs. In the same way, learners should be given activities that raise their interest and create critical thinking, with teachers providing advice and direction for the learners to learn.

Chulu (2013:416) extended the debate on the teacher's role, stating that they should prepare learners to feel at ease by engaging them in conversation before assessing them. This engagement will help teachers to identify what is needed to address the challenges the learners are encountering in the teaching process. Teachers are also expected to be acquainted with the

contents of their subjects and to design clear and appropriate teaching material to enhance the learners' participation in teaching practices. Teachers should understand and interpret assessment issues before they are applied in teaching practices in schools. These issues will help them to explain the tasks, projects and activities given to learners. When awarding marks to the learners, teachers should ensure that these marks reflect the learners' basic competencies in the formal assessment practices. Harden and Crosby (2000:334) note that the role of teachers goes beyond the transmission of information, because teachers are key players in the educational process. They further argue that teachers are resourceful persons and able to provide information and facilitation and to make plans concerning assessment practices. These show that teachers play a major role in terms of the implementation of assessment in the classroom. In the next section I will discuss assessment implementation in the different contexts.

2.6 Implementation of assessment policy in different contexts

Over the past twenty years, assessment is a policy issue that has grown worldwide because governments have realised its importance in the education sector (Broadfoot & Black, 2004:9). Its implementation is considered to be essential in the education transformation process in many countries. For example, in Scotland, assessment development has a long tradition in teaching practices. However, the implementation is considered to be challenging and those who are concerned struggle to implement assessment and produce the expected results in teaching (Hayward & Hedge, 2010:55). Some of the challenges experienced were, firstly, the relationship between continuous assessment ideas and the practicality experience in the classroom. Secondly, assessment in learning increases the workload of teachers. For example, when employing assessment in teaching there are too many objectives to be observed in assessing learners. Thirdly, there was no synergy between what was needed to be assessed for learning and the tasks given to the learners (Hayward & Hedge, 2010:61).

Several studies have also revealed that the shift from summative (traditional) assessment to formative assessment was not easy. Morgan, Preece, Skinner, and Shen (in Broadfoot & Black, 2004:9) explain how summative tests requirements dominate the assessment practices in teaching. Teachers tend to focus mainly on instruction and demonstration, rather than on assessment activities, and they therefore perceive summative assessment as a form of selection, certification and accountability, rather than as giving feedback in the teaching process (Mavrommatis, 1997:382). In the context of the United States of America (USA), Bachor and

18

Anderson (in Broadfoot & Black, 2004:9) found that teachers could not properly distinguish between the purposes and practices of formative and summative assessment. Mavrommatis (in Broadfoot & Black, 2004:9) found that, in Greece, teachers resisted the implementation of formative assessment to the extent that they only used summative assessment in schools. The literature further suggests that there has been apathy in implementing assessment policy reform, especially in countries such as France and Canada. In the United Kingdom (UK), similar changes have produced various practices that are counter-productive to the stated aims of the reform process (McCallum *et al.* & Gipps *et al.* in Black & Wiliam, 2006:19). However, these changes were slow in pace because it was very difficult for teachers to change practices that were directly rooted within their model of pedagogy as a whole (Torrie & Shepard *et al.,* in Black & Wiliam, 2006:19). It therefore is hard for the teachers to accept the changes, because the old practices were embedded in their everyday teaching practices. Mavrommatis (1997:382) notes that inadequate assessment training of teachers seems to be held responsible for a lack of proper implementation of assessment policy in most primary classrooms internationally. Broadfoot and Black (2004:9) therefore argue that if assessment policy is to flourish in schools, teacher training and initiatives that support a constructive connection between formative and summative assessment is needed from the teachers and all the stakeholders in education.

Lewin and Dunne (2000:380) argue that assessment on the African context emanated from many discourses on assessment and curriculum reform designed by African curriculum developers and assessment specialists. The Science Education Programme for Africa (SEPA), along with the African Primary Science Programme (APSP), which advocates for a shift in emphasis from rote learning to enquiry-based activities and subject integration, spearheaded curriculum reform in the 1970s. This was accompanied by a competency-based discourse and an official shift in curriculum and assessment policy design. The reason behind this was to minimise the significance of examinations and enhance the importance of continuous assessment activities as a means of stimulating a learner-centred approach (Lewin & Dunne, 2000:380).

The national policy on education in Nigeria placed more emphasis on assessment policy because it was assumed that it would provide teachers with greater motivation and encouragement to provide quality education to the learners (Eimann, 2002:16). However, Adebowale and Alao (2008:2) observed that the implementation of assessment policy was not successful and they identified certain challenges in schools that hampered the successful implementation of

assessment. These included inadequate skills among teachers in test construction and test administration; the teachers' lack of skills in assessment implementation, which created the wrong impression about the continuous assessment approach; and the teachers' lack of interest in keeping assessment record-sheets that are retrievable. These were some of the challenges experienced by teachers in terms of assessment implementation in Nigerian schools.

In Senegal, a learner-centred approach was adopted, but teachers continued to focus on recall and memorisation rather than learning with understanding (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008:197). Teachers were not prepared to teach using a learner-centred approach, which involves the implementation of formative assessment in the classroom. For this reason, teachers were encouraged to continue giving instruction in a teacher-centred approach and implement summative assessment activities in teaching.

In Malawi, assessment in primary schools is mainly summative and teachers designing tests that are used with norm-referenced interpretations of scores (Chulu, 2013:410). Chulu further notes that certain teachers lack important skills, such as test constructions, score reporting and score interpretation. The teachers also experience a lack of adequate knowledge and skills of educational assessment practices (Kadzamira *et al.;* Kaledzera; Mwanza & Kazima; Selemanimbewe, in Chulu, 2013:410).

In Zambia, an assessment policy was introduced in primary schools for two reasons, firstly, "to improve the teaching and learning practices in schools. Secondly... to collect school-based results that needs to be added to the final examination marks for certification and selection purposes" (Kapambwe, 2010:102). However, those involved in implementing assessment faced numerous challenges. Kapambwe (2010:102) noted that teachers were facing challenges such as large class sizes, implementing remedial teaching, learner absenteeism, lack of teaching and learning resources, lack of teacher networking and lack of monitoring systems. Teachers indicated one of the major challenges as being large classes, which increase the workload of teachers during the assessment process. The teachers also failed to administer the practice of on-going assessment, such as weekly, monthly or after a topic. They felt that the implementation of continuous assessment tasks took too much of their time doing remedial teaching, which brought the fear that they would not be able to complete the syllabus. The absenteeism of learners also poses challenges to the smooth running of learners' performance, including deficient continuous assessment records due to learners' lack of presence, which is worse in rural schools. Some of the

absenteeism led to learners dropping out of school. The majority of teachers complained of inadequate teaching and learning support materials in schools. They also indicated that they needed support in terms of stationery, computers and photocopiers. The teachers in different districts aimed to work together in terms of implementing continuous assessment by developing common end-of-terms tests; however, this was problematic due to the distance and lack of resources in the schools. Monitoring was also another area of concern in which the overall implementation of assessment experienced challenges. The study revealed that the inadequate monitoring practices by officials who were tasked to support the implementation process hampered the proper implementation of assessment in schools (Kapambwe, 2010:102).

Although South Africa adopted the learner-centred goals of outcomes-based education, those involved still faced many challenges in terms of the implementation of assessment (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008:197). Vandeyar and Killen (2007:101) argue that one of the challenges affecting the implementation of assessment in South African schools was the unwillingness of teachers to accommodate linguistically and culturally diverse learners in teaching. Teachers struggled to put outcomes-based assessment into practice, because most of the teachers were reluctant to embrace these changes. They found it difficult to cope with demands that clashed with their philosophy, assumptions and value systems (Jansen; Potenza & Monyokolo; Vandeyar & Killen, in Vandeyar, 2005:462). These challenges meant that the teachers struggled to implement outcomes-based assessment policies in their teaching practices.

Jansen (2003:43) contends that, in the process of outcomes-based assessment implementation, the government did not do much to empower the teachers to implement assessment successfully in schools. He further states that a lack of resources and supervision by the authorities meant that the changed syllabi were not implemented fairly across all public schools. Jansen (in Beets, 2012:11) argues that the language associated with Curriculum 2005 was too complex and confusing and, as a result, teachers failed to interpret and understand the policies in terms of their implementation. In order to implement these policies successfully, teachers are required to be fully prepared to ensure quality teaching in schools.

The Namibian government embarked on a new educational reform process to create an organised national system that reflected the democratic policies of the government (Dahlstrom, 1995:273). The new government felt that the way in which traditional assessment was viewed and practised in education had to be changed (MoE, 2008:8). The new curriculum policy suggested that

classroom assessment should change in two essential ways. Firstly, the content should be changed to better represent important thinking and problem-solving skills of learners; second, the way assessment is used in classrooms and how it is regarded by teachers and learners should also change. These shifts, from traditional summative assessment to the new formative assessment practices, have not been successful. Hilya (2007:25) argues that one of the challenges affecting the implementation of assessment policy in Namibian schools is the inadequate knowledge of teachers to understand policy guidelines. A lack of proper control and supervision at school level, as well as the unwillingness of teachers to implement assessment, has also hampered its successful implementation. This is exacerbated by the lack of capacity among certain teachers to understand how continuous assessment feedback can be used to inform classroom practices.

In this section, the challenges in terms of the implementation of assessment policy, both internationally and nationally, were discussed. The literature showed that the shift from summative to formative assessment and educational reforms all over the world have had different reactions in different contexts. Teachers have not been prepared successfully to implement these policies effectively in their teaching practices. In the next section I will discuss the Namibian education system during the colonial era and the current education system under the new government, and consider the shifts that took place in the curriculum and in assessment strategies.

2.7 Implementation of assessment policy in the Namibian context

The Namibian education system during colonial rule was characterised by segregation and separate development (Cohen, 1994:228). Education was a privilege for the white minority elite groups and was well resourced within this sector, while the black majority was ill-prepared and had limited resources (Shanyanana, 2011:76). Cohen (1994:228) states that the administration was fragmented and categorised along racial lines. This sentiment is echoed by Van der Merwe (in Eimann, 2002:1), who stated that:

> The characteristics and apartheid practices of the South African system were consistent with beliefs and policies of the apartheid South Africa. This practice became embedded in the system during a protracted pre-independence period and has been described as a system explicitly divisive and fragmented along racial lines with dramatic inequalities and

22

disparities caused by highly unequal resource allocations which resulted in differences in access, quality and capacity between various ethnic groups.

The Ministry of Education report on the provision of schooling states that few black Namibian children were in schools and most of those who had access to education did not go far (MEC, 1993:2). This has resulted in very few Namibian people being educated compared to the white minority. Cohen (1994:229) further notes that the education system in Namibia before 1990 ignored the true aspirations of Namibian people. In support of the above sentiment, the Ministry of Education and Culture (1993:19) states that the policies of racial discrimination created a legacy of disparity among people as well as the allocation of resources. In order to strengthen its power, the colonial government established eleven semi-autonomous education departments, which were based on race and ethnic, groups for example the Kavango administration, Ovambo administration, etc. The aim was to promote the policy of segregation and apartheid that was intended to minimise threats to white "supremacy", both in Namibia and South Africa (Tjitendero, 1984:7). Consequently, society and the education system were totally divided along racial and tribal lines. It further was noted that, during apartheid rule, the Namibian education system placed more emphasis on the passing of traditional examinations, which were based on memorisation.

The instruction was done in a teacher-centred approach, which was unproductive and frustrating for most of the learners in schools (MEC, 1993:10). In this approach, teachers are regarded as experts in the discovery of facts, and their responsibility was to transmit knowledge to learners, who were expected to reproduce what they have learned (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998:6). Teachers were viewed as the agents of all aspects of teaching practice, which led to passive participation by learners in the classroom. So, rote learning took place and learners were required to memorise facts without comprehension. Rote learning therefore became a stronghold in many of the classes and subjects in schools (Shanyanana, 2011:77). Moreover, the curriculum was very narrow in scope and learners spent time memorising facts and terminology without understanding, rather than employing critical thinking about their learning (MEC, 1993:121). Shanyanana further stated that the authoritarian system was rooted in the teaching methods used in Namibia during the mid-1980s, because "children are expected to be well behaved sponges, absorbing the text-book knowledge transmitted by the teacher and further more to reproduce these facts in examinations". This kind of education system did not prepare learners for critical reasoning that

23

would enable them to question their teachers during the instruction process (Shanyanana, 2011:77). For this reason, most black Namibians were deprived of the necessary ability to understand issues and participate in debates in their education. In fact, the colonial government failed to create a group of people who could actively engage in education matters in the country. In this way, the authoritarian government ensured that people would not speak about educational issues in public.

Shanyanana (2011:78) argues that most Namibian people who received their education during the colonial era would not oppose or challenge issues, because it was not in their nature. The system was highly autocratic, oppressive and authoritarian, therefore the Namibian people had no human rights and freedom of expression, and they were expected to respect the rule of law and adhere to the colonial policies, such as separate racial development. The inequality in the education system was perpetuated by the apartheid government through the subject content and practices, and this discriminatory arrangement meant that people were not allowed to take part in any decision-making process. These policies were instituted by the apartheid system, as they feared that an education would prepare black people for a future in the social world, which was not part of their destiny (Fataar, 2010:66).

After independence in March 1990, the new Namibian government sought to replace the colonial South African system with a new "international system" (Nekhwevha, 1999:496). These reforms lead to the enactment of education policy statements called "Toward Education for All", which brought a new vision for education in Namibia (MEC, 1993:2). This policy states that the previous education system in Namibia was premised on educating the elite in a positivistic system that was based on apartheid and racism (MEC, 1993:2). The central initiative of this new education policy was, among others, the "abolition of racial discrimination in education, the establishment of a compulsory education structure from age seven to sixteen, a marked shift in assessment practices, etc. (Nekhwevha, 1999:496)". In addition, the new education system moved from a teacher-centred approach towards a learner-centred approach that aimed at harnessing the interest and excitement of both teachers and learners to promote democracy and responsibility for lifelong learning.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (1993:60) states that a learner-centred approach encourages learners to use their prior knowledge and ability to learn new concepts. These also enhance learners' natural curiosity and eagerness to learn from one another's experiences.

Teachers are encouraged to appreciate the learners' perspectives in the process of learning. For this reason, learners should be motivated to cultivate a culture of critical thinking and become responsible for their own actions. The policy also states that learners should be goal oriented, rather than receivers of knowledge from the teachers.

Namibian policy makers therefore are aiming to implement a learner-centred curriculum and teaching that assesses a wider range of knowledge and skills that are relevant in a knowledge-based society by the year 2030 (MoE, 2009). Namibian teachers, however, perceive these changes as a new and unfamiliar theory in teaching and have expressed concern about the implementation of this new philosophy in reality. For instance, they ask questions on aspects such as what continuous assessment is all about and what is expected from them.

Iipinge and Kasanda (2013:437) state that a major challenge found within the assessment policy system is the poor correlation between continuous assessment and examination marks. There is a weak link between assessment activities and learner-centred education, as well as inadequate training of examiners and makers. The teachers lack skills in material development that is required in the new curriculum and continuous assessment systems. Iipinge and Kasanda (2013:437) argue that a lot needs to be done to improve the use of continuous assessment strategies as part of proper teaching methods in schools. In the next section I will discuss the challenges that teachers experienced during the implementation of assessment in Namibia.

2.8 Challenges experienced by teachers in assessment policy implementation in Namibia

The section expounds how teachers perceive the assessment policy, as well as the challenges they face in its implementation in Namibian schools. O'Sullivan (2002:222) claims that the successful implementation of education reform always depends on the extent to which teachers are prepared to implement the reform process, therefore teachers' attitudes towards any reform contributes to the success or failure of its implementation. Eimann (2002:45) identified some of the challenges experienced by teachers in Social Studies and suggested that teachers should be trained to implement assessment policy in Social Studies. Issues such as a lack of subject knowledge, and a lack of school funds to purchase teaching and learning materials to support teaching were some of the challenges mentioned. Overcrowded classrooms also hamper the teachers' performance because they do not have space and time to provide support to all learners during a class period.

25

The absenteeism of some learners also affects the implementation of assessment policy in teaching. Learners often also are not interested in doing continuous assessment tasks, which results in them achieving low marks during assessment practices.

Hilya (2007:25) argues that one of the reasons that there has been poor implementation of assessment policy in Namibia seems to be the poor understanding of policy guidelines by the teachers. Hilya further suggests that workshops should be provided to teachers to interpret assessment policy documents effectively, and that teachers should be supported with teaching resources to implement the policy effectively in teaching. Uiseb (2009:65) notes that teachers lack skills in test construction, test administration and record keeping. He further alludes that some teachers display apathy towards assessment implementation because they are not adequately trained to implement assessment policy successfully in the classroom. Although important information is provided in the continuous assessment manual, information alone may not adequately address the impact in term of how effectively and efficiently teachers can implement assessment policy in their classrooms (Uiseb, 2009:13).

Iipinge and Kasanda (2013:439) state that capacity building for teachers to respond effectively to the demands of the emerging curriculum is lacking and schools also lack the necessary learning materials that reflect the new curriculum and assessment systems. For this reason, teachers should be positioned adequately to interpret the policy documents and national curriculum goals properly. All stakeholders in education are further encouraged to be committed and to engage in discussion for an improvement of educational policies. Van der Merwe (in Iipinge & Kasanda, 2013:437) identified teachers' lack of confidence as the main contributing factor hampering the effective implementation of assessment in teaching. A study conducted by Lukubwe (2006:102) in Namibia confirmed that teachers and principals are not provided with an opportunity to contribute to the initial planning stage of policies, despite the fact that teachers are represented in policy formulation by teachers' trade unions. On a similar note, Ball (in Smit, 2001:68) argues that teachers are always not involved in the discourses of education policy and that policy itself does not take the context in which teachers find themselves into account, but they are expected to implement policy in the classroom situation. This lack of teacher involvement in policy formulation affects the proper implementation of the policy in schools. It is high time that teachers should be involved in the planning stage of policy, rather than only in the implementation process (Ball, in Smit, 2001:68).

O'Sullivan (2002:232) further notes that the successful implementation of change depends on the policy makers engaging with the policy implementers. In addition, O'Sullivan argues that teachers' conditions of service may prevent them from investing their time and energy in implementing assessment policy in schools. For example, a problem arises when teachers implement new policies that entail extra work and the teacher expects to be paid extra funds or awards. However, government schools do not provide extra incentives to teachers. The other challenges experienced by the current government include a lack of skilled teachers, overcrowded classrooms and a lack of resources such as textbooks in schools, etc.

Since the discussion is on the challenges teachers experience in terms of assessment implementation, it is necessary to include a discussion of how teachers were trained to implement the educational programme effectively in schools. The Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD) is a national three-year programme that was introduced after independence in 1990 to cater for teachers who teach Grades 1 to 10 (Kandumbu, 2005:87). This programme was implemented in January 1993 with its first intake of BETD students to be trained as professional teachers. With the new programme it was hoped that the teachers would learn and be able to master the skills and knowledge in the various fields of specialisation to provide proper teaching strategies to learners (MEC, 1993:78-81). Kandumbu (2005:87), however, argues that the training of teachers was rushed and that the teacher educators themselves were unqualified. The BETD programme thus failed to equip teachers with the necessary skills to cope with classroom practices. Therefore it was not possible for the BETD programme to equip teachers with the relevant skills to implement assessment policy and other educational programmes in schools. The programme also failed because the teacher educators failed to show and demonstrate self-reliance and to impart knowledge to the student teachers.

Kandumbu (2005:87) further argues that the teachers in this programme lack subject knowledge because the programme did not concentrate on the subject content, but only on teaching methodology. In other words, the training prepared teachers for methodology, with less emphasis on content and knowledge. This affected the teachers, as they lacked the knowledge required to teach the content of the subjects. For instance, if I teach a topic in Social Studies, I may be able to demonstrate my skills and methodology in how to teach that topic, but I may fail to demonstrate what learners should learn and how I might assess them, simply because I lack the subject content knowledge.

27

Nyambe and Wilmot (2008:18-21) extend the arguments further by stating that teacher educators lack knowledge and skills in presenting learner-centred pedagogy, as well as confidence in their own professional abilities to adequately interpret and practise a learner-centred approach. These shortcomings might contribute to a lack of ability by teachers to implement assessment policy in teaching, because if the teacher educators lack ability, knowledge and self-confidence to present their lessons in learner-centred education, their students would suffer.

Ball (2012:3) believes that putting policies into practice is a creative, sophisticated and complex process. It needs the implementer to be adequately prepared with the relevant training skills to interpret them correctly before put them into practice. He further notes that policy creates circumstances in which a range of options are available in deciding what to do. Fataar (2010:49) suggests that policy can be interpreted differently by different role players, depending on their particular locations. The assumption is that policy cannot be implemented as is; it needs to be translated from text into classroom practices. The evidence shows that teachers are not coping with these complex demands of implementation because they are not adequately equipped with relevant training skills to interpret policies correctly and to put them into practice. Consequently, most of the teachers in schools now are not trained to implement assessment policy in learner-centred education (Vandeyar & Killen, 2007:64).

In this section the challenges in terms of assessment policy implementation were discussed, showing that teachers have different challenges during the implementation of assessment policy in teaching. Teachers also were not properly trained in terms of the subject content and knowledge in their areas of specialisation at the college of education. It therefore is not surprising that they may fail to implement assessment policy successfully in their teaching practices. It was also shown that policies cannot be implemented as they are, but need to be translated from text into practice.

2.9 Summary

This literature review provided a broad overview of how assessment policies are conceptualised globally and locally. The study revealed that the shift from summative to formative assessment has not been easy. Teachers normally prefer to focus mainly on instruction rather than on assessment activities. The study also suggests that there was apathy in implementing assessment reform in countries such as France, Canada, etc. (Broadfoot *et al.* & Dassa, in Broadfoot &

Black, 2004:9). Mavrommatis (1997:382) argues that inadequate training of teachers in assessment implementation was the reason for the lack of proper implementation of continuous assessment in primary schools in many countries. There also are challenges experienced by teachers in assessment implementation in Namibian schools, such as a lack of skills in test construction, test administration and record keeping. Uiseb (2009:65) argues that a lack of adequate training of teachers hampers the successful implementation of assessment policy in teaching practices. Teachers are not provided with opportunities during the initial planning stage to contribute to policy formulation (Lukubwe, 2006:102). Kandumbu (2005:87) argues that teachers lack subject content to implement educational programmes, including assessment policy, in teaching. This review brought me to closer understanding of the issues surrounding my research question of how teachers implement assessment policy in Namibian schools. The background to the education system in Namibia, from pre-to post-independence, has located the study in how the education system and assessment have shifted to the current situation in schools. I ended up with literature that suggests how teachers were trained through the BETD programme to implement the educational programme, including assessment policy, in teaching. In the next section I will present the research design and methodology that were used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and research methodology that were used in this study. It offers a motivation for adopting a qualitative methodological paradigm and for choosing an interpretive research design as being most appropriate for answering the main research question and sub-questions. With the aim being to investigate primary school teachers' experiences of implementing assessment policy in Social Studies, the study therefore was qualitative in nature. I introduce the chapter with a brief overview of the two methodological paradigms underpinning my study, as well as with an explanation of the research design, methods and sampling procedure. The processes of data analysis, presentation and data interpretation, as well as issues of delimitation and limitation, are also discussed. Finally, the chapter deals with aspects of validity and reliability, as well as the ethical considerations pertaining to the study.

3.2 Research paradigms

Research in general is conducted within specific paradigms. These paradigms are based on assumptions about knowledge and ways of assessing it (Chilisa & Preez, in Du Plooy, 2010:33). Paradigms present different ways of viewing the world and open up new understandings of social realities. In this section I briefly qualify my preference for a qualitative methodology as a more viable research methodology than a quantitative one for this study.

A quantitative research design presents statistical results that are presented in numbers, while qualitative research presents the data as a narration using words (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:15). Quantitative research is concerned more with establishing a formal connection based on statistical presentations and experimental reality, while qualitative research by nature addresses *what* and *how* questions that provide detailed views on the research topic. Since the study is aimed at investigating the teachers' experiences, I used a qualitative research design to allow me to construct data and have an in-depth understanding of the study. The qualitative research methods, however, also has its weakness. In order to substantiate the sentiment above, Clarke (in Du Plooy, 2010:36) states that qualitative research is context bound, not universal. Furthermore, it only offers a holistic approach in which peoples' perspectives, insights and

experiences are taken into account by studying them and their context, but not what lies beyond them.

3.3 Research methodology

In this study I used an interpretive, qualitative case study approach. I was informed by the research theory that the most common ways to undertake qualitative inquiry as interpretation is found within the context of the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, in Van Laren & James, 2008:294). The study focuses on teachers' experiences in the implementation of assessment policy in schools. Lester (1999:1) argues that this social phenomenon has to do with experiences from the perspectives of the individuals, therefore it was imperative to use interpretive inquiry. The use of interpretive inquiry helped me to find out what happened, how it happened and why it happened in the way that it did. Using the interpretive research paradigm not only allowed me to scrutinise the phenomenon under study, but also enabled me to explain the situation in a nuanced way. It also provided me with the best opportunity to establish the necessary understanding from engagement with the participants. Using this approach I could construct understandings of the teachers' experiences in the implementation of assessment. In the next section I discuss the different procedures used in my study to construct data.

3.4 Research methods

According to Murray and Hughes (2008:148), research methods refer to the different ways in which data is collected and analysed. I used document analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interviews to obtain information during data construction. The combination of different procedures helped me to validate and crosscheck my findings. Strydom and Delport (2011:377) believes that each data source has its own strengths and weakness, thus by using triangulation the strengths of one procedure can compensate for the weaknesses of another approach.

3.4.1 Document analysis

Strydom and Delport (2011:377) argue that documentary analysis involves examining the existing documents, either to understand their practical content or to illuminate deeper meanings that may reveal their style and coverage. I used document analysis methods to help me to understand how the Social Studies documents are used to guide and support and are applied in

teaching. Maree (2010:82) claims that the use of document analysis may shed more light on the phenomenon under investigation. The documents that were analysed include the Social Studies Syllabus for Grade 5 to 7, the scheme of work, class record sheets, lesson plans and learners' written work, as well as the assessment policies, e.g. *Towards Improving Continuous Assessment in Schools: A Policy and Information Guide* (MBEC, 1999). These documents can be described as follows:

- Syllabus: This document provides detailed information to the teachers on what to teach, as well as the requirements of the continuous assessment. It therefore is imperative that each teacher must possess it and use it.

- Scheme of work: The scheme of work is a guide used by the subject teacher to plan teaching and learning for the year. This must be developed by the teachers from the syllabus and not from the books.

- Lesson plan: Written lesson preparation is compulsory for every teacher, irrespective of his or her years of experience. The daily or weekly written preparation should be done on the template provided by the school or by the subject advisor, well in advance of delivery in the classroom. Assessment is very important and all lesson plans should include well-planned homework activities, written work, tasks, exercises and assignments.

- Class record: This is a document in which learners' work is recorded in the course of the year. This document should be kept in a safe place where it can be retrieved when it is needed.

- Learners' written work: This work strengthens the teachers' efforts in class and enhances the learning process. Learners should be given well-planned homework or class activities every day.

- *Towards Improving Continuous Assessment In Schools: A Policy And Information Guide:* The purpose of this guide is to clarify ministerial policies, to create a better understanding of what CA entails, and to provide examples of good practice to help teachers design and implement continuous assessment (MoE, 2009:2-3).

I selected these documents to provide evidence of how assessment is planned, interpreted and applied in teaching processes. In scrutinising these documents I learned that all the teachers use Social Studies syllabi during their preparation and that these are possessed by all the schools. All these documents provide evidence of what is happening during teaching, which I will substantiate

in Chapter 4. In the next section I discuss classroom observation as one of the methods used during the construction of data.

3.4.2 Observation

I used classroom observation as a method to ascertain, understand and obtain significant information pertaining to the teachers' assessment practices in the classroom. Classroom observation is the practical process of using senses to understand and record facts (Graziano & Raulin, 2010:28). Strydom (2011:330) notes that the special parts of observation are to be able to see, to listen, to acquire, to observe and to write up a note that helps the researcher to obtain valuable information. Classroom observation in qualitative research therefore refers to the procedures in which the study's neutrality and everyday set-up in a particular situation are observed (Strydom, 2011: 330).

Maree (2010:84) states that observation helps the researcher to gain insight into the practical process and understanding the phenomenon, as well as become part of the daily routine of respondents. I used this method to ascertain the behaviour and experience of the participants, which assisted me to understand how teachers implement assessment in teaching processes. I observed teachers during their classroom instruction, focusing on how they taught and used continuous assessment in the context of the three assessment objectives in Social Studies. The objectives, such as knowledge with understanding, handling information, application of knowledge and problem solving, as well as practical skills and abilities, were observed. These helped me to draw conclusions on how teachers follow the criteria when assessing learners during instruction. The participant observation method provided me with a clear picture of how teachers assess learners during teaching practices. I took note of the weaknesses of this method which (Strydom, 2011:331) states as being that, if participants know that they are being studied and observed, their natural situation will automatically change and therefore the researcher will not be able to achieve the purpose of the study. Due to this reason and weakness of the method, I sought to complement it with semi-structured interviews. In the next section I discuss the research method of interviewing, which I used to collect data during the exploration of my study.

3.4.3 Interview methods

Interviews are the dominant method of data collection in qualitative research. The researcher obtains information through direct interchange with an individual or group that has been identified as possessing the knowledge the researcher is seeking (Greeff, 2011:342). This can also

be regarded as a social relationship designed to exchange information between participant and the researcher. Greeff (2011:342) defines qualitative interviews as "attempts to understand the world from the participants' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences [and] to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations".

There are different types of one-on-one interviews, such as unstructured, semi-structured and ethnographic interviews. In this study I employed semi-structured interviews as one of my methods to collect data. Semi-structured interviews are defined as an organised methods used to obtain information of a particular interest, while allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth (Greeff, 2011:348). A semi-structured interview allows the participants to express their views freely regarding the phenomenon under investigation. Maree (2010:87) argues that semi-structured interviews are one of the vital tools that help the researcher to collect data from participants. I gained a detailed picture of the participants' experiences of the topic. Through interviews I was able to find out what the teachers do to implement assessment in teaching practices. For example, the teachers provide different tasks to the learners during and after the instruction for assessment purposes. In the next section I discuss the sampling methods employed in the study.

3.5 Sampling procedure

In this section I discuss the sampling methods that I used to gain access to the schools and to select teachers for the purpose of this study. Strydom and Delport (2011:392) suggest seven types of non-probability sampling techniques in qualitative research. These are purposive, theoretical, deviant case, sequential, snowball, key informant and volunteer sampling. I will described two sampling techniques commonly used in qualitative study and then indicated which one was more appropriate for my study.

In purposive sampling the researcher must first think critically about the parameters of the population and then choose the sample case accordingly. Clear identification and formulation of pre-selected criteria for the selection of respondents therefore are of cardinal importance (Strydom & Delport, 2011:392). In this case the researcher has to come up with clear criteria to select the participants and provide the reason that led to his/her decisions. Thus, the search for data must be guided by processes that will provide rich details to maximise the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about that context (Strydom & Delport, 2011:392).

In theoretical sampling, the sample can be used only for specific matters that are studied in order to obtain more precise information that would cast further light on the development of the theory, making it conclusive and useful. This form of sampling seeks to improve ideas and not to expand the original sample. In this case, researchers could use people, scenery, events or documents (Strydom & Delport, 2011:392).

In this study I employed purposive sampling to access teachers in the Kavango region of Namibia who had in-depth knowledge of assessment practices in the Social Studies learning area. I used my discretion to select the participants, because the phenomenon being studied was the teachers' experiences of implementing assessment policy in teaching. I needed to involve specific teachers who had teaching experience in the subject in order for me to gain the maximum amount of information for the study.

The research unit consisted of six participants who were selected because of their knowledge and expertise in the subject. They were six Grade 7 teachers of Social Studies at rural schools in the Kavango region of Namibia. I considered that the selected participants would shed more light on the research question due to their specialisation, practices and expertise as Social Studies teachers. The schools were selected based on their accessibility, although they were in the rural areas. In the next section I discuss the data presentation of the study.

3.6 Data analysis and presentation

The data was analysed and presented using different methods. Graziano and Raulin (2010:38) state that data analysis is a process of analysing and interpreting data to make meaning of it. The collected data was analysed using content analysis. The choice of content analysis was based on Kumar's (2011:278), who noted that it is a useful method in qualitative research with the view to analysing the contents of interviews or observational notes. In order to identify the main themes in the responses by the respondents, content analysis was employed, following four steps.

The first step was to identify the main themes. This step was employed in the descriptive responses from the participants in order to understand the meaning they communicated. The second step was to assign codes to the main themes by using numbers or keywords. The third step was to clarify responses from the participants under the main themes. Having identified the themes, this step was used to sift through the transcripts of all the interviews in order to classify responses from the participants. The fourth step was to integrate themes and responses into the

text of the report (Kumar, 2011:278). The content analysis method was used to obtain the relevant data through document analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interviews. These helped me to identify and understand the focus of the respondents. In the next section I discuss the interpretation of the data.

3.7 Data interpretation and discussion

The data interpretation involved making sense of the data constructed during the study, (Schurink *et al.,* 2011:416). This is where I discussed, interpreted and drew conclusions from the data collected during the study in an attempt to make meaning of it. Schurink *et al.* (2011:417) state that the researcher "interprets data by finding out how people being studied see the world, how they define the situation, or what it means for them". The qualitative researcher therefore interprets the data by clarifying the meaning to make sense of it and to understand the viewpoint of the participants involved in the study. Here is where the researcher steps back to gain a broader view of what is going on in the data constructed during the study. In the next section I discuss the delimitations and limitations of the study.

3.8 Delimitations and limitations of the study

3.8.1 Delimitations

I proposed a case study of three rural schools. These three schools are based in Ncuncuni circuit in the Kavango region of Namibia. The focus was on Grade 7 Social Studies teachers with the aim to investigate and analyse teachers' experiences and practices in relation to the implementation of assessment in schools. The study was carried out over a period of three weeks.

3.8.2 Limitations

Due to limited time, funding and the scope of the research, the study was limited to the Kavango region and the discipline of Social Studies. Should further funding be allocated, research in the other regions of Namibia would help to provide a fuller picture of the challenges to implementation experienced by teachers. The study was further limited by the situation at the schools, where I found that only one teacher teaches Grades 5 to 7. This put me in a situation where I could only interview three teachers, one per school. In the next section I discuss the validity and reliability of the study.

3.9 Validity and reliability

Aspinwall *et al.* (in Le Grange, 2012:64) argue that reliability, along with validity, is regarded as one of the key tests when judging the adequacy and relevance of a study. In this study I employed the notion of Nieman *et al.* (in Du Plooy, 2010:53), who remind us, that in qualitative study, researchers acknowledge their own subjectivity while allowing the object being studied to 'speak for itself. I therefore allowed the respondents to state their positions with regard to the implementation of assessment in teaching practices. In order to understand the validity and reliability, I present different definitions from various perspectives in qualitative research design.

3.9.1 Validity

The concept of validity is used to judge whether the study accurately portrays the phenomenon that it intends to depict during the research process. For me to judge the validity of this study, I employed two categories of qualitative research offered by Maxwell (in Thomson, 2011:78-79). These categories are descriptive and interpretive validity. Descriptive validity refers to the accuracy of the data collected, while interpretive validity captures how well the researcher reports the participants' meanings of the events, objects or behaviour (Thomson, 2011:78-79).

I used descriptive validity because I desired the data to be accurate and reflect what the participants said and did. I also used interpretive validity because the key issue here was that the interpretations are not based on my viewpoint, but on those of the participants. I drew conclusions from the words and actions of the participants in the study. I also took cognisance of the current trends that show changes in qualitative validity. Generally there are two approaches to validity in qualitative research, namely transactional and transformational validity. Transactional validity is defined as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants and collected data. The aim of my research was to obtain a high level of accuracy in the facts, feelings, experiences or beliefs collected and interpreted (Cho & Trent, 2006:321-322). Transformational validity is defined as a "progressive, emancipatory process leading towards social change to be achieved by the attempt of the research itself" (Cho & Trent, 2006:321-322).

I used a transactional qualitative research approach in my study, which deals with the experiences of the participants. The transactional approach is grounded in an active relationship between the inquiry and the study of participants by means of an array of techniques, such as member checking and triangulation. I considered triangulation as an important method because I used different techniques, such as document analysis, participant observation and semi-structured

interviews, to obtain data with which to improve the validity of the study. Cohen *et al.* (2007:141) describe triangulation as a technique used in an attempt to map out the richness and complexity of human behaviour. Similarly, the various sources, such as books, articles, field notes, interviews, observations and journals, were used to draw conclusions from the study findings.

3.9.2 Reliability

The value of research depends to a large degree on the value attached to the researcher's findings. Sapsford and Evans (in Le Grange, 2012:66) state that reliability is the consistency of the results obtained when using measures. Reliable techniques were used to demonstrate the reliability of the study. Le Grange (2012:63) argues that the goal of reliability is to minimise the errors and bias in the study. In order to make sure that the data was reliable and authentic I used triangulation methods. Similarly, I used a tape recorder to capture the information from the respondents during the interviews. In the next section I discuss the ethical considerations of the study.

3.10 Ethical considerations

The issue of protecting the rights of participants in a study is very sensitive and special efforts have to be made to protect the rights of those who are vulnerable. Klopper (2008:71) states that ethical considerations refer to the protection of the participants' rights. I obtained consent and approval from the relevant institutions and individuals concerned before undertaking the research, following McKiernan's (1996:241) summary of the important ethical criteria that need to be considered when embarking on research. Firstly, all those affected by the study have the right to be informed, consulted and advised about the objective of the inquiry of the study, and the participants have the right to refuse to participate in the study. Secondly, the researcher should not proceed with any activities concerning the research unless permission has been granted by the concerned person or institution. Thirdly, documentary evidence, such as files and correspondence, should not be examined without official permission. Fourthly, the researcher is responsible for the confidentiality of the data and is accountable to the school community involved in the research. Lastly, the researcher must make the ethical contractual criteria known to all involved in the study.

I ensured that the study adhered to all the ethical considerations above by writing a letter to the regional director of education, the circuit inspector and the principals of the selected schools. The participants were requested to sign a consent form, which outlined the rules and procedures of the study. All the stakeholders were assured that the data would remain anonymous and confidential. Cooper and Schindler (2003:120) argue that the research must be designed in a way that participants do not suffer any physical harm, discomfort, pain, embarrassment or loss of privacy. All efforts were made to establish trust between the researcher and the participants to ensure that their privacy was not compromised. By following these procedures, a healthy working relationship was established between the researcher and the participants.

3.11 Summary

In this chapter the research methodology, data collection processes and data analysis strategies used in the study were addressed. The reasons for the sampling were given, and the advantages and disadvantages of the different research methods were discussed. The issue of the limitations and delimitations of the study were also addressed. The chapter concluded with the outlining of the ethical considerations and measures to ensure the validity and reliability of the research. The next chapter presents the data obtained through the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present my study outcomes. The data presented here is in the form of responses constructed from document analysis, observation and interviews during the research. In this study, the Grade 7 teachers in three rural schools in the Ncuncuni circuit were observed and interviewed. I focused on three rural schoolteachers to determine how they implemented assessment policy in Social Studies learning area. This is aligned with my research question, namely 'what are the experiences of teachers in terms of implementing assessment policy in the Social Studies learning area in the Kavango Region of Namibia'. Policy documents on assessment in the Namibian education system were analysed, teachers' assessment practices were observed, and interviews were conducted with teachers in order to cross-verify answers to the research questions.

This chapter also presents descriptions and the background of the three rural schools to illustrate the context of the schools. I provide a brief biographical summary of the three teachers and describe what the classrooms look like in each of the schools. Lastly, I present the findings, which I have analysed according to themes that emerged after the coding and categorising of the data was complete. At the end of each theme I summarise the nuances and similarities. In line with the ethical considerations, I use codes in place of the names of the participants and schools. The teachers in the one-on-one interviews are referred to as Teacher 1, 2 and 3, while the schools are referred to as School A, B and C respectively. These categories were further divided into smaller sub-categories to allow for further clarification.

4.2 Milieu of schools

The study was conducted at three different schools in Ncuncuni circuit in the Kavango Educational Region of Namibia. As stated in Chapter 1, the main aim of the study was to investigate primary school teachers' experiences of implementing the assessment policy in Social Studies. In order to understand the context in which the teachers were located, I provide a short background description of each school.

School A is a rural school situated 20 kilometres south of Rundu, which is the capital city of the Kavango Region of Namibia. The school comprises eight classrooms and two storerooms. One of the storerooms is used as the principal's office. The school is well fenced and has two pit latrines used by the male and female teachers, while the learners go into the bush to relieve themselves. The population around the school are predominately Rukwangali-and Rumanyo-speaking people. School A consists of 272 learners and 10 teachers who are responsible for Grades 1 to 7, including the principal and heads of department for the lower primary section. The school has one cleaner and one secretary. Most of these teachers commute from Rundu to the school due to a lack of accommodation for teachers closer to the school. School A is one of the schools built in the 1970s by the apartheid government to cater for the community of Mavandje Village, and it is located next to a gravel road. The school does not have resources such as a library, computers or photocopier, and lacks teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, exercise books, posters and other stationery, etc. The teachers have to go into town or to the Circuit Office, which is approximately 20 kilometres from the school, in order to make copies. Due to the lack of teaching and learning material at School A, learners have to share one textbook during the teaching practice.

The community in which this school is situated is very poor. It is characterised by high levels of unemployment and high levels of illiteracy. This community depends on subsistence farming and hand-outs from the government's drought relief programme while some members receive government grants. People make a living through various agricultural activities. The community gets water from the boreholes provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development. Most of the children are orphans or vulnerable children. The learners walk long distances from the surrounding villages to come to school. Absenteeism at the school is high because some parents prevent their children from going to school in order to help them with ploughing the fields.

School B is situated 40 kilometres from Rundu and most of the teachers commute to school from the town. The school was established as a community school by the Roman Catholic Church in 1963, with two huts as classrooms. Since the establishment of the school it has gone through a significant transformation, and currently consists of 21 teachers, including the principal, and three heads of department. The school has two school secretaries, a cleaner and 637 learners. The classrooms are overcrowded to the extent that one of the Grade 8 classes has to be taught in a

tent, while the Grade 6 learners are in traditional huts. The distance between School A and School B is approximately 15 kilometres. Most of the learners who have completed Grade 7 at School A move to School B to continue with Grade 8 to 10. The learners who complete Grade 10 at this school go to senior secondary schools in town or inland. Following Grade 12, the learners leave for university or college. Learners walk long distances and often arrive at school late. The principal picks up some learners when he comes to school every morning, which often causes him to arrive at school late as well. As with School A, absenteeism here is frequent because some learners are forced by their parents to plough the fields, while other learners are required to look after livestock. Early marriages and teenage pregnancies are also prevalent due to the lack of education and traditional beliefs. The children sometimes are forced into marriage by their parents.

The community is primarily engaged in subsistence farming and some have livestock such as cattle and goats. Many of the family breadwinners are pensioners. The community also experiences poverty, unemployment and a high rate of illiteracy. There is poor sanitation and only a small health centre that caters for approximately 2 000 people. The community live in traditional huts or shacks, which are built with grass and trees, while some have sink-roofed houses with wall of sand or mud. These poor living conditions force the youth to move to the township in search of low-paid jobs to help their families.

School C is approximately 50 kilometres from Rundu. It is surrounded by a fence and is built next to the clinic and opposite the circuit office of education and the office of the Regional Councillor of the Rundu Rural West Constituency. School C is a missionary school that was established by Father Franz Max with 12 learners in 1936. It has nine staff members, including the principal, heads of department and a school secretary, and they are responsible for 201 learners from Grades 1 to 7. The school has never been renovated since its construction. According to the principal, "the school needs a serious and urgent renovation as it is not safe and in good condition for both teachers and learners". The school is situated alongside the gravel road that leads to Matumbo Ribebe Senior Secondary School. The school has one computer that is used by the school secretary. It has no library or photocopier and lacks teaching and learning materials such as stationery, textbooks, exercise books, etc. It has eight classrooms and two storerooms that are used as offices for the principal and heads of department. The school makes use of the computer and photocopy machines of the circuit office and the Regional Councillor's

office. Most of the teachers are not computer literate. Absenteeism is high because learners are forced to plough fields, while other children have to look after livestock. These often are contributing factors to the high dropout rate at this school. Early marriages and teenage pregnancies are also prevalent at this school.

The community depends on subsistence farming, while some keep cattle and goats. Many in the community are also dependent on government grants and relief programmes during the drought period. This community has a high rate of illiteracy and most of the breadwinners are pensioners. Despite the challenges of this community, some parents are passionate and involved in the education of their children. The teachers have built their own accommodation site with shacks due to the distance they have to travel from Rundu to the school.

The discussion above is crucial to understanding the context of the schools. All three schools experience similar challenges, which include the lack of teaching and learning materials. The schools' infrastructure is all-old. All three schools have few resources. They all experience challenges of school dropout, learners coming late and absenteeism. Many of the people live in poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. They depend mainly on subsistence farming and the herding of cattle and goats. Despite these conditions, a strong community spirit seemed to prevail in each of the schools. The schools differed mainly in terms of staffing and number of learners. Schools A and C had one school secretary each, while School B had two. Schools A and C had fewer learners than School B. Schools A and C had one head of department each, while School B had three heads of department. In the next section I shall provide the biographical information of the teachers and discuss the classroom space in the different school contexts.

4.3 Biographical information of teachers and a look at their classrooms

In this section I provide a brief biographical description of the respondents to enable the reader to have a sense of who the teachers are in their unique environments. Teacher 1 in school A was a young male teacher who speaks Silozi. He completed Grade 12 and then proceeded to college and obtained a Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD), specialising in Social Studies for Grades 5 to 7. He had three years of teaching experience in assessment implementation and had taught for three years at the same school. He was an energetic teacher and coordinated the school's sport activities. During my school visit I observed him teaching the Grade 7 learners

Social Studies. There were forty learners in his class. During his presentation, some of the learners participated actively while others did not.

His classroom had a door and four windows. There were chairs, desks and a table, as well as a chalkboard. The learners sat on chairs at their desks facing the teacher. The table was located in front of the class and was used by the teacher. The teacher used the chalkboard to explain concepts and wrote down the activities for the learners to complete. There was little space for the teacher to move around to assist the learners during the teaching and learning process.

Teacher 2 in school B was a female teacher whose home language was Rumanyo. She specialised in Social Studies and had fourteen years of experience in the teaching and assessment of Social Studies. She also completed a three-year in-service training programme run by the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture for a Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD) at the Rundu Teachers Resource Centre (RTRC). She had a grade 12 certificate that allowed her to do BETD in-service and obtain a teaching diploma. Teacher 2 was responsible for Grade 7 learners. Her classroom had five windows, desks, chairs, a table and a chalkboard. It did not have space for the teacher to move around to assist learners during the lesson presentation.

During my classroom observation she presented her lessons to the Grade 7 learners in a big class of fifty learners. Despite the large class and limited space, her lesson presentation was fascinating and the learners were actively engaged and expressed their opinions on the topic. These learners participated in the discussion and completed the classroom activities.

Teacher 3 taught at School C. He was a male teacher who spoke Thimbukushu as his home language. He specialised in languages at Rundu College of Education (RCE), where he obtained a Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD). He had ten years of teaching experience, of which two years been spent teaching languages and eight teaching Social Studies.

There were 45 learners in his class and he had very little space to navigate around the classroom and pay attention to all learners. The classroom had five windows, desks, chairs, a table and a chalkboard. During his lesson presentation the learners were not actively engaged. This forced him to explain some of the concepts in Rumanyo (their vernacular language), which then continued for most of the lessons. He appeared to be more comfortable teaching in the vernacular language.

All three teachers interviewed had secondary education qualifications. Teachers 1 and 2 were trained to teach Grade 7 Social Studies, while Teacher 3 was a trained language teacher. Teachers 1 and 2 completed their studies full time, obtaining the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) in teaching, while Teacher 2 did an in-service training programme of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture for a Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD). Teacher 1 had taught for three years, but his teaching style did not encourage learners to participate in his class presentation. Teacher 2 had taught for fourteen years and the learners enjoyed her lesson presentation. Teacher 3 had taught languages for two years languages and Social Studies for eight years. His teaching style did not motivate the learners' to participate in the class presentation.

4.4 Teachers' assessment practices in teaching

Assessment in Social Studies refers to the process of decision making by the teacher about the performance of the learners with a view to improving teaching and learning practices. As stated in section (2.2), teachers are expected to use assessment as an instrument to develop a reliable picture of each learner's progress. I will start by presenting the captured data from the document analysis, observations and interviews conducted with the teachers.

4.4.1 Document analyses

During the document analyses, the following documents were examined: *Towards Improving Continuous Assessment in Schools* (MBEC, 1999), *Social Studies Syllabus Grades 5-7* (MoE, 2007), *Continuous Assessment Manual for Grades 5-7* (MoE, 2008) and *National Subject Policy Guide for Social Studies Grade 5-7* (MoE, 2009). These were the policy documents and guides that provide information for teachers on how to implement and carry out assessment policy in the Social Studies learning area. I also checked the teachers' lesson plans, the learners' workbooks and the different textbooks teachers were using in the teaching-learning process. During and after the instruction the teachers were expected to provide topic tasks, topic tests and practical investigations, as activities for the learners in the implementation of assessment policy in teaching practice (see section, 2.3). The policy also expects teachers, to make the aims of assessment clear to the learners, to identify and gather information about the learners' achievements and progress, to record learners' assessment marks and to assess learners by using different assessment strategies and ensure that assessment is authentic, valid and fair, as well as bias-free (MoE, 2010:37). During the document analysis in three schools I noted the following:

45

Teacher 1 at School A used the prescribed syllabus during his lesson preparation. I noted, however, when checking the exercise books of the learners that the teacher had not provided the learners with tasks such as topic tasks, topic tests and practical investigation for assessment purposes in 2014. There also were no record sheets for 2014 on which the teacher had recorded the continuous assessment marks. The teacher only provided old record sheets for 2013 to show me how he usually recorded the learners' results. He stressed that the learners with higher continuous assessment marks had a better chance to pass the examination when grades were combined compared to those learners who got low marks in continuous assessment. Therefore, he always encouraged learners to work hard in their continuous assessment projects.

At School B, the same documents mentioned above were examined. The teacher recorded activities such as topic tasks, topic tests, assignments and practical investigations for 2014. When I checked the learners' exercise books I found the necessary activities given to them for assessment purposes. Teacher 2 also had mark sheets for 2014 on which she had recorded the marks of all the learners.

In the document analysis at School C, the above-mentioned documents were also examined; however, the teacher did not give topic tasks, topic tests and practical investigation to the learners for assessment purposes. The learners did not have exercise books or test books and no record sheets with the learners' marks were available for 2014. The learners did not have enough textbooks and they struggled to share these books during the classroom activities.

All three schools had the required policy documents for Social Studies. However, the schools lacked textbooks and exercise books, as well as other teaching support materials such as posters, maps, etc. Teachers 1 and 3 had no record sheets and did not provide tasks to the learners during the instruction, whereas Teacher 2 provided completed record sheet with recorded marks as well as activities for assessment purposes.

4.4.2 Classroom observations

I observed that Teacher 1 at School A did not provide tasks that would assess the learners in the class or at home. The teacher would introduce the topic, for example Early World Civilization, to the learners. He wrote the topic on the chalkboard and assessed the learners' pre-knowledge of the topic. He then presented different features of world civilization such as forms of government, religion, writing arts and the work of the Egyptians. The learners were then divided into four

groups and each group was allocated one feature of world civilization. During the lesson the learners were instructed to select a learner within their groups who would report back after the group discussion. The learners were then asked to summarise the information from their textbooks. They were not properly instructed in what or how to complete the task. The groups were unable to complete the task due to insufficient time. The teacher did not prepare the learners well for the assessment tasks. He also did not consolidate what the learners had learned to ascertain whether they had understood the lesson objectives and the consequent presentation. Homework was not provided to the learners at the end of the lesson for assessment purposes.

At School B the teacher provided her lesson plans for the day in which she outlined the goals/objectives for her lessons. She used the introduction well to arouse the interest of the learners and asked questions about previous work, which was part of the assessment. The teacher presented her lessons by explaining the activities to the learners. The learners were actively encouraged to participate in the lesson presentation. The assessment was done by giving class activities to the learners. The teacher explained what was expected from the learners when doing the tasks. The learners were given five minutes to do the class tasks. After the tasks were completed, the teacher collected the exercise books to be marked in class. Learners were given immediate feedback, which served as a motivation. The teacher announced the results of each learner in the class and she wrote the correct answers on the chalkboard for the learners to copy in their workbooks. The teacher consolidated the lesson presentation by asking questions based on the work to assess the learners' understanding. She then provided a summary and gave homework at the end of the lesson. The assessment objectives, such as knowledge with understanding, handling information, application of knowledge and solving problems, as well as developing skills, were applied in her lesson presentation. Teacher 2 was able to integrate assessment in the teaching/learning processes.

At School C, Teacher 3 did not provide lesson plans for his lesson presentations. He introduced the lesson topic to the learners by asking them questions based on the previous lesson. Teacher 3 presented the same topic (Early World Civilization) two weeks after I observed it at School A. The teacher presented the lesson topic by explaining it to the learners. The teacher then assessed the learners' understanding of the topic through verbal questions. Only a few learners answered the questions. The teacher gave an opportunity for the learners to ask questions but none of them asked any questions. The teacher started to explain some concepts in the vernacular language and

continued in this manner for almost the rest of the period. He did not give formal written assessment tasks to determine the learners' understanding of the lesson or to consolidate what was taught. No homework was given either.

Teachers 1 and 3 did not have lesson plans while Teacher 2 had lesson plans for every lesson. Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 had no record sheets, nor was there evidence of any tasks, tests and practical investigations to assess the learners. There also were no activities or tests in the learners' exercise books. Teacher 2 provided tasks to the learners and the marks were recorded on record sheets. All the teachers in the study introduced their topics with the aim to arouse the interest of the learners before the actual teaching proceeded. Teacher 1 could not finish his lesson presentation in time. Teachers 1 and 2 gave class activities, while Teacher 3 did not. Teacher 2 provided learners with homework, while Teachers 1 and 3 did not. Teachers 1 and 3 encouraged the learners to participate in their lesson presentation, although not all the learners did. The learners in the classes of Teacher 2 participated very well.

4.4.3 Interviews

The teachers were asked to respond to questions on how their assessments strategies were being implemented in the teaching process. The teachers responded in various ways:

Teacher 1 noted:

> I assess my learners using the two purposes of assessment, namely summative and formative assessments. Summative assessment is the assessment that I use to assess learners at the end of the learning programme, semester or at the end of the year. Learners write a test/examination and the obtained marks will determine whether a learner should be promoted to the next grade or not. This also shows the progress, performance and the achievements of a learner in a particular topic or theme. Formative assessment is the assessments in which I assess learners' work, such as topic tasks, topic tests and projects, as well as investigative activities that are given to the learners on a daily basis or continuously and that that need to be done in the classroom for assessments purposes. These are some of the activities that I normally provide to the learners during the instruction and these activities will be marked, and provide the grades that learners deserve. This is also the time I evaluate the work of the learners to ascertain the achievement of their learning outcomes. I have to decide what learning activities I should give learners based on the objectives in the syllabus for them to achieve the basic competencies.

Teacher 2 remarked:

> I assess my learners in teaching by giving them, activities to do in the classroom such as topic tests, topic tasks, exercises, worksheets and practical investigation. These

activities are outlined in the worksheet for me to determine their performance, whether they understand what I teach them or not. This is also to observe and ascertain whether they are paying attention during the instructions. These assessments help me to decide whether I can re-teach the lesson or just correct the misunderstandings of all the learners or only the few who might not understand the work given to them. As a result, I use homework or class activities as a formative continuous assessment to evaluate my learners' performance. This gives me a clear picture of the achievement and progress of my learners in the course of the term or year. For me to improve my teaching practices, I have to identify challenges experienced by my learners during my instruction and solve them.

Teacher 3 responded in the following way:

I assess my learners using different types of assessments such as informal and formal assessment. Informal assessments normally are done during the instruction and learners are given class activities that need to be completed in the classroom or at home. I use this technique to gather information about the learners' performance during my instruction. Informal assessments are usually not for grading purposes, they only show how the learners are progressing in certain aspects during teaching practices. Formal assessments are the way of gathering information from the learners considering methods that match the basic competencies in the syllabus. Formal assessments normally are graded and recoded on the record sheet. These assessments are done in a situation set up by the teacher for the purpose of assessing learners' activities. This is where I give a test or examination to the learners and marks are recorded for assessments purposes. Assessing the learners in different domains helped me to identify the challenges learners experience in my teaching practices. Therefore there is a need to address these challenges as soon as they arise to improve my teaching practices.

All three teachers discussed the relevant assessment methods and purposes for the effective implementation of assessment policy in their teaching practices. They were all aware of the fact that they needed to use different methods in assessment policy implementation, but not all of them applied it.

During the interviews, the teachers also were asked several questions on how their assessment strategies influenced and determined the learners' grades. The teachers had the following opinions:

Teacher 1 argued:

I used different strategies that influenced and determined the grades of the learners in my teaching practice. I assessed them on different tasks, such as class activities, which they do in groups. Actually it is not only in formative assessment where grades are determined, but together with summative assessment as well, which I provide to them at the end of the term or year. This implies that grades are gathered from different tasks and tests or examinations. The marks are combined and calculated at

the end of the term to determine their grades. These marks will determine whether a learner is to be promoted or not. If a learner scores, for example, an E symbol, it is a reflection that a learner did not master the basic competencies, because the learners' levels of achievement in relation to the basic competencies in the subject syllabus should be from letter A to E, where A is the highest and E the is lowest grade.

Teacher 2 observed:

My experience shows that, when I assess my learners, some of them get higher marks in continuous assessment activities than in examinations or vice versa. Some learners are often lazy to do the continuous assessment tasks, but they may score exceptionally well in an examination. In other words, they will get higher marks in the examination compared to their continuous assessment (CA, henceforth) activity marks and when you combine the marks that learner will pass. The way the assessment strategies determine and influence the grades of learners depends from on how the teacher is prepared to integrate continuous assessment in teaching. During this time I give them more activities that they need to do and select the best ones that I have to record. This is a lot of work that need to be done; if the teacher is not well prepared it might be difficult to provide better grades to the learners. Sometimes if the teacher is not well equipped with subject content/knowledge he/she is likely to provide inaccurate assessment marks. This shows the competence of the teachers in a particular subject they teach and how good they can integrate the assessment activities in their teaching practices.

Teacher 3 remarked:

I regard the assessment strategy as one of the important aspects that enhance teaching and it can contribute to better grades. I give assessment activities based on the level of the learners' understanding. For instance, in Grade 7 I assess learners based on their knowledge, skills and understanding. Therefore, after assessing them I check whether they have mastered the learning skills or basic competences during the teaching process. I also give them more tasks during the class and after the class for them to do at home, because these help them to obtain better grades in assessment. In other words, when learners are promoted to the next level it means that they understand or have mastered what you taught them in the previous grade and this contributes to better marks in the examination.

The teachers indicated that different assessment strategies influence the grades of learners when they have numerous tasks to do and they then choose the best activities to be recorded. This influences the marks of the learners because teachers make sure to record the best results.

On the question of how to integrate assessment activities into teaching practices, the teachers stated the following:

Teacher 1 noted:

50

I incorporate CA activities during my instruction by giving the learners tasks to do in the classroom. For example, I am teaching Social Studies and Social Studies are an integral subject, so I provide the tasks to the learners that are outlined in the syllabus and assessment manual. These activities are marked by the learners themselves. They exchange their exercise books and give grades to each other, while I write the correct answers on the chalkboard. This motivates the learners to take ownership of their learning practices.

Teacher 2 remarked:

Oh...yes, I integrate continuous assessment activities during my instruction. I normally prepare the activities, which learners need to do in the class during my lesson preparation, and when I come to the class I just implement what I had planned in the lesson for that specific topic. The planned activities will be done in the class and later I collect their exercise book for marking. These marks will be recorded in the record sheet for assessment purposes.

Teacher 3 noted:

Oh yes … I do integrate the continuous assessment tasks in my teaching practices … let's talk about assessing learners through the test; it's of high quality to assess learners in every topic, because at the end of the day these learners should know everything that you teach them. Learners will be given a test to write in the class and I will collect their test books for marking purposes.

The teachers indicated that they incorporated continuous assessment activities in their teaching practices. They provided the activities to the learners during their instruction to enhance the ability of learners to understand the work they are doing. These tasks are integrated into the teaching practices to make sure that the teachers follow the requirement in the syllabus.

When asked if they had any suggestions on how best to implement/practise assessment policy in teaching, they said the following:

Teacher 1 noted:

I think regular calling of workshops will definitely improve the implementation of assessment policy in the teaching practices, because when teachers gather together they share their views and challenges faced at their respective schools. This will help us who are new in the teaching profession. Therefore, we still need some scaffolding from the veteran teachers to assist us in how we best can implement assessment policy in teaching practices. In my point of view, the workshops that we attended with hand-outs received in relation to assessment policy did much to improve my assessment practices. I also have made some revisions and compared the old assessment manual with the new one.

Teacher 2 observed:

Yes, teachers have different understandings; I believe that teaching is a calling; I cannot take teaching as an opportunity. Therefore, I should take it as a profession and

51

love learners as much as I love our work. I do not think it will be a problem if we have to assess our learners according to their performance and competence, and not to assess them based on our imagination. Therefore we have to assess learners according to what they know and do, which is what the policy is asking us to do.

Teacher 3 remarked:

Once we have a better understanding of the policies, we will be able to interpret them into teaching practices. I suggest that if teachers provide more work for the learners and select the best ones for assessment purposes we will improve assessment practices in schools. We also need more workshops to be arranged for us to learn from other experienced teachers how they implement the policy and translate it into teaching practices.

All the teachers were of the opinion that schools should be provided with teaching support materials. According to the participants, more workshops should be arranged where teachers could come together and share their experiences in implementing assessment policy. Teacher 2 argued that teachers should embrace teaching as a profession and develop an appreciation for their learners as well as a love for their work. Teacher 3 expected teachers to provide more work for learners and select the best ones for assessment purposes.

Interesting similarities and differences emerged from the data. The teachers in all three schools were in possession of the assessment policy documents pertaining to Social Studies. There was a shortage of teaching/learning support materials in all the schools. In Schools A and C, no completed work was found in the learners' exercise books. The teachers had no continuous assessment record sheets. Teacher 2 gave tasks and different activities to the learners to complete in their workbooks for assessment purposes, and the marks were recorded as required. All the teachers introduced their topics from the known to unknown. Teachers 1 and 3 did not provide activities to the learners during their lesson presentations, and did not record the learners' marks on the record sheets, while Teacher 2 provided the learners with the tasks as well as recording the grades on the record sheets.

All the teachers indicated that they assessed the learners in different ways. Teacher 1 stated that he used both formative and summative assessments when assessing the learners. He evaluated himself while teaching different topics in order to determine whether the activities given to the learners were done correctly. He further checked whether the learners had achieved the basic competencies. Teacher 2 assessed her learners by giving them activities. This helped her to

decide whether she needed to repeat lessons. Teacher 3 used informal and formal methods by providing different activities for the learners to do in the class as well as giving them tests, especially at the end of the topic or the theme. The teachers assessed the learners to enhance their learning habits, to check where they have achieved the basic competencies and to obtain a better understanding for future planning. All the teachers, however, interpreted and implemented the assessment policy in different ways. The data suggests that the teachers also assessed differently. Most of the learners in all three classes did not participate in the lessons. Most of the teachers did not adhere to the policy prescriptions. The learners in all three schools faced more or less the same challenges inside and outside of the school. In the next section I will discuss the challenges that teachers experience in implementing the assessment policy.

4.5 Challenges teachers experience in implementing assessment policy

In my document analysis in Schools A and B I found that learners had to share textbooks during the lesson presentation. Learners had to sit in groups when doing activities from these textbooks. The teachers found it difficult to provide individual attention to all the learners in large classes. The most common challenge of large classes was that of a lack of space for the teacher to move between desks. This was evident especially at school B, where learners were taught in tents and huts. Time constraints prevented most of the teachers from achieving their intended outcomes and covering all the required themes as set out in the policy. Learners' absenteeism also affected the smooth running of teaching and assessment practices. It was not easy for teachers to assess learners who were absent or to repeat what had already been taught. These factors also contributed to learners falling behind with their work. Some learners struggled with their schoolwork, which negatively affected their accumulated assessment marks for the year. The participants all complained about the extra administrative tasks that increased their workloads.

When asked about the challenges that teachers experience in implementing assessment policy in teaching and how it affects their performance as teachers, they shared the following views:

Teacher 1 noted:

I experience a shortage of teaching support materials. This affects my performance as a teacher because learners become disengaged completely in the absence of teaching materials. However, during the instruction I have to try to make sure that learners are given enough information on the different topics. The challenges are that learners are expected to be exposed to different source of information, but our school does not have library, computers or internet and this causes problems and has a serious effect when I

implement this assessment policy in teaching. Sometimes the learners show unwillingness to do the assessment activities and it is not easy to force them to do the work without proper punishment which can make them accountable to their work. This might not be their problem, however, but because of the environment in which they find themselves. However, this affects the teaching process where learners should learn in order to achieve the basic competencies. This assessment policy also has it is challenges because it increases our workload due to many activities that we have to do prepare.

Teacher 2 expressed the following:

The implementation of assessment policy in teaching is challenging because some learners are very lazy to do the continuous assessment tasks. When you give them tasks to do they will not be willing to do them and this affects them a lot because they will not have marks for assessment practices. The most difficult challenge that I experience is when learners are not willing to do their continuous assessment work. These could be attributable to a lack of role models in the community, or the school environment might not be conducive for them, although as a teacher I try to create favourable conditions for my learners. Another factor might be the lack of punishment from us as teachers, because we are not allowed to punish learners if they did not do homework or any activities, since there is no corporal punishment. Therefore, it becomes a norm for learners not to do any tasks because they know nothing will happen to them. The other challenge is too much work that needs to be done when you implement this policy in teaching practices. For example, you need to observe, give practical activities, mark and record learners' work and at the same time you have to teach. These activities need to be finished at least by the end of August of each year.

Teacher 3 argued:

The challenge we experience here is absenteeism. There are learners who come to school only a few days in a week. How do you assess learners who are always at home? This affects us as teachers, because at the end of the day these learners will fail automatically at the end of the year. These learners will not be able to master skills or basic competencies. Most of the people are still living a primitive lifestyle here. The absenteeism sometimes can be attributed to parents who force the children to marry early, especially girls, and boys are forced to plough the fields, while some have to look after the livestock. The assessment policy does not take all of this into consideration. These traditional norms and customs mean that the value of education is not recognised by some parents. Generally, some learners stay away from school due to fear of the challenging work at school. These eventually drop out of school completely. As teachers we also have a lot to do in order to implement this policy therefore it has increased our workload and we have to finish the syllabus by the end of August.

The teachers expressed their concerns about the challenges of the practical implementation of the assessment policy. They suggested that their increased workload placed extra pressure on them to address all the policy requirements. The teachers were rushed to complete the syllabus without considering the quality of work they were providing. They all expressed concern about the attitude of learners to their schoolwork.

The participants were also asked how they thought they could improve their assessment practices in the teaching process.

Teacher 1 explained the process in the following way:

> This process of assessment can be improved once teachers are provided with enough teaching resources. For example, if a teacher gives tasks, such as those learners should locate Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries on the map, how will they do the activities without an SADC map? Thus, we need enough teaching support materials, because without relevant support materials it is quite difficult to implement assessment policy in teaching. I believe that if all the resources were available at the school it would be easy to implement the assessment as expected. Since we are teaching in the bush, we need a library with books and computers and for our learners to be exposed to the new technology similar to those in the townships. I think regular workshops will improve the implementation of assessment in teaching. In workshops, participants share their views and challenges faced in their respective schools. This will help novice teachers in the profession to learn from the experienced teachers how best to implement continuous assessment in teaching. This is to testify that, although we are receiving training and workshops, there still is a need for more workshops to be organised for the successful implementation of assessment policy.

Teacher 2 noted:

> Continuous assessment can be improved if challenges such as the shortage of textbooks and overcrowded classrooms, to mention but a few, can be addressed. It can improve what the teachers do during the assessment implementation practices. Teachers should assess their learners by giving them suitable tasks from the syllabus, because we cannot assess activities without achieving the basic competencies. Thus, the way teachers assess learners should comply with the assessment policy requirements and teachers should avoid making decisions based on what they assume will be best. These will assist us to improve continuous assessment in teaching practices. In terms of the policy, it should consider the context of the school and the environment in which the school is located. One cannot expect 100% performance from a school situated in the bush without any resources.

Teacher 3 remarked:

> The assessment can be improved if all of us as teachers are committed in doing our work as expected. I suggest that teachers should provide four to five tasks to the learners for the purpose of assessment and then select the best two to be recorded for the continuous assessment results. Sometimes teachers give only three tasks and two tests in a term, which is not enough to assess learners effectively. It therefore is necessary to do more than the policy manual requires to help learners in improving the continuous assessment results and to prepare them properly for the next grade. So, if we are to do this then our learners will be assessed effectively and efficiently. Therefore, I am 100% sure that it will help us to improve the understanding of our learners, as they are going to the next grades, at the same time improve assessment practices in teaching.

According to the policy, schools are expected to provide teaching/learning resources in order to help teachers in implementing assessment policy in the classroom. Some teachers did not carry out the tasks as outlined in the assessment manual. The assessment policy expected teachers, among others, to make the aims of assessment clear to the learners, to identify and gather information about the learners' achievements, to record learners' assessment marks and to assess learners by using different assessment strategies. It was expected of the teachers to simply be creative during their implementation of the assessment policy. In the next section I will discuss capacity building of teachers.

4.6 Capacity of teachers to implement assessment policy

The empowerment of teachers in terms of the implementation of assessment policy in teaching is necessary for them to be capacitated to implement assessment policy effectively. Two sub-topics emerged in this section. These were the teachers' professional qualifications and the professional development of teachers.

4.6.1 Professional qualifications

All three teachers in the study were professionally trained after Grade 12 at institutions of higher education in Namibia. Teachers 1 and 3 studied at Rundu College of Education (RCE), where they obtained a Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD). Teacher 2 studied through an in-service training programme of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, where she obtained a Basic Education Teacher Diploma in teaching Social Studies.

4.6.2 Professional development of teachers

During the interviews the teachers revealed that they received workshops and training through cascade model from the Ministry of Education organised by the subject advisor. Teacher 1 noted the following: "Yes, I received training and workshops through cascade model. This is done to empower me as a teacher with understanding of assessment practices and equip me with relevant skills and knowledge to provide quality teaching to the learners."

Teacher 2 reported: "Yes, I attended various workshops and training through cascade model organised by the subject advisor. This took place at various venues, including Shamby Mission, Sarusungu Lodge and Greenhouse Lodge, and was aimed at equipping us with relevant skills, knowledge and understanding in order to improve our teaching practices."

Teachers 3 said: "Oh, yes, I attended training and workshops which are provided to us by the facilitators organised by subject advisor. These workshops equipped me with different strategies on how to interpret, calculate and record the marks of the continuous assessment on the record sheets. Besides workshops and training I also received some materials and other relevant documents that contain valuable information about the Social Studies learning area."

The participants were also asked whether they received support from the subject advisor/advisory teacher (SA/AT) to implement the assessment policy successfully. The subject advisor in the Namibian context is the person who is employed by the Ministry of Education 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, amongst others, to ensure quality education through the rendering of liaison services and subject guidance (MEC, 2009:8). He or she is responsible to visit schools in the region to survey the challenges teachers experience in their field of specialisation. During the visits, the subject advisor attends to teachers' difficulties and advises them accordingly. In addition, he/she should arrange meetings/workshops to address the challenges faced by the subject teachers from various schools in the region. Considering the vastness of the Kavango Region and its 330 schools, the subject advisor has a group of teachers who work with her and are known as regional facilitators of Social Studies. This group consists of 15 teachers who are selected from various schools to assist her in planning for workshops and doing the presentations on different topics in workshops and training. The subject advisor (SA) and advisory teacher (AT) is the same person, they are just given different titles.

In the interviews, Teacher 1 stated the following:

> The subject advisor visits schools on a monthly or term basis to ensure the correct implementation of the assessment policy in teaching at schools. These visits provide advice and guidance to the teachers to effectively carry out the continuous assessment activities in the teaching process. All the new information we need is delivered to us as Social Studies teachers by our subject advisor.

Teacher 2 noted:

> …the subject advisor provides support to me by arranging workshops and meetings to prepare me to implement assessment policy successfully in schools. She also has an open

door policy to welcome and accommodate teachers who have difficulties concerning the Social Studies learning area. These are aimed at improving the effectiveness of and building of capacity among the teachers in their everyday teaching practices.

Teacher 3 reported:

> I am pleased with my subject advisor because she normally invites me at the beginning of each year to attend meetings with other teachers from various schools. During the training she normally distributes some teaching materials to support us in implementing assessment policy. Her office is always open to everyone and she provides constructive ideas on how best teachers can improve the learners' results.

The respondents' replies revealed that the subject advisor indeed visited their schools to offer advice and guidance. The subject advisor also organised workshops through cascade model aimed at capacitating the teachers to implement assessment strategies. According to the respondents, they always received hand-outs after these workshops.

In the interviews, all three teachers were asked on different occasions whether they received support from school principals or heads of department during the implementation of assessment. Teacher 1 noted that "the principal does check the tasks provided to the learners, whether they are in line with the policy in the continuous assessment manual. Such checks are important to ensure quality and control of the teaching/learning process".

Teacher 2 also: "The principal does class visits to observe my lesson presentation and sometimes to look at learners' work with the aim to ascertain whether the activities given to the learners are in line with the syllabus objectives and basic competencies. The principal also uses this opportunity to give direction to the teacher if needed."

Teacher 3 remarked: "The head of department or principal checks our work and that of the learners to verify correction. We also submit our continuous assessment forms to be checked whether the marks provided are correlating with the learners' work. This helps management to verify whether the information given is correctly recorded on the record sheets. Principals and heads of department do classroom observations. This is done once a term and the comments as well as the findings are discussed to improve teaching practices."

All three teachers received professional training at institutions of higher education after their grade 12 qualification. Two teachers were qualified to teach grade 7 learners. All the teachers indicated that they received training and were empowered during workshops to teach and assess in Social Studies.

4.7 Summary

The data presented in this chapter was collected through document analysis, observation and interviews. Three teachers from three schools participated in the study. Policy documents were analysed to familiarise myself with the policies prescriptions. Observations were done to assess how the three teachers implemented the assessment policy. Interviews were carried out to correlate teachers' responses to their actual practices.

All three schools experienced shortages of teaching support materials, which hampered the implementation of the assessment policy. The teachers generally did not provide assessment tasks to the learners in order to enhance their understanding of the work they had done. Some teachers did not provide record sheets as proof of their recording of learners' marks. Some teachers did not have lesson plans. A contradiction was observed between teachers' awareness of the policy prescriptions and their practices. The teachers expressed concern about the lack of teaching support materials, the large class size, learner absenteeism, learners' apparent lack of interest in doing continuous assessment tasks and insufficient time to carry out activities and perform their workload, and they were forced to complete the syllabus in a short period. Teachers acknowledged that they had received training and workshops to capacitate them in the implementation. They also agreed that principals and heads of department visited them during their instruction. Due to all the above mentioned facts I noted that some teachers are not really implementing assessment policy as expected. My next chapter will be an attempt to explain the tension between stated and enacted policy and this will be link with the literature review in answering my research question.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss and analyse the data presented in the previous chapter. The focus of the study was to investigate teachers' experiences of implementing assessment policy in Social Studies. I discuss and interpret the findings in terms of the themes that emerged from the responses of the teachers in Chapter 4 and draw on the literature study as presented in Chapter 2 to connect the data findings in the study. My initial analysis indicates a tension between stated and enacted policy. In this chapter I use the thematic categories, which include the context of the schools, the capacity of the teachers and policy enactment to address the tension alluded.

5.2 Context

The data indicated that the teachers' implementation strategies were negatively impacted by various external and internal social and contextual school factors. It was noted, however, that the policy did not take into account how a contextual factor influences the teachers' assessment practices. Out-of-school factors included the fact that parents forced their children to marry early with the intention of passing on their responsibilities for caring (Sanzila, 2011:66-67). Absenteeism was also one of the challenges experienced by teachers and was often rooted in sociological contextual factors coupled with traditional beliefs and customs. Learners were constantly absent from school because of helping parents to work in order to amend their income. Boys had to look after livestock or work in the field, and girls stayed at home to prepare food and care for the household (Sanzila, 2011:66-67). Eimann (2002:45) corroborates how absenteeism negatively affects the implementation of assessment policy in Namibian schools because teachers are not able to complete their curriculum on time. Teachers could not attain their teaching objectives because some learners were missing classes. Kapambwe (2010:102) concurs that the absenteeism of learners poses challenges to the smooth management of learners' performance due to their lack of attendance, and this phenomenon is worse in rural schools. Absenteeism influences the teachers' assessment practices, as teachers cannot obtain any results for the learners. According to Mboweni (2014:62), poor school facilities contribute to learners' absenteeism in South African schools, particularly due to unfavourable weather conditions, as some schools have leaking roofs and no windowpanes. This affects teaching, hence the high rate of learner absenteeism on cold and wet days. It also affects assessment practices/tests because if

learners who have to sit for a test are absent that day, it wastes time and resources and makes extra work for teachers to set up special test for those learners. The lack of facilities such as toilets and cleaning running water posed a serious problem, especially for female learners and teachers when they menstruated, causing very high absenteeism of learners at this time of the month (Kandumbu, 2005:98). This affects the attainment of teaching during the implementation of assessment policies.

The in-school factors include overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching support materials and learners' lack of interest in their schoolwork. The challenges of overcrowding were evident in the teacher-learner ratio of 1: 45. In most cases, this ratio is exceeded, making it extremely difficult for teachers to implement the assessment policy. In this case, the needs of each individual learner in the overcrowded classroom are hard to fulfil (Kandumbu, 2005:100). Kapenda *et al.* (in Amutenya, 2013:32) suggests that overcrowded classrooms in Namibian schools hinder the creation of a proper teaching environment and that this results in the low academic performance of learners. This affects teaching because there is no space for teachers to navigate and assist learners. Although assessment requires teachers to engage with the learners, the teachers could not attend to all the learners and failed to provide sufficient tasks for assessment purposes. The learners sit squeezed into an environment where there is no space to do their tasks. The large size of the class, coupled with a heavy workload, affects assessment practices because it is difficult to control the learners and mark their daily activities (Mboweni, 2014:61). Teachers fail to cope with large numbers of learners and it is impossible for them to pay attention to all the learners in the classroom. As a result, slow learners always suffer because teachers have no time to spend with them (Kandumbu, 2005:100).

The lack of teaching resources also hampered the implementation of assessment in schools. Learners are not exposing to libraries, computers, etc. Amutenya (2013:31) contend that, in order to attain the desired academic gains, schools need adequate resources such as textbooks, computers and libraries to help teachers to implement assessment policy. Elkonin and Foxcroft (in Smit, 2001:77) concur that a lack of appropriate resources and teaching/study materials worsens the possibilities for sound policy implementation in the classroom. This study found that not all teachers achieved the intended outcomes of assessment practices because of a lack of appropriate teaching support materials in the schools. I contend that the teachers could not provide tasks to learners due to the lack of test and exercise books. It was also found that teachers

were still writing tests on the chalkboard, which is time consuming and physically demanding. Lingard *et al.* (2012:3) caution that policy makers neglect the issue of materials in the production of educational policy and the need for distribution of materials to poor schools. Kapambwe (2010:102), in his study of "the implementation of school-based continuous assessment" in Zambia, states that a lack of teaching support materials influences teaching practices, because teachers cannot provide tasks for their learners due to the lack of exercise books for learners to use in class. A regular supply of stationery and the provision of printing facilities that could motivate teachers to implement assessment policy were seriously lacking.

The study indicates that learners showed a lack of interest in their schoolwork. This was exacerbated by the disjunction between the beliefs, values and behavioural expectations at home and at school. Arunkumar *et al.* (1999:441) argue that learners of high dissonance are angrier and self-critical, causing lower self-esteem, less hopeful, feel less academically efficacious, and have lower grade point averages. This affects the implementation of assessment because learners are demoralised because of the lack of supportive learning materials that could arouse their interest in school. The lack of textbooks also poses serious challenges; some learners prefer to work individually, while they are forced to work in groups. Another challenge is that learners are exhausted when they arrive at school due to the long distance they have to walk from home. Sanzila (2011:24) concurs that "the walk to school is a bridge between home and formal education". This bridge is unreliable and life threatening, especial for girls who are vulnerable in society. My own observation was that languages also posed challenges to the learners, as they sometimes did not understand what the teachers were teaching them; this creates challenges when it comes to class activities that need to be assessed, and has an impact on the implementation of assessment because learners do not understand the tasks they need to learn. In the next section I discuss how teachers were capacitated to implement assessment policy in schools.

5.3 Capacity

This study has shown that all the teachers had teaching qualifications from institutions of higher education and are certified to teach Grades 5 to 7. They all obtained a Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD). The fact is that even though the teachers had qualifications, these qualifications were not helpful to them in implementing this new form of assessment. Kandumbu (2005:87) argues that teachers who were trained in the BETD programme lack subject knowledge, skills and understanding. This programme did not concentrate on the subject content,

but only on teaching methodology. The data indicate that the participants' lack of capacity to implement assessment policy has had a negative impact on their work. This constitutes a gap between the participants' knowledge of the policies and their implementation of them. Ball (in Fataar, 2010:52) argues that the implementation of policies depends on the commitment, understanding, capability, resources and cooperation of those who are involved. He further argues that these capacities may not be available through education systems, causing serious challenges when it comes to the implementation of assessment policy. My own observations suggest that the teachers had different understandings and interpretations of the process of policy implementation. Fataar (2010:49) reminds us that policy can be interpreted differently by different role players, depending on where they find themselves. The different interpretations give rise to challenges due to the fact that teachers use their own knowledge without applying what the policies mandate them to do. Smit (2001:68) argues that policy is interpreted differently due to teachers' histories and experiences with values, purposes and interests that make the arena different. In the same line, Fataar (2010:52) suggests that those responsible for implementation attach their own meanings and interpretations to policies, which often change or even subvert the policy makers' original intentions. Teachers therefore interpret and implement the policy differently in schools. Mosoge (2008:180) contends that little improvement can take place at any institution unless the employees engage in activities that assist them to acquire and apply the new knowledge, skills and attitudes required. This can reduce the tension of different interpretations and create a focal point for teachers to do what is expected from them. Mosoge argues further that training is an important instrument that holds the potential to translate progress into action. If teachers are not properly trained and empowered they will likely not translate the action into achievements. The data indicated that teachers were provided with training and workshops to implement assessment policy. The training provided to them in this case was inadequate, however, because of the education department's preferences for a cascade model. The teachers only received two- or three-day workshops, which did not help them to understand the new assessment requirements. In fact, these quick training sessions confused teachers even more. The cascade model is preferred because of its ability to reach a large number of teachers within a short space of time. It is cost effective and is used with existing teaching staff as co-trainers. Mosoge (2008:182) explains that one of the weaknesses of this model is that the facilitator may lack confidence in disseminating the information to other teachers. This reliance on the cascade model failed to equip these teachers with the skills needed to implement the assessment policy as expected. During the

implementation of outcomes-based education (OBE) in South Africa, teachers panicked and called for the changes to be postponed until teachers had received adequate training and schools had been provided with the required resources for the new curriculum (Vandeyar & Killen, 2003:119). These were stressful times for the teachers, who felt that they were ill-prepared for the new paradigm shift (Vandeyar & Killen, 2003:119).

Ball (1993:11) contends that the lack of adequate training of teachers causes significant numbers of teachers to misunderstand the fundamental key premises and methods in the implementation of assessment in schools. This renders teachers unable to implement assessment policy according to the policy prescriptions. The data indicated that teachers expressed concern about the implementation of assessment policy because it increased their workload and was time consuming. Torrance (in Van Laren & James, 2008:292) concurs that teachers expressed their resentment at the extra workload in the assessment process. This heavy workload affects teachers' implementation of assessment because they are expected to complete too many tasks on continuous assessment with the learners for proper assessment to take place. Teachers are also expected to provide authentic grades for the learners, which then could inspire learners towards further learning. These increased mandatory administrative activities suppress their teaching practices. Churchill *et al.* (1997:148) support this claim when they argue that the nature of teachers' administrative roles in schools has expanded. Teachers are now required to spend more time on administrative tasks then on their core work of teaching. They express concern that the time given to them to implement the changes was unrealistically short. Frustration with the work overload in the system led to a spike in teacher resignations (Churchill *et al.,* 1997:148). The next section will discuss the formulation of policy enactment by teachers in schools.

5.4 Policy enactment

According to Fataar (2010:52), policy formulations were seen as the responsibility of politicians and their representative institutions. However, the lack of involvement of teachers in policy formulation is one of the challenges that have weakened teachers' implementation of assessment policy in Namibian schools. Lukubwe (2006:102) argues that Namibian teachers are not provided with opportunities to participate in policy formulation, even though they are represented by unions. Hence, despite approximately 24 660 teachers in Namibia, they are represented by four union members therefore it can be argued that they are not well represented in the policy formulation process. This affects teachers' performance in the implementation of assessment

because they do not understand the process of formulation or the process of implementation. It was also noted that if teachers do not understand what is expected of them, they become less committed to participate in the assessment enactment process (Van Laren & James, 2008:292). Jansen (2002:207) contends that if those affected by its results are not involved, the legitimacy of policy will be affected. This gives rise to the challenge that if teachers are positioned as recipients and deliverers of policy without involvement, they are faced with contradictions and tensions (Kirk & Macdonald, 2001:151). Teachers who are not involved in the process of policy design will not understand the implementation process. This places teachers in a situation where they cannot cope with the complexities and demands during the policy implementation process due to the fact that they were inadequately trained to implement assessment policy in schools.

In addition, Fataar (2010:55) suggests that an understanding of the various contexts in which policy is formulated is crucial to its implementation to avoid misunderstanding of the policy. The lack of training and involvement made teachers incompetent to implement assessment policy in schools as expected (Van Laren & James, 2008:292). Ball (2012:9) agrees that the role and work of teachers are increasingly prescribed by the central government and that they were expected to implement this policy without proper preparation, this positioned teachers to operate in a specific way, because teachers are not prepared to implement this policy and caused the dissonance among them. In this regard, Carl (2005:224) reminds us that it is worthwhile to engage teachers in the discourse at their level of experience by involving them in policy formulation; this will increase ownership and assist with more effective implementation. Kirk and Macdonald (2001:151) suggest that attaching the teachers' voice in policy formulation provides a key to understanding the perennial problem of the transformation of innovative ideas from conception to implementation. Teachers should experience ownership and understanding to reconcile their own assessment capacities with improving the enactment process in schools.

The data made it clear that teachers were not involved in policy enactment; therefore they lacked the skills, knowledge and understanding to interpret policies. There also was evidence that the most common challenges arose because policies occasionally failed to connect teachers' views with the practicalities of their circumstances (Ball, 1993:11). In the next section I summarise the teachers' experiences of the implementation of assessment policy in their teaching practice.

5.4 Summary

This chapter provided a discussion and analysis of the data presented. The data indicated that teachers struggled to implement assessment policy successfully in schools. The teachers' assessment practices were affected by in-school and out-of-school social and contextual factors. The teachers were not adequately trained to implement assessment policy in schools, and they were inadequately involved in the policy enactment; therefore they lacked the skills, knowledge and understanding to interpret and implement the policy in schools as expected. The above-mentioned facts, coupled with poor school facilities, a lack of resources and internal and external factors, impeded the teachers' implementation practices. The next chapter draws conclusions and offers further recommendations for study.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, the primary aim of this study was to investigate teachers' experiences of implementing assessment policy in their teaching practice. My focal point of interest was to examine how Grade 7 Social Studies teachers in the Kavango Region of Namibia experienced the implementation of assessment policy.

In Chapter 1 I argued that certain teachers were unable to implement assessment policy in their teaching practice. The study therefore aimed to examine what led to the teachers' ineffective implementation of assessment policy in schools.

Chapter 2 outlined the various understandings of the implementation of assessment policy both globally and nationally. I drew from different theories and policies to understand the impact and complexities associated with assessment policy implementation processes in schools.

In Chapter 3 I discussed the methodological aspects underpinning the study. I adopted a qualitative research design using interpretive paradigms to capture the teachers' experiences in implementing assessment policy. The data was presented in Chapter 4 by way of summarising the main categories that emerged from the research. The data was presented in such a way that it provided an overall description of the way three Namibian teachers experienced the assessment implementation processes in their practices, the challenges they experienced and how they were capacitated to implement assessment policy in schools as expected.

Chapter 5 provided a discussion and analysis of the data that emerged from Chapter 4. The teachers were expected to use diverse teaching strategies during the implementation of assessment policy. They were then expected by the policy to gather information about the learners' performance, to make the purpose of assessment clear to learners, to assess learners using various assessment strategies, e.g. topic tasks, tests, etc., to record learners' marks and to improve their teaching practice. Teachers were also expected to ensure that assessment was authentic, valid and fair, as well as bias-free (MoE, 2010:37).

The data revealed, however, that teachers encountered numerous challenges during the implementation of assessment policy. These challenges emanated from social and contextual factors that impeded teachers' implementation of assessment policy. The challenges included in-

school factors, such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching and learning support materials, learners showing a lack of interest in doing their tasks, the heavy workload of teachers, poor school facilities, etc. Out-of-school factors included learner absenteeism due to early marriages, long walking distances, etc. One of the challenges that had an impact on the implementation of policy was teachers' lack of capacity due to inadequate training and support.

The key conclusion of the study is that the teachers were inadequately trained and prepared to meet the demand of this new assessment policy. The lack of teaching support materials and lack of teachers' involvement in policy formulation impeded the effective implementation of assessment policy in schools, and this created a huge gap between the expectations of the policy and the actual implementation. It was also noted that assessment policy can be helpful in the learning process if it is used not only to help learners but also teachers.

6.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings and interpretations of the study. Firstly, policy makers should visit schools to familiarise themselves with the policy implementation process. This will provide policy makers with information on what support the schools need.

Secondly, teachers ought to use assessment, not for recording of marks, but also to help them with their teaching practices. In this way assessment does not only become an instrument of teaching but also an instrument for teaching.

Thirdly, in order to effectively adhere to the policy prescriptions, contextual realities in rural Namibian schools should be taken into consideration. Guidance, support and infrastructure thus become very necessary to help these teachers in their assessment practices.

Fourthly, schools be providing with the necessary teaching and learning support materials for the sound implementation of assessment policies in the classrooms. This will address the shortage of resources in schools, especially schools in the rural areas.

Fifthly, the lack of capacity building and training for teachers in the assessment of Social Studies as a subject should be addressed as matter of urgency.

Finally, the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders in education should ensure that there are interventions to remedy the situation in schools to improve the quality of education in Namibia.

6.3 Summary

In conclusion, teachers' involvement in policy formulation, and adequate training and support, will reduce the frustrations experienced by teachers and lead to the proper implementation of assessment policy in schools. Uiseb (2009:45) reminds us that the core reason for any organisation to succeed in its reform initiatives is individuals who are prepared and able to translate its purpose into reality. In schools, teachers are the key implementers of any reform and practice that has an impact on the teaching process (Uiseb, 2009:45). The implementation of assessment policy would not be effective and successful if teachers encounter challenges that undermine successful implementation. The study has shown that social, contextual and capacitation factors have a negative influence on teachers' assessment implementation strategies. If teachers received sound professional support in terms of training, resources and co-operation among stakeholders in the education arena, the issue of the implementation of assessment policy in schools would be addressed effectively and efficiently. If teachers are involved in curriculum formulation stage, they will be able to own the programme and implement it as expected. The imposed curriculum will always frustrate teachers to the extent that they will fail to execute it as expected. In-service training should be offered on regular basis to ensure the effective implementation of assessment policy. In-service training should be longer than a week because the current practices of one week or less than a week workshop is not effective.

REFERENCE LIST

Adebowale, O.F. & Alao, K.A. 2008. Continuous assessment policy implementation in selected local, government areas of Ondo state (Nigeria): Implications for a successful implementation of the UBE program. *KEDI Journal of Education Policy,* 5(1):1739-4341.

Amutenya, S. 2013. Identifying social and environmental factors that shape the achievement levels of grade 12 learners from two rural schools in the Oshikoto region of Namibia. Unpublished dissertation. Bellville: University of the Western Cape.

Arunkumar, R., Midgley, C. & Urdan, T. 1999. Perceiving high or low home-school dissonance: Longitudinal effects on adolescent emotional and academic well-being. *Journal of Research on Adolescence,* 9(4):44-466.

Ball, S.J. 1993. What is policy? Texts, trajectories and toolboxes: *The Australian Journal of Educational Studies,* 13(2):10-17.

Beets, P. 2012. An analysis of education assessment policies in South Africa after 1994. *Junior Secondary Science,* 33(1):5-19.

Black, P. & Wiliam, D. 1998. Assessment and classroom learning: *Assessment in Education. Principles, Policy & Practice,* 5(1):7-74.

Broadfoot, P. & Black, P. 2004. Redefining assessment: The first ten years of assessment in education: *Assessment in Education. Principles, Policy and Practice,* 11(1):7-26.

Carl, A. 2005. The "voice of the teacher" in curriculum development: A voice crying in the wilderness. *Southern African Journal of Education,* 25(4):223-228.

Chisholm, L. & Leyendecker, R. 2008. Curriculum reform in post-1990s Sub-Sahara Africa. *International Journal of Education Development,* 28(2):195-2005.

Cho, J. & Trent, A. 2011. Qualitative Research: *Validity in qualitative research revisited,* 6(3):319-340.

Chulu, B.W. 2013. Institutionalisation of assessment capacity in developing nations: The case of Malawi. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice,* 20(4):407-423.

Churchill, R., Williamson, J. & Grady, N. 1997. Educational change and the new realities of teachers' work: *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education,* 25(2):141-158.

Clarke, M. 2012. What matters most for student assessment systems: A framework paper. *SABER-Student assessment working paper No. 1.* Washington DC: World Bank Press.

Cohen, C. 1994. *Administering education in Namibia: The Colonial Period to the Present.* Windhoek: Namibia Scientific Society.

Cohen, L., Manion, L & Morrison, K. 2007. *Research Methods in Education* (6th ed.). London: Routledge.

Cooper, D. & Schindler, P.S. 2003. *Business Research Methods* (8th ed.). New Delhi: McGraw Hill.

Dahlstrom, L. 1995. Teacher education for independent Namibia: From the liberation struggle to national agenda. *Journal of Education for Teaching International Research and Pedagogy,* 21(3):273-288.

Dimitriadis, G. & Kamberelis, G. 2006. *Theory for education.* London: Routledge.

Du Plooy, L.L. 2010. An ethnographic study of the learning practices of Grade 6 students in an urban township school in Western Cape: A sociological perspective. Unpublished master's thesis. Bellville: University of the Western Cape.

Dufresne, R.J. & Gerace, W.J. 2004. Assessing-to-learn. *Formative Assessment in Physics Instruction,* 42(2):428-433.

Eimann, A.M. 2002. The implementation of continuous assessment in Social Studies Grade 6-7 in the Windhoek education region: Unpublished master's thesis. Windhoek: University of Namibia.

Fataar, A. 2010. *Education Policy Development in South Africa's Democratic Transition¸ 1994-1997.* Stellenbosch: Sun Media.

Gipps, V.C. 1995. *Beyond testing: Towards a theory of educational assessment.* Washington DC: The Falmer Press.

Graziano, A.M. & Raulin, M.L. 2010. Research methods: *A process of inquiry* (7th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Greeff, M. 2011. Information collection: Interview, in De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouche, C.B. & Delport C.S.L. (eds). *Research at grassroots: For the social sciences and human service professions* (4th ed.). Pretoria: Van Schaik. 341-375.

Harden, R.M. & Crosby, J. 2000. The good teacher is more than a lecturer–the twelve roles of the teacher. *Medical Teacher,* 22(4):334-347.

Hayward, L. & Hedge, N. 2010. Travelling towards change in assessment. *Research in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice,* 12(1):55-75.

Hilya, M. 2007. Investigating the implementation of continuous assessment by Grade 7 social studies teachers in the Oshana education region: Unpublished master's thesis. Grahamstown: Rhodes University.

Iipinge, S.M. & Kasanda, C.D. 2013. Challenges associated with curriculum alignment, change and assessment reforms in Namibia. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice,* 20(4):424-441.

Jansen, J.D. 2002. Political symbolism as policy craft: Explaining non-reform in South African education after apartheid. *Journal of Education Policy,* 17(2):199-215.

Jansen, J.D. 2003. Rethinking education policy making in South Africa: Symbols of change, signals of conflict, in Kraak, A. & Young, M. (eds.). *Education in retrospect. Policy and implementation since 1990.* Pretoria: HSRC.

Kandumbu, M. 2005. Exploring education policy transformation in Namibia in terms of democratic change. Unpublished master's thesis. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University.

Kapambwe, W.M. 2010. The implementation of schools based continuous assessment (CA) in Zambia. *Educational Research and Reviews,* 5(3):099-107.

Kellaghan, T. & Greaney, V. 2004. *Assessing student learning in Africa.* The World Bank: Washington DC.

Kirk, D. & Macdonald, D. 2001. Teacher voice and ownership of curriculum change. *Journal of Curriculum Studies,* 33(5):551-567.

Klopper, H.C. 2008. The qualitative research proposal: *Abstract. Curationis,* 31(4):62-72.

Kumar, R. 2011. *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners.* London: SAGE.

Le Grange, L. & Beets, P.A.D. 2005. (Re)Conceptualizing validity in (outcomes-based) assessment. *Southern Journal of Education,* 25(2):115-119.

Le Grange, L. & Reddy, C. 1998. *Continuous assessment: An introduction and guidelines to implementation.* Cape Town: Juta.

Le Grange, L. 2012. Educational Research. BEd Hons Reader. Stellenbosch University: Sun Media.

Lester, S. 1999. *An introduction to phenomenological research.* Taunton.UK: Stan Lester Development.

Lewin, K. & Dunne, M. 2000. Policy and practice in assessment in Anglophone Africa: Does globalisation explain convergence: *Assessment in Education. Principles, Policy & Practice,* 7(3):379-399.

Lingard, B., Thomson, P. & Wrigley, T. 2012. Ideas for changing educational systems, educational policy and schools. *Critical Studies in Education,* 53(1):1-7.

Lorna, E. 2003. Assessment as learning: *Using classroom assessment to maximise student learning.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Lukubwe, R.M. 2006. The role of the Namibia national teachers union in the development of staffing norms policy in Namibia. Unpublished master's thesis. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Maree, K. 2010. *First steps in research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Mavrommatis, Y. 1997. Understanding assessment in the classroom: Phases of the assessment process–the assessment episode. Assessment in Education: *Practices, Policy & Practice,* 4(3):382-400.

Mboweni, L. 2014. Challenges and factors contributing to learner absenteeism in selected primary schools in Acornhoek. Unpublished master's thesis. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Mckernan, J. 1996. *Curriculum Action Research: A handbook of methods and resources for the reflective practitioner:* London. Page.

McMillan, J.H & Schumacher, S. 2001. *Research in education: A conceptual introduction* (5th ed.). New York: Longman.

Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture. 1996. *Pilot curriculum guide for formal basic education.* Okahandja: NIED.

Ministry of Education and Culture. 1993. *Toward Education for All: A Development Brief for Education, Culture, and Training.* Windhoek: Macmillan Publisher.

Ministry of Education and Culture. 1999. *Towards Improving Continuous Assessment in Schools. A Policy and Information Guide.* Okahandja: NIED.

Ministry of Education. 2007. *Social Studies Syllabus for Grades 5-7.* Okahandja: NIED.

Ministry of Education. 2008. *Continuous Assessment Manual for Social Studies.* Okahandja: NIED.

Ministry of Education. 2009. *National Subject Policy Guide for Social Studies Grades 5-7.* Okahandja: NIED.

Ministry of Education. 2010. *The National Curriculum for Basic Education.* Okahandja: NIED.

Mosoge, J. 2008. Talent development, in Heystek, J., Nieman, R., Van Rooyen, J., Mosoge, J. & Bipath, K. (eds). *People leadership in education.* Johannesburg: Heinemann. 160-191.

Murray, N. & Hughes, G. 2008. *Writing up your university assignments and research projects: A practical handbook.* New York: Open University Press.

Mutorwa, J. 2004. National Report on the Development of Education in Namibia. Unpublished paper delivered at the International Conference on Education. 8-11 September, Geneva.

Nekhwevha, F. 1999. No matter how long the night, the day is sure to come: Cultural and educational transformation in post-colonial Namibia and post-apartheid South Africa. *International Review of Education,* 45(5/6):491-506.

Nyambe, J. & Wilmot, D. 2008. Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse: A framework for understanding how teacher educators in a Namibian college of education interpret and practice learner-centred pedagogy. Cardiff: Cardiff School of Social Sciences.

O'Sullivan, M.C. 2002. Reform implementation and realities within which teachers work: A Namibian case study. *A Journal of Comparative and International Education,* 32(2):219-237.

Sanzila, K.M. 2011. Environmental factors influencing learner absenteeism in six schools in the Kavango region, Namibia. Unpublished master's thesis. Grahamstown: Rhodes University.

Schurink, W., Fouche, C.B. & AS de Vos. 2011. Qualitative data analysis and interpretation, in De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouche, C.B. & Delport C.S.L. (eds). *Research at grassroots: For the social sciences and human service professions* (4th ed.). Pretoria: Van Schaik. 397-422.

Shanyanana, R.D. 2011. Education for democratic citizenship and cosmopolitanism: The case of the Republic of Namibia: Unpublished master's thesis. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University.

Shepard, L.A. 2005. *The future of assessment: Shaping teaching and learning.* New York: Routledge.

Shilongo, E. 2004. *Historical overview of educational assessment in Namibia.* Windhoek: REFORM FORUM.

Smit, B. 2001. How primary school teachers experience education policy change in South Africa. *Perspectives in Education,* 19(3):67-84.

Strydom, H & Delport, C. S.L. 2011. Information Collection: Document study and secondary analysis, in De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouche, C.B. & Delport C.S.L. (eds). *Research at grassroots: For the social sciences and human service professions* (4th ed.). Pretoria: Van Schaik. 376-396.

Strydom, H. 2011. Information collection: Participant observation, in De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouche, C.B. & Delport C.S.L. (eds). *Research at grassroots: For the social sciences and human service professions* (4th ed.). Pretoria: Van Schaik. 328-340.

Thomson, S.B. 2011. Qualitative research: Validity. *JOAAG,* 6(1):77-80.

Tjitendero, M.P. 1984. *Education Policy for Independent Namibia.* Lusaka: United Nations Institute for Namibia.

Uiseb, I. 2009. The role of teachers in continuous assessment: A model for primary schools: Unpublished master's thesis. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Van Laren, L. & James. A. 2008. Selected teachers' understanding of assessment four years after the implementation of the New Assessment Policy. *African Education Review,* 5(2):288-303.

Vandeyar, S. & Killen, R. 2003. Has curriculum reform in South African really changed assessment practices, and what promise does the revised National Curriculum Statement hold? *Perspectives in Education,* 21(1):119-134.

Vandeyar, S. & Killen, R. 2007. Educators' perceptions and practice of classroom assessment in post-apartheid South Africa. *South African Journal of Education,* 27(1):10-115.

Vandeyar, S. 2005. Conflicting demands: Assessment practices in three South African primary schools undergoing desegregation. *Curriculum inquiry,* 35(4):462-481.

APPENDIX A: Demographics of teachers

ADDENDUM A

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Teacher No: ----------------------------------- School (A, B and C): ---------------------------------

DATE: -- GRADE ---

KINDLY PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING PERSONAL INFORMATION:

1. GENDER:

 ----

2. HOME LANGUAGE:

 ----

3. HIGHEST QUALIFICATIONS:

 ----

4. TRAINING LEVEL OF SPECIALISATION:

 ----

5. SUBJECT SPECIALISATIONS:

 ----

6. YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN SOCIAL STUDIES:

 ----

7. YEARS OF ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION IN SOCIAL STUDIES:

 ----

8. YEARS OF TEACHING AT THIS SCHOOL:

APPENDIX B: Interview schedules

ADDENDUM B

**STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: ASSESSMENT POLICY
IMPLEMENTATION IN SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING AREA**

Teacher No: ---------------------------------- School (A, B and C): -----------------------

DATE: --GRADE ---------------------------------------

1. How many years have you been in a teaching profession?

   ----

2. How do you assess learners in teaching practices?

   ----

3. How do different assessment strategies influence and determine the learners'
   grades?

   ----

4. How do you integrate assessment activities into teaching practices?

   ----

5. What do you think and how best can assessment policies be implemented in
   teaching practices?

   ----

6. What are the challenges you experience when implementing assessment
   policies in teaching practices?

----

7. How can assessment practices be improved in teaching?

----

8. How are you capacitated to implement assessment policies in teaching

practices?

----

9. Does the subject advisor visit your school to render support to you?

----

10. Is there any professional support from the principal or heads of department

during the implementation of assessment policy in teaching practices?

----

11. Is there any suggestion you would like to make on how best you can be

supported to implement assessment policies in teaching?

APPENDIX C: Permission letter from the Director of Education

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

KAVANGO REGIONAL COUNCIL

DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION

Tel. (066) 258.9111........................ Private Bag 2134
Fax (066) ...2589213/2589320/258.9222 RUNDU

Enquiries: **Alfons M. Dikuua**

Our Ref.:

Date : 10 September 2013

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERNED

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THREE SCHOOLS IN NCUNCUNI CIRCUIT IN KAVANGO REGION

1. Kindly be informed that permission is hereby granted to Mr. Thomas Nyambe, a full-time master student at Stellenbosch University to conduct education research at three schools in Ncuncuni Circuit .

2. Your cooperation and support in this regard is highly appreciated and valued.

Your sincerely,
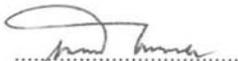
Alfons M. Dikuua
DIRECTOR
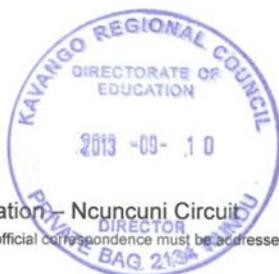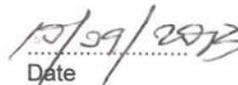
Date

Cc. Inspector of Education – Ncuncuni Circuit

All official correspondence must be addressed to the Chief Regional Officer

APPENDIX D: Permission letter from the Inspector of Education

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
KAVANGO REGIONAL COUNCIL
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION
NCUNCUNI CIRCUIT OFFICE

PRIVATE BAG 2134, RUNDU, NAMIBIA

Enquiries:	S.M. Hausiku	Telephone No.:	066 256064 / 0608016759
Email:	hscholastika@mighty.co.za	Fax No.:	+264-66-258 9213/2589320
Ref. No.:			

16 September 2013

To: Principals within Ncuncunci Circuit

RE: PERMISON TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

In my capacity as an inspector of education of Ncuncuni circuit, I would like to ask for fully
Co-operation and support to Mr. T. Nyambe (masters student at Stellenbosch University) who will
conduct an educational research in your schools.

Educational research is one way of finding out where the educational system needs to iron for the
benefit of education stakeholders and on this case, learners whom we prepared for the future.
Therefore, principals must also share this message with the school board members for their
information regarding this exercise that it will not disturb any school programs.

Yours sincerely
Mrs Hausiku S.M
Inspector of education

Cc Nyambe .T (Masters Student)