

CHALLENGES OF LEARNERS WITH MULTIPLE DISABILITIES IN A  
SELECTED SPECIAL SCHOOL IN THE OSHANA EDUCATION REGION

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in a special school setting. In order to collect in-depth information, this study followed a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design. Purposive, criterion sampling procedures were employed to select the participants. The sample consisted of thirty-three (33) respondents: a school principal, ten (10) teachers, three (3) hostel matrons and nineteen (19) learners with multiple disabilities from the selected school. The data were collected through semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews supplemented by observation. The data were carefully organised into categories and themes and analysed during and after the period of data collection. The main findings of the study were that learners with multiple disabilities faced challenges that ranged from the physical infrastructure of the school (accessibility), the inability of staff to respond effectively to their needs, a lack of differentiated teaching and learning resources (leading to their exclusion from certain learning activities), as well as poorly structured curriculum approaches. Based on the findings, various recommendations were made to the school and to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to mitigate the identified challenges. The study also made recommendations for further research. The study concluded that learners with multiple disabilities need to access a curriculum that suits their needs and receive the quality education that they deserve.

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Sam Hauulu, as well as my children, Lahja Evangeline Magano Ndapanda and Sam Pandeni, for being symbols of motivation in my life.

## **Declaration**

I, Johanna Ambili, declare that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof, has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education. No part of this thesis may be reproduced, stored in any retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means (e.g. electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior permission of the author or the University of Namibia in that behalf.

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## **List of abbreviations/ acronyms**

ACE: Advanced Diploma in Education

ADL: Activities for Daily Living

BED: Bachelor of Education (honours)

BETD: Basic Education Teachers Diploma

CLaSH: Children with Language, Speech and Hearing Impairments

ICF: International Classification of Functioning, Disabilities and Health

LWVI: Learners with Visual Impairments

LWHI: Learners with Hearing Impairments

LWMD: Learners with Multiple Disabilities

NHEC: National Higher Education Certificates

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organisation

UN: United Nations

UNESCO: United Nation Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation

WHO: World Health Organisation

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Orientation of the Study**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2009, p. 67) maintains that "... literacy depends not only on efforts by governments, international organisations and NGOs ..., but also on individual families and socio-cultural contexts irrespective of their levels of disability ...". This sentiment is reaffirmed by the United Nations (UN) (1989) which states that education is a fundamental human right. The main goals of the post-independent Namibian education system are to increase access and equality in educational opportunities for all Namibians, irrespective of their race or ethnic group.

The Government of the Republic of Namibia has introduced the National Policy on Disabilities (1997), to promote the rights of people with disabilities. One of the main objectives of this policy is to ensure that people with disabilities have access to quality education and that they have the same educational opportunities as everybody else in the country (Haihambo, 2011). This view is corroborated by the Education Sector Policy for Inclusive Education (2013) whose main aim is to offer a range of services to meet all learners' individual needs. Akawa (2013) revealed that even though teachers support inclusion, they are challenged by the multiple needs of learners with learning difficulties/disabilities. The National Housing and Population census (2011) indicated that about 5% of Namibians were living with disabilities.

According to the Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) Educational Statistics (2012), there were 5302 Namibian learners who were partially sighted, 261 who were blind, 5399 who were hard of hearing and 667 who were deaf (Ministry of Education: Directorate of Planning, 2012). These large numbers, as well as the higher prevalence in rural areas, emphasise the importance of inclusive education. There are no inclusive schools that cater for learners with different needs except regular schools in the rural areas, and learners with visual and hearing impairments have to travel long distances away from their families to attend inclusive schools which are formally known as special schools. According to the Ministry of Education (2013), Special schools will become inclusive/resource schools therefore learners with disabilities will be taught in mainstream schools close to their homes.

The school targeted for this study was established in 1973 to cater for learners with sensory disabilities. Initially it had 30 learners, but over the years the numbers of learners have been increasing. For instance, in 2015 there was a total number of 341 learners while, during the 2016 academic year, 354 learners were registered at the school. Although the school was intended for learners with sensory disabilities, they also have learners who have co-existing disabilities ranging from physical, psycho-social, emotional, mental and other disabilities and/or difficulties. Since the school caters mainly for learners with sensory disabilities, most of the teachers are not trained to educate and support learners with multiple disabilities. This may have the effect that learners do not receive the attention and/or support they deserve. The school does not provide those para-professional services that are crucial for meeting the complex needs of all learners as per inclusive education policy requirements.

All schools should be spaces in which all learners, irrespective of the challenges they face to learning, can thrive.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In the era of segregation in education, special schools were highly specialised in terms of the services they rendered to children with selected impairments. A school for learners with visual and hearing impairments had a philosophy, infrastructure and resources geared towards those needs. But like all other schools, special school populations are becoming more diverse, with learners presenting a variety of needs. The school where this research was conducted is a resource school for learners with visual and hearing impairments. While this is the case, learners with multiple disabilities who have visual and/or hearing impairments or other additional conditions posing barriers to their learning do not appear to receive the learning support and attention that they need from their teachers.

Vayrynen (2008) outlined that learners with multiple disabilities tend to lag behind cognitively, emotionally and otherwise so while the challenges for learners with sensory disabilities in Namibia are mostly known and documented (Josua, 2013), not much is known about the barriers experienced by those with multiple disabilities in adjustment, learning and socialisation in resource/special schools. It appears that staff in resource schools has remained with their original mandate of educating learners for which their schools were established. In the process, learners with multiple disabilities fall through the cracks and thus do not benefit from inclusive education despite a positive policy framework. Although the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities maybe noticed and acknowledged, there could be a need to identify them, unpack them and discuss them from the perspective of learners;

this will raise educators' awareness and may encourage them to work towards developing support strategies for their inclusion in education.

Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore the challenges of learners with sensory disabilities, who also have other co-existing physical, observable and disclosed disabilities, in a resource/special school for learners with visual and hearing impairments.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

In order to gain full understanding of the challenges learners with multiple disabilities experience in school, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What challenges do learners with multiple disabilities at a special/ resource school experience in learning and adapting to activities of daily living (ADL)?
2. How do these challenges inhibit the learning and socialisation of learners with multiple disabilities?
3. How do the stakeholders (i.e., teachers, school management, and hostel staff) in the school address these challenges?
4. What facilities should be put in place in the schools to support learners with multiple disabilities?

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Several studies regarding challenges faced by learners with disabilities have been done in Namibia (Haihambo & Hengari 2005; Ashton, Haihambo & Mushaandja, 2007; Haihambo, 2011). However, these studies did not focus on learners with multiple disabilities in special school settings. This study is of great importance to the learners with multiple disabilities, teachers and the Ministry of Education, Arts

and Culture and the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation policy makers.

The outcomes of the study are raising awareness of the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities and inform policy development in line with the national and international policies. Learners with multiple disabilities are benefiting in the sense that, now that their challenges are identified and documented, they will be addressed and then learners will be assisted accordingly and they will be able to progress well and attain their academic goals.

The researcher strongly believes that the findings of this study will help teachers to be more conscious of the diverse needs of learners with multiple disabilities, and develop ways to address their challenges in accordance with the inclusive education principles to provide inclusive, equitable, quality education and promote lifelong learning (Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals of 2015). Policy makers of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation can utilise the findings of this study to plan for learners with multiple disabilities in the development of basic, vocational and higher education courses.

### **1.5. Limitations of the study**

This is a case study and therefore results may not be representative of the situation across the country. Its findings should thus not be generalized. The findings should be understood from the perspective of a particular context (a special/resource school for learners with sensory disabilities) in the Oshana region. The researcher is a teacher at the research site, this could have served as a limitation in that it could have swayed some learners to respond in the way they deemed appropriate for the teacher.

As a result, the researcher tried by all means to wear an outsider hat to ensure that learners' responses are not influenced by the fact that the researcher was a teacher at the school.

### **1.6 Definitions of concepts**

Some of the key concepts used in this thesis are defined in accordance with the scope in which they were used in this particular study.

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:** “Inclusive education is a process of addressing and responding to diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures, communities and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modification in content, approaches, structures and strategies, within a common vision which covers all children of appropriate age range and a conviction that is the responsibility of the regular system”. (UNESCO, 2008 in Ministry of Education, 2013).

**DISABILITY:** The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) which is the World Health Organization's (WHO) framework for measuring health and disability, defines disability as “the outcome or result of a complex relationship between an individual's health condition and personal factors, and of external factors that represent the circumstances in which the individual lives” (WHO, 2009, p.7). For the purpose of this study, disability refers to a lack of ability to perform a certain function which is considered normal for a human being. For example, eyes to see and or ears to hear.

**MULTIPLE DISABILITIES:** “A person with multiple disabilities has a combination of two or more serious disabilities (e.g., cognitive movement, sensory), such as sensory mental retardation with cerebral palsy” (Cabag, 2010, p. 198).

For purposes of this research, ‘multiple disabilities’ refers to a learner with several disabilities, such as a sensory disability associated with a motor disability or any other impairment.

**IMPAIRMENT:** According to the ICF, impairment is defined as “problems in body function or structure such as significant deviation or loss” (WHO, 2009, p. 6). For purpose of this study, impairment refers to an inability to use, or a loss of, a body part or function, such as sight, hearing and/or any other physical impairment.

**VISUAL IMPAIRMENT:** The International Statistical Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death, 10th revision (ICD-10) bases its definition of visual impairment on best-corrected vision, i.e. visual acuity obtained with the best possible refractive correction. This is achieved by subjects tested with pinhole or refraction. Measuring the extent of uncorrected refractive errors, the term presenting vision is used. In the context of this study, this category refers to learners who are partially sighted with low vision and those who cannot see at all.

**BLINDNESS:** This can be defined as a visual acuity (with best possible correction) of 20/400 (maximum and less than) and/or 20/1200 (minimum, equal to or better than). Furthermore, a person who is blind can either have light perception or no light perception (WHO, 2007). For the purpose of this study, the term ‘blind’ will be used to refer to those learners who cannot perceive any information visually, that is,

having no light perception or those who have limited light perception, but are unable to read print, even with optical or magnification devices or when the print font is enlarged.

**LOW VISION:** Low vision refers to visual impairment, not corrected by standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine or surgery and that interferes with the ability to perform everyday activities. While lost vision usually cannot be restored, many people can learn to make the most of the vision that remains (Bedinghaus, 2007). For the purpose of this study, low vision refers to learners who are partially sighted.

**HEARING IMPAIRMENT:** Hearing impairment or hearing loss occurs when you lose part or all of your ability to hear (Williams, 2016). For the purpose of this study, hearing impairment means learners who have difficulty to hear.

**HARD OF HEARING:** Hard of hearing people are those who have “residual hearing sufficient to enable successful processing of linguistic information through hearing” (Rodda & Eleweke, 2000, p. 102) and may use hearing aids. In the context of this study, learners who are hard of hearing are those who hear only with the aid of hearing aids or when the speaker raises his or her voice.

**DEAFNESS:** deafness means a hearing impairment that is so severe that the learner is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification. This condition adversely affects a child’s educational performance (Dussault, 2003). For the purpose of this study, deafness means the inability of a learner to hear at all with or without hearing aids.

**SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED:** the definition refers to a “discipline that made education accessible to all learners regardless of their abilities and disabilities, their environment and cultural backgrounds, their physical, mental as well as sensory compositions, taking into consideration the needs of such learners, and attempting to give them education of a highest quality possible” (Haihambo, 2011, p. 37). Special education need comprises of a range of programmes including, teaching strategies that address the needs of learners with various needs (Landsberg, Kruger & Swart, 2011). For the purpose of this study, special education need refers to the differentiated teaching methods and strategies used by teachers when teaching learners with multiple disabilities.

**SPECIAL SCHOOL/ RESOURCE SCHOOL:** Douglas Silas Solicitors (2017) defined a special school as a school that is specially organised to make special educational provision for children or young people with special education needs. In this study, special school/resource refers to a school that provide education to learners with hearing and/or visual impairment.

### **1.7 Summary**

This chapter provided an introduction to the study that explored the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in a special/resource school in the Oshana region. The researcher provided a background to the study to make the readers aware of the problem under investigation. The statement of the problem, the significance and limitations of the study, as well as definitions of key concepts were provided to make the study more understandable

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, literature regarding multiple disabilities, mostly relevant to school contexts, is reviewed. Firstly, a theoretical framework within which the study is viewed is discussed. Thereafter, the literature reviewed, with a focus on, but not exclusive the following themes will be presented: possible challenges faced by learners with multiple disabilities; how the stakeholders in the school address such challenges; what facilities should be put in place in the school to support learners with multiple disabilities. Finally, a summary of the chapter will be provided.

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

The theory underpinning this study is the Bio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1979). This theory emphasises the quality of the environment in which human beings live, as well as the interdependence between human beings and their physical environment. The learner's environment (which in this case is the school) plays a major role in her/his development, learning and exploration because if the learning environment is inclusive, learners will thrive to their best potential, regardless of their disabilities. The opposite is also true that if the learning environment contains lots of challenges with minimal efforts to address such, learners are less likely to thrive.

The strength of the ecological system theory according to Landsberg et al. (2011) is that a person's development is the product of a network of interaction such as cultural, social, economic, political and not only psychological. For example, a peer support group or a group of friends can provide support to the learner, helping the

learner to negotiate difficult situations and providing a context for social interactions. Bronfenbrenner divides the environment into five different levels, namely the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chronosystems (Landsberg et al., 2011).

### **2.2.1. The Micro-system**

The microsystem is described as the system closest to learners and the one with which they have direct contact. It includes family, school, peers and caregivers; this includes guardians and teachers. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) maintain that the relationship between learners and teachers, peers and family play a major role in shaping their development. For example, if the school does not provide differentiated teaching methods and does not offer an accessible and safe environment, the learners' interaction will be limited and they will not be able to explore and learn.

The microsystem of my study will be the special/resource school that learners with multiple disabilities attend. This environment consists of teachers, learners and the hostel matrons, as well as institutional workers. These people interact with the learners on a daily basis. The school is expected to provide a conducive environment in terms of physical infrastructure and welcoming school environment in which the physiological, psycho-social and psychological needs are met, teachers are mandated to provide "inclusive, equitable, quality education" (Sustainable Development Goals 2015). Caregivers such as (hostel matrons) are mandated to "control, manage, and supervise" the learners in their respective hostels assigned to them as outlined in the Namibian Hostel Administration guide (Ministry of Education, 2005).

### **2.2.2. The Meso-system**

Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 25) describes a mesosystem as “a system that comprises interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participate.” In this case, the relationship between the parents and the school is characterised by how they attend teacher-parents’ meetings and the communication between the two parties: the school and home and community by extension.

On a mesosystemic level, contact between the school, teachers and the parents, church and health care providers is very important. From the researcher’s experience as a teacher at a special/resource school, she has observed that some parents often drop their children at school and do not communicate further with the school regarding their children’ wellbeing. Some do not collect their children for home-weekends or attend parents’ meetings. This impaired relationship between parents and the school is evidence of deeper issues affecting parents of children with disabilities (Haihambo 2011). On the other hand, the school expects parents to inform the school of their children’s next doctor’s appointments, as well as give all relevant details and information about their children’s needs. Poor home-school partnerships contribute to challenges experienced by learners while affecting the quality of care of learners by stakeholders in the school environment. Conversely, the school should create platforms for social networking with the parents in order to enhance communication. The school should also try to understand those issues affecting parents, which the researcher referred to earlier and develop programs to empower and address them. (Haihambo, Brown & Tobias, 2011).

### **2.2.3. The Exo-system**

The exo-system refers to a setting that does not involve a learner as active participant. The factors in the exo-system do not have a direct link to the learner but they can affect the learner positively or negatively. For example, the inability of the curriculum/education system to develop the flexible and needs-specific curriculum that includes all learners with disabilities may affect the learner negatively as the teaching and learning strategies that teachers may use will not meet the learner's needs. Consequently, the child may become bored and lose interest in school.

Other factors, such as a family's inadequate resources, may affect the child. In addition to resources, the family's acceptance of disability plays an important role in the support they render to their children and also seeking support for them from professionals and para-professionals. For example, a parent who has just lost his or her job may be unable to support his or her children financially and provide a home, electricity and running water. This may influence the quality of the children's lives as they are deprived of basic needs. The children may also feel that their parents are neglecting them. Also, the way their communities frame disability and treat them with a sense of blame and rejection may also influence the child's self-esteem and thus hinder the child's performance in school.

### **2.2.4. The Macro-system**

This is the fourth level of the ecological system theory. Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 26) defines it as "consistencies in the form of content of lower-order system (micro-, meso and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies."

National policies, such as the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (Ministry of Education, 2013), which puts emphasis on the fact that the educational setting should be inclusive of everyone, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities and learning needs, falls under this level. Proper execution of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education 2013 will have positive outcomes, which will benefit all children, including those with multiple disabilities.

From the above, it is clear that there is an existing interaction between the different ecological levels within which the child and family live and it is almost impossible to separate them. These levels are of vital importance in the development of a child. They play a major role in shaping the child. The gap within these levels as discussed earlier will result in the learners with multiple disabilities in schools not getting the education that they deserve and that address the needs.

### **2.3 Possible Challenges Faced by Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

Learners with multiple disabilities face an array of challenges that are likely to impede their ability to function effectively and inhibit their learning and socialization. Some of these challenges are discussed below.

#### **2.3.1 Challenges Related to Infrastructure and Activities for Daily Living (ADL)**

Learners with physical disabilities face challenges related to mobility such as access to buildings and particular areas where no special provision is made for them, so in order to move they have to use orthopaedic aids, such as crutches or leg braces, to a great extent. The orthopaedic aids can be a bother to put it on and off, the aids also become too small quickly and cause pain because learners grow up fast, so they need adjustments or new aids often (Landsberg et al., 2011).

Learners with visual disabilities may face challenge arising from “negative attitudes and stereotyping of differences, an inflexible curriculum, inappropriate communication, inaccessible environments, inappropriate and inadequate support services, non-involvement of parents and inadequate trained teachers” (Landsberg et al, 2011, p.371). Learners with visual impairments rely mainly on hearing to explore their world while learners with multiple disabilities face multi-level needs that require well-considered interventions regarding their Activities for Daily Living (ADL) and socialisation needs are to be met in order to prevent them from dependency. Due to the complexity of multiple disabilities, some educational institutions may lack adequate financial resources to acquire the right equipment, knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to support learners with multiple disabilities (Landsberg et al, 2011).

In Namibia, many educational and other institutional buildings were constructed prior to the time of inclusive education. Prior to the Salamanca Declaration in 1994, which Namibia ratified, it was not mandatory for regular schools to admit all learners. Learners with special needs and impairments were automatically referred to and served by special schools, the majority of which targeted one or two types of disabilities. Learners with multiple disabilities would most likely attend an institution catering for one of their disabilities. Such schools had facilities that catered for learners with single or double categories of disabilities only; however, they lacked infrastructure, both physical and emotional, for learners with additional needs arising from other co-existing conditions, which may require specially modified infrastructural facilities, such as wheelchair access, as well as modern visual and hearing aids (Spear, 2013).

From the researchers's experience as a teacher in a special school, it is clear that infrastructural facilities are needed. Learners with a combination of physical and health impairments, in addition to sensory impairments, may not be able to carry out daily existential activities without assistance; this ADL refers to the set of daily living skills that is needed for people living with disabilities to be able to cope with their day-to-day functioning. ADL consist of five major themes namely; personal appearance and hygiene, housekeeping, interpersonal skills, emergency and safety, and transportation (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2014). Some people, because of their nature of disabilities, are unable to perform those skills therefore they may need someone to help them with other humanitarian needs; so, caretakers may be needed in schools to provide such services.

### **2.3.2 Challenges Related to Classroom Support**

Preparing activities for learners with multiple disabilities can be a daunting task for teachers as these learners need maximum educational support. The inability of schools to meet these multi-layered needs of learners with multiple disabilities could result in these learners not reaching their maximum potential, thus leading to their exclusion from education. Landsberg et al. (2011) suggest that there is need for assistant teachers in classrooms, especially in classes where a diversity of learners are accommodated. Learners with multiple disabilities can benefit from this initiative. Currently, a teacher who single-handedly handles all aspects of his or her assigned classroom duties may be overwhelmed, and this could result in him or her not paying individual attention to specific learners. The outcome will be that learners with less complex needs will benefit from learning activities and progress, while those whose needs require additional supports will be excluded by default.

Therefore, “The planning and preparation process of lessons and activities should be multidisciplinary process, including teachers, physical therapists, assistive technology teachers and number of support staff” (National Dissemination Centre for Students with Disabilities, 2012, p. 5). Although this is recommended in the Sector policy for inclusive education 2013, it is yet to be implemented in Namibian schools.

### **2.3.3 Challenges Related to Teaching and Learning**

Polloway, Serna, Patton and Bailey (2013) state that teachers seeking to educate all learners are faced with the challenge of meeting their instructional needs to prepare them for a competitive world. This is due to many issues, such as a lack of teaching and learning resources. According to Emvula (2007), the assistive technologies for learners with visual impairments are more expensive than any other type of technology. If, for example, the school is buying its own materials it can drain the total grant that it receives from the government.

Another challenge is the lack of materials needed in order to adapt the curriculum and instruction (Peters, 2003). The researcher as a teacher in the special/resource school have noticed that there are not many books in Braille; therefore, a school usually makes arrangements to have their books brailled at the Oniipa printing shop, which takes time. Other materials, such as magnifying devices and talking computers and calculators, are scarce, which puts learners with disabilities at a disadvantage. Learners with visual impairments and Down syndrome, for example, will not be supported much in the absence of the teaching materials/resources and this has a negative impact on their academic experience.

### **2.3.4 Acceptance and Socialisation**

Every person needs a sense of belonging and acceptance as an important member of the society. Pijil and Frostad (2010) found that students with disabilities who were not accepted by their peers in regular classrooms ran the risk of developing a low self-concept. It is often not only their peers who do not accept them, but sometimes their own parents as well. Vayrynen (2008) has identified a traditional beliefs phase when disability was understood as being caused by some supernatural power.

A child with disabilities was perceived as a punishment for an offence a parent might have committed. Human (2010, p. 48) adds that “for some parents such a child becomes a source of guilt, shame and stigma”. Additionally, the child with disabilities was seen as an individual who was more of a “burden” to be looked after. The belief was that such a person could not become a valuable member of society and could not do anything that would contribute to his or her family, community and the country at large. Based on these negative perceptions, parents of children with disabilities preferred to keep them at home rather than to send them to school.

### **2.3.5 Parental Involvement**

It is very important for parents to be involved in their children’s education. Pushor and Ruitenberg (2005, in Jennings & Bosch, 2011, p. 3) view parental involvement as “enabling parents to take their place alongside educators in the schooling of their children, fitting together their knowledge of children, teaching and learning”. Many parents of children with disabilities in Africa often make many excuses for their poor participation in their children’s education, such as that they are not educated and they

feel that they cannot help. Mafa and Makuba (2013) emphasise that parents' involvement must not only be viewed in terms of parents coming to the school to talk about the child or to perform certain activities. Helping the child during weekends and holidays is also parental involvement. Furthermore, when parents attend sign language classes or braille lessons at school, it may help learners to have meaningful communication with their parents and they will help their children as well. Parents are likely to participate and get involved when they have additional support, (Haihambo et al., 2011).

Literature identifies various challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in schools, which could lead to the exclusion of these children from educational programmes although they are in school. These challenges could have a negative impact on their self-esteem and also on acquiring the skills they need for good citizenry later in life. The situation in many Namibian schools seems to be in line with this literature.

#### **2.4 How Stakeholders in the School (Teachers, School Management, Hostel Matrons and other Staff Members) Address these Challenges**

Having pointed out some of the challenges in the previous section, I now turn to literature on stakeholders in schools' attempt to address challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in one or two categories of impairments.

Knouwds (2010) investigated how learners with visual impairments are included in a mainstream secondary school and found that, in Namibia, special school teachers did not have proper training in the area of special needs; however, their experience as teachers for learners with special needs seemed to be making up for the lack of

training. Knouwds stresses that there is a need for special school teachers, educational psychologists and other education support professionals to be meeting to share their expertise on disabilities and learning difficulties and how to overcome the challenges that they encounter in their daily work with their fellow teachers.

Teachers teaching learners with multiple disabilities try their best to help their learners with multiple disabilities in the class although their assistance may not be sufficient. In the Oshana region of Namibia, there have been positive school-community interventions as stakeholders and business people in the community have donated equipment, such as magnifiers and acrobats, while some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's), such as Children with Language, Speech and Hearing Impairment (CLaSH), have provided some hearing aids and training for the teachers in deaf education. However, research done by Mastropieri and Scruggs (1996, cited in Knouwds, 2010, p. 34) indicates that "apart from training, teachers need time, personnel, material resources, and adequate classroom space in order to be able to implement inclusive education". The materials donated are assisting learners to improve their academic performance; however, the challenges still lie with teachers' support to those learners with multiple disabilities as their needs are often not met due to lack of materials and training for teachers.

Other stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Health and Social services, are responsible for assessing the nature of learners' disabilities and degree thereof, when requested then provide a letter so that the children with disabilities can receive disability grants provided by the State. The grant helps to cover transport costs to and from school and also to pay for a hostel development fund. However, there are cases of disability grant abuse that were reported some parents/caregivers spend the grant on their own needs including alcohol, while the beneficiaries live in poverty (Tjihenuna, 2015). Stakeholders such as parents of children with disabilities can change their community's perceptions by discussing issues to create awareness regarding disabilities and how a community can support children with disabilities. Zimba, Haihambo and February (2004) found that parents of children with disabilities in Namibia were rejected, while some children with disabilities were bullied for having disabilities. A negative attitude towards special educational needs is identified as a barrier that must be addressed in order to develop and expand successful inclusive education programmes (Haihambo, 2011).

Josua (2013) suggests that, in order to address the issue of the lack of skills by teachers, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture can offer teacher workshops, seminars and other in-service training opportunities that focus not only on knowledge and skills but, most importantly, on attitudes and values in order for teachers to improve their skills. It is of most importance if stakeholders try their best to address the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities to make their academic learning better.

## **2.5 What Facilities should be put in Place to Address Challenges of Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

Having outlined the literature on stakeholder attempt to address the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities, I now turn to literature on what should be put in place to address the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities. For the effective planning and execution of activities to take place in schools, there should be collaboration between teachers, learners and para-professionals (nurses, educational psychologists, social workers, counsellors, physical and occupational therapists, as well as communication disorder specialists) (Ministry of Education, 2013). Learners with multiple disabilities are capable of learning at their own levels when provided with the appropriate support and materials. Teachers should therefore, be offered training aimed at meeting the diverse needs of all their learners (The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities, 2013).

The government must improve the existing structures for those schools that cater for learners with disabilities. The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (2013) advises schools to make use of augmentative communication for learners who have problems with communication. Augmentative and alternative communications are defined as “any instructional technique, device or a system that serve to support and bolster communication in individuals with multiple sensory, physical and cognitive impairments” (The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities, 2013, p. 5). Tangible and tactile symbol systems, choice boards, object prompts and symbols, physical modelling, prompting and any other technique can be very useful.

The researcher observed that such materials were available in the school where this research was conducted but they were not in good working condition, and there was no-one with the technical expertise to repair them. The teachers have basic skills to use them but they do need technical support to repair them when dysfunctional.

Other strategies such as the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) can be used. This strategy is “a way of thinking about teaching and learning that helps give all learners an equal opportunity to succeed. This approach offers flexibility in the ways learners access material, engage with it and show what they know” (Morin, 2017 p 2). Learners with a variety of learning and special needs such as those with multiple disabilities can benefit from this flexible strategy because all learners can access a variety of learning solutions. It removes barriers by anticipating the needs for all learners. Although this strategy is effective, it requires sufficient resources such as assistive technology, it can be high tech like computer or low tech items e.g. post-it note. Assistive technology can level the playing field for those with disabilities and can give them the means to express their knowledge. Potts (2017) suggests collaboration as one of the best strategies of UDL, teachers in special schools can work together with content experts (subject advisory teachers) to plan lessons that address the learners’ needs and ensure that it gives learners multiple means of representation, engagement and expression.

Differentiated instruction is also one of the strategies that teachers of learners with multiple disabilities can use. Differentiation is defined as the instruction that helps learners with diverse academic needs and learning styles to master the same challenging content (Willoughby, 2012). Differentiating does not imply that each learner is provided with separate, unrelated activities. Good (2006) corroborated that

with differentiation, is about providing interrelated activities that are based on learner needs for the purpose of ensuring that all learners come to a similar grasp of a skill or idea. Teachers can differentiate content, process or a product so that they can support learners with learning differences. In conclusion, there is need to put strategies in place to support learners with multiple disabilities in order to offer them the best education that they may need.

## **2.6 Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed the theoretical framework of the study. The researcher also reviewed relevant literature regarding challenges faced by learners with multiple disabilities in school, as well as how stakeholders in the school address such challenges. Finally, literature suggesting what should be in place to augment the inclusion of learners with multiple disabilities was reviewed.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the research methodology that was employed in this study. It includes the research design, the population and sampling, the pilot study, as well as the research instruments utilised to collect, collate and analyse data. The research ethics observed in conducting the study were also discussed in this chapter.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The study adopted a qualitative approach (Cresswell, 2012). Qualitative approaches enable the researcher to obtain intricate details of a situation. These include feelings, thoughts and emotions that are difficult to extract or obtain through other, conventional research methods, such as social survey methods.

This study made use of an intrinsic case study design (Merriam, 2009). A case study possesses the following major strengths:

- It offers means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon.
- It results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon.
- It enables the examination of an applied field's processes, problems and programmes (Merriam 2009, p. 50-51).

The researcher wanted to understand and present the specific case of learners with multiple disabilities and the challenges that they face in a school mainly intended for learners with one or two dominant disabilities only.

### **3.3 Population**

Population refers to the entire group of people, events or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2012; Cresswell, 2012). The population for this study comprised learners with multiple disabilities at the targeted school, as well as the principal, hostel matrons and teachers. There were one principal, 47 teachers, six (6) hostel matrons, and 354 learners of which 38 learners had obvious and/or observable multiple disabilities at the school where this study was conducted.

### **3.4 Sample**

The sample of the study comprised a total of 33 participants. The researcher employed purposive, criterion sampling to select the current principal of the school (each public/government school in Namibia has only one principal), five (5) teachers from the section for learners with visual impairments and five teachers from the section of learners with hearing impairment. All the teachers included in the study were within the age-group 24–40 years, and had been serving at the particular section for more than two years.

Three hostel matrons who had been at the school for at least two years or more were selected. Nineteen learners with multiple disabilities were also selected, according to the following criteria: they should have been in the age group of 8–18 and they should have been at this school for at least two years.

### **3.5 The Research Site**

In this section, the researcher presents the research site. The school chosen for this research caters for learners with sensory disabilities. It is situated in Ongwediva town

in the Oshana region. There are about 13 schools in the vicinity, which cater for the general learner population (including public and private). However, this is the only school that was established with the aim of educating learners with sensory disabilities in the region. The school continued to educate learners with visual and hearing impairments from different regions of Namibia; the school also enrolled learners with multiple disabilities. By the time of this study the school had about 354 learners, 49 teachers including four heads of departments and five assistant teachers; the school had 10 hostel matrons and 39 institutional workers including one administration officer, three cooks, five cleaners and six watchmen. The school range from orientation class, then grade 0-10. The school has two major sections, a section for learners with visual impairments and a section for learners with hearing impairments. The learners with multiple disabilities were found in any section of the school. When teachers apply for a vacant post to teach in the school, they are placed at any of the sections at which the vacant post was.

The school did not require an additional criterion in appointing their teachers; they took any teacher with a teaching qualification. The school arrangement was that when a teacher first joins the school, (to teach junior primary phase, grade 0-3) they would be observing in a class with some similarities to the one they are going to teach, for a period of six weeks before they are given their own class to commence teaching. For upper primary and secondary phases, a new teacher would be with an assistant teacher to help in translation of sign language or Braille of learners' work until they got used or at least until they mastered the basic skills.

The mission statement of the school read as follows: *“we commit ourselves to provide equal opportunities to all our learners and staff members as to develop their*

*full potential to the point of excellence and providing a sound educational culture through knowledge and skills based on scientific principles that enable them to meaningfully contribute to the development of Namibia”.*

School vision:

*“To impart knowledge and skills to learners living with disability, to be literate in all areas of learning, self-independent and to have a bright future. To educate learners with disabilities and enable them to face the challenges of the future and enable them to plan and organize their future lives”.*

### **3.6 Research Instruments**

The researcher made use of two main data collection methods, namely semi-structured interviews and observations.

#### **3.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews**

Face-to-face, in-depth semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data. Christensen, Johnson and Turner (2012) state that an in-depth, face-to-face interview is a powerful instrument in collecting data since it allows the researcher to capture the feelings and emotions of the participants; this will help to present a holistic picture of the phenomenon under study, in this case, challenges of learners with multiple impairments in a special school setting. Semi-structured, open-ended interview questions were utilised to gather data for this study. Merriam (2009) views semi-structured interviews as halfway between structured and unstructured interviews. Semi-structured interviews start with a “few defined questions” (O’Leary, 2004, p. 164) but allow the interviewer to pursue any interesting aspects

that may arise; it allows the research to probe for further elaborations and clarifications.

All participants were interviewed individually by the researcher. The principal, teachers and some learners were interviewed in English, while some learners and the hostel matrons were interviewed in their home language (Oshiwambo) to allow them an opportunity to express themselves freely. Some young learners were hesitant to respond to the questions; so a sign language interpreter (a teacher for the learners with hearing impairments) was called in to translate. The interviews that were scheduled for two weeks ended up lasting about four weeks. The researcher did not put a time limit or limit on the duration of each interview. The researcher made notes of all the responses from the interviewees as no tape recorder was used. One of the limitations experienced was the site where interviews for learners took place. It was not convenient for the researcher to conduct the interview because of noise and distraction; some learners heard of the interviews and they also came to the windows and door of the interview room and demanded to be asked questions. So at some point the researcher had to change venues or postpone the interviews to the next day.

### **3.6.2 Observation**

Observation is one of the instruments that were used to generate data for this study. The researcher was a non-participant observer as she observed the participants in their natural setting in order to gather first-hand information. O'Leary (2004, p. 172) describes non-participant observation as a "process of a one way mirror" where the observer watches without taking part in the activities that he or she is observing. Observations were conducted in various environments of the school.

### **3.6.2.1 General School Environment**

The researcher observed the general school structure and organisation. The researcher walked around the school during tea breaks between 10:10 AM and 10:40 AM and also after classes while waiting for appointment time for interviews, the researcher was a non-participant observer looking at a situation from as an outsider, the observation was guided by the research questions as outlined in chapter 1. The general setting environment was observed to get a picture or an idea about a general physical condition of the facilities in which learners with multiple disabilities live.

### **3.6.2.2 Inside Classrooms**

Classrooms are rooms that learners sit in according to their class levels (e.g. Grade 1, grade 2, etc.). In the classroom is where most of the teaching and learning activities take place. All the classes commence at 7:30 AM but they end at different times according to the phases. In the classrooms the researcher observed the seating arrangements, lighting, grouping, number of learners, as well as the visible adaptations and/or special arrangements made for learners with multiple disabilities. Teaching and learning activities were observed when the researcher observed classroom activities and the general participation of learners in the classroom in various subjects. The researcher did not visit all the classrooms in the school due to limited time that was allocated for the researcher. The classrooms visited were randomly selected of which the researcher believed that they gave rich information and a clear picture of the situation in the classrooms.

### **3.6.2.3 The Dining Hall**

A dining hall is a place whereby learners in the boarding schools take their meals. According to the school superintendent, learners get in every morning at 6:00 AM for soft porridge, bread and tea, then around 10:10 AM for tea, lunch and dinner are served at 14:00 and 18:00, respectively. In the dining hall, the researcher observed the arrangement of tables and chairs and the handing of meals to learners with multiple disabilities. During observation at the dining hall the researcher opted to stand among teacher supervisors on duty in order to blend in without raising suspicion among learners as they walked around taking their meals.

### **3.6.2.4 The Hostel**

A hostel is a home-away-from-home that provides learners with a healthy and homely atmosphere and ensures that they have access to effective education, The Namibian Hostel Administrative guide (Ministry of Education, 2005) Learners in the hostel shares common areas such as bathrooms and other facilities. There are three hostel blocks for girls and three hostel blocks for boys. The hostels for learners with visual impairments are separated from the hostel for learners with hearing impairments. The learners with multiple disabilities are found in any of the hostels. In this case, the researcher observed the arrangement of beds, wardrobes and toilet seats, among others.

### **3.6.2.5 Sport Facilities and Activities**

The sport facilities comprised of the soccer pitch, netball court, volleyball court and the playground. Many aspects that were observed, including those not on the observation schedule, were recorded and provided part of the data. Hodgskiss (2007)

point out that the problem with observation is that the observer may affect the situation being observed in the sense that participants may behave in a certain way when they know that they are being observed. The researcher was worried about this aspect, hence the non-participatory observation by which she made sure that the observations do not interfere with the normal day-to-day processes and activities of the school.

### **3.6.3 Pilot Study**

To ensure that the research tools (interview and observation) were in line with the study, a pilot study was carried out with a group of respondents with almost similar characteristics at a special school in a different region. The interviews were done with the school principal, four teachers, two hostel matrons and two learners with disabilities separately. The observations were done after the interview process and at places like hostels, classrooms, dining room and sport field. Only a few classes were observed, as the school was busy preparing to host a soccer tournament, but the researcher felt that those data were sufficient. This was mainly done to determine the extent to which the instrument focused on the relevant information (Gay et al., 2009). The pilot was also necessary to detect possible errors and/or repetition, and to ensure that the language used was appropriate and clear.

#### **3.6.3.1 Results of the Pilot Study**

Gay et al. (2009) reiterate that the participants' feedback after a pilot study confirm or challenge the assumptions made during the formulation and writing of research questions. The pilot study was also vital as it enabled the researcher to practise the execution of the complete research process and obtain a clear picture of the necessary

logistical arrangements, the time, and expectations of the respondents, among others. This process boosted the researcher's confidence in using the tools. The results of the pilot study revealed that the tools were valid and reliable. However, it also revealed that there were parts of the interview instruments that needed to be revised before the actual research interviews would be conducted. Examples of areas of the research tools that needed to be changed included: *Instrument 1: interview guide for learners with multiple disabilities*: the pilot study revealed that in section D, question 2 was not understood; consequently, it was revised. The first version of question 2 was:

1. "How do your teachers help you access the curriculum?"

The corrected version: "How do your teachers help you learn?"

2. *Instrument 2: interview guide for the teachers*, section D, *question 2* and Section E *question 1* were removed from the interview guide because they elicited similar answers to section B, *question 5* (What do you do in your capacity as a teacher when faced with those challenges?).

The Instrument 2 observation schedule: the observation schedule was not changed since the information in the items was found to be appropriate for the study.

### **3.7 Procedure**

After permission was granted by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC), the Director of Education in Oshana region and the School Principal of the case-study school, the data collection process began. The researcher introduced the research to the respondents, and all ethical issues were explained to them. The respondents (the principal, teachers and Hostel matrons) were

at liberty to choose a time that was convenient for them between 14:00 and 18:00, while learners were given numbers and they were put in the schedule by the researcher in arrangement with their class teachers (young respondents only). This was done to ensure that the research process did not interfere in the activities of the school.

### **3.7.1 Interviews**

The interviews with the school principal took place in the principal office, while the interviews with two teachers took place in the staff room, and the rest of the teachers (8) preferred to be interviewed in the classroom. The hostel matrons' interviews took place at the hostel in the hostel matrons' rooms. The learners were interviewed in different venues; some were interviewed in the classroom, Library, and at the hair care class.

Consent was obtained from parents and all other participants. The consent forms were signed by the participants to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. The interviews were not tape-recorded because the respondents indicated that they were not comfortable with the conversation being recorded; they were suspicious of who was going to listen to the conversations so the interviewer wrote everything that was said down. The interviews that were done in Oshiwambo were translated directly and the notes of the conversations from interviews were each put in an envelope marked with the code of the respondents.

### **3.7.2 Observations**

The researcher conducted observations before, after and during the interviews, it was randomly done, and each opportunity that the researcher got was used for observation. Observation schedule was used and the field notes were taken on the spot. General school setting, classrooms, hostels, dining room and sport field were observed repeatedly on different days.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The data that were obtained from the semi-structured interviews and observations were analysed during and after the period of data collection. According to Merriam (2009) data analysis is an ongoing process in qualitative research.

In this research, the responses from the open-ended interview questions posed to the school principal, learners with multiple disabilities, teachers and hostel matrons were interpreted and carefully organised into categories and themes such as the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities regarding physical facilities/infrastructures, academic curriculum and Activities for Daily Living (ADL). At the end of each theme, a summary was made interpreting items that appeared more often. Data gathered through the observation method were analysed and interpreted using the researcher's insight

### **3.9 Research Ethics**

The ethical clearance certificate was issued by the University of Namibia, Ethical clearance reference number FOE/141/2016. Permission was also granted by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to conduct research in a case-study school (*see appendix J*).

Another letter of permission was given in writing by the Oshana Regional Education Director responsible for the selected school to access the site and carry out a research (*see appendix L*). The permission from the principal of the selected school was given verbally.

Respondents were assured of confidentiality of the data. This was done in accordance with Cohen et al. (2007) who emphasise that access and acceptance are vital aspects of data collection.

Some participants in this study were minors; therefore, the researcher acquired assent from their parents and guardians. The assent forms were written in English and Oshiwambo. The parents signed the consent forms as an indication that they have allowed their children to participate in the study. The purpose of the research was explained to the learners, and those aged 21 years and older signed their own consent forms. Other participants (the principal, hostel matrons and teachers) also signed their consent forms before the interviews took place. The participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any given time. In order to assure the confidentiality of the data and protect participants' identities, participants' real names were not used; pseudonyms were utilised instead.

### **3.10 Summary**

This chapter described the methodology employed, starting with the research design, population and sample. The instruments utilised to collect data were discussed. Lastly, the steps taken in collecting and analysing data as well as the research ethics were presented.

## **CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research findings that emerged after employing two research methods, namely observations and interviews conducted with the principal, teachers, learners with multiple disabilities and hostel matrons (hereafter referred to as the respondents) at the target school. The data presented an analysis aimed at exploring the challenges that learners with multiple disabilities experienced in the selected special/resource school.

The results from the observation schedule are presented in a descriptive form, while the results from the semi structured interviews are presented in the form of a descriptive note, the results are presented according to categories and themes that were generated from the research questions

## 4.2 Description of Participants

**Table 4.1 Demographic Data of Respondents**

### Demographic Data of Teachers

<b>Respon- dents</b>	<b>Age group</b>	<b>Years of teaching experience at school</b>	<b>Highest academic qualifications</b>	<b>Qualifications that include teaching learners with disabilities/ or inclusive education</b>	<b>Categories of learners that they teach</b>
T1	30-40	10 years	ACE	No	LWHI
T2	30-40	10 years	B.ED (honours)	No	LWHI
T3	30-40	6 years	ACE	No	LWVI
T4	20-30	7 years	B.ED (honours)	No	LWHI
T5	20-30	2 years	B.ED (honours)	No	LWHI
T6	30-40	12 years	ACE	No	LWVI
T7	40-50	3 years	ACE	No	LWVI
T8	30-40	10 years	B.ED (honours)	No	LWVI
T9	50 & above	23 years	NHEC	No	LWVI
T10	30-40	11 years	B.ED (honours)	No	LWHI

**Key:**

ACE: Advanced Certificate in Education

B.ED: Bachelor of Education

NHEC: National Higher Education Certificate

LWVI: Learners with Visual Impairments

LWHI: Learners with Hearing Impairments

Table 4.1 presents the demographic data of teachers (Respondent T1-T10) teaching learners with sensory disabilities at the school of which learners with multiple disabilities are included. This includes two male and eight female teachers. Their ages ranged from 25 to above 50 years. The teaching experiences of these respondents ranged between three and 23 years. Their highest qualifications were a Bachelor of Education Degree (B. ED), Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) and National Higher Education Certificate (NHEC). None of the teachers had obtained qualifications that included teaching learners with impairments. Five of the respondents were teaching learners with hearing impairments and another five were teaching learners with visual impairments. It should be noted that learners with multiple disabilities are found in all the two main sections of the school and that explains why they were admitted in the special/resource school.

**Table 4.2: Demographic Data of Hostel Matrons**

The key roles and/or responsibilities of hostel matrons in the school were to ensure that they supervised the health and welfare of the learners in the school hostel and to lead, manage and monitor the running of the hostel according to the hostel rules and policy (Ministry of Education, 2005).

The hostel matrons will be represented by the Code HM followed by a number.

Table 4.2 Demographical Data of Hostel Matrons

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Age category</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Years of working experience at this school</b>	<b>Training received to support learners with multiple disabilities (Nature of training)</b>
HM1	50 & above	Female	10 years	Yes, caring of learners with general disabilities
HM2	50 & above	Female	9 years	No
HM3	40-50	Female	7 years	No

Of the three hostel matron-respondents, there were two females and one male. Their age categories were 40 years and above. Their working experience ranged from seven to ten years.

Only one of the three identified hostel matrons had an opportunity to attend training which focused on the caring of learners with disabilities in general disabilities while working at the school. The remaining two hostel matrons never received training regarding taking care of learners with multiple disabilities while working at the school.

**Table 4.3 Demographic Data of: The Principal**

Age category	50-60
Gender	Male
Number of years at this school	30
Number of years as a principal at this school	3
Highest academic qualification	Specialised Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education

Table 4.3 provides the demographic data of the principal. His age was between 50 and 60 years. He had been working at this school for 30 years and had been managing and leading the school as a principal for the past three years. His highest qualification was a Specialized Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education.

**Table 4.4 Demographic Data of Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

The learners will be represented by Code L followed by a number (1 – 19).

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Age category</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Class Group</b>	<b>No. of years at the school</b>	<b>Diagnosed impairments of learners</b>
<b>L1</b>	8-12	F	UPP 4-7	5	Partially sighted, paralysis on left arm and left leg
<b>L2</b>	8-12	M	JJP 0-3	4	Partially sighted since birth and partial paralysis on the left side of the body (leg & arm) that affected his speech
<b>L3</b>	8-12	M	JPP 0-3	3	Optic atrophy totally blind, speech impairment' minor deformity both ankles
<b>L4</b>	15-18	F	SP 8-10	3	Partially sighted, paralysis on left arm and left leg
<b>L5</b>	15-18	M	UP 4-7	4	Partially sighted, physical disabled on the left arm and left leg
<b>L6</b>	15-18	F	SP 8-10	5	Totally blind, retinal detachment, clipped feet
<b>L7</b>	8-12	F	JPP 0-3	2	Deaf since birth and paralyse on the left and right arm
<b>L8</b>	8-12	M	JPP 0-3	3	Hard of hearing, paralyse on the right side of the body & drooling
<b>L9</b>	8-12	F	JPP 0-3	2	Hard of hearing, partially paralyse due to meningitis
<b>L10</b>	8-12	M	JPP 0-3	3	Hard of hearing, speech problems and some degree of weakness on his upper limbs & drooling
<b>L11</b>	12-15	F	UPP 4-7	5	Deaf and partially sighted
<b>L12</b>	15-18	M	SP 8-10	5	Deaf and partially sighted
<b>L13</b>	12-15	F	UPP 4-7	5	Partially sighted microcephaly (small head) kyphosis (bent spine) speech is slow and slurred
<b>L14</b>	12-15	F	UPP 4-7	4	Partially sighted cause by congenital abnormalities and physical disabled on the left arm
<b>L15</b>	12-15	M	JPP 0-3	4	Partially sighted, slow and slurred speech
<b>L16</b>	15-18	M	SP 8-10	5	Hearing impaired due to congenital hyboxyl paralyse on the left arm and leg
<b>L17</b>	15-18	M	SP 8-10	6	Partially sighted and paralyse on the arm and leg
<b>L18</b>	15-18	M	JPP 0-3	4	Partially sighted, physical disabled on the left arm and left leg
<b>L19</b>	8-12	M	JPP 0-3	4	Partially sighted, physical disabled on the left arm and legs

Table 4.4 provides the demographic data of learners with multiple disabilities (respondents L1-L19). Their ages ranged from eight to 18 years. Of the nineteen learners interviewed, 11 were male while eight were female. Nine learners were in the Junior Primary Phase (i.e., Grades 0 – 3); five learners were in the Upper Primary Phase (i.e., Grades 4 – 7), and another five learners were in the Secondary Phase (i.e., Grades 8 – 10). The students had spent between two and six years at this school. Six of the respondents had been at the school for four years, while four had been there for three years; only two learners had been at the school for two years. The longest time that a learner had been at this school was six years.

The diagnosed impairments (as recorded in the learners' files) differed for all nineteen respondents. Ten of them were partially sighted and had additional physical impairments (partial paralysis) affecting their arms and legs; three of those 10 learners had slow and slurred speech (L2, L13 and L15). Two of the respondents (L3 and L6) were blind while one had a minor deformity in both ankles and also demonstrated slurred speech, and one (L6) had a clubbed right foot in addition to visual/hearing impairment.

Two of the respondents were deaf and affected by paralysis (left arm and a leg). Two (L11 and L12) were deaf and partially sighted. Three of the respondents were hard of hearing and affected by paralysis; two of them experienced drooling.

### 4.3 Findings from Observations

This part discusses themes identified in the data from observations and recorded in the researcher's filed notes and are summarised in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6: Themes and categories from the field notes (see Appendix: Observation schedule)

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Categories</b>
Challenges regarding physical facilities and infrastructure	Classroom Dining hall Hostel Sport facilities
Challenges regarding teaching and learning in the classroom	Classroom activities Grouping in the classroom Class size Adaptations made for learners Social groups

#### 4.3.1 Observed Challenges and Discussion Regarding Physical Infrastructure

This part discusses the challenges as observed by the researcher regarding the physical facilities at the school. The discussion covers observations in classrooms, the dining hall, hostels and sport facilities.

##### 4.3.1.1 Classrooms

The classrooms that were observed were chosen randomly. When the researcher was moving around in the classrooms, the following was observed: the classrooms for learners with hearing impairments had very thick carpets on the floors and walls, mainly to prevent echoing. In the section for learners with visually impairments no carpets were observed in any of their classrooms, but the researcher noticed that the classrooms had curtains to prevent too much light from entering. The researcher also observed open window frames in the new block that stuck out over the pathway in the section for learners with visual impairments, which could be hazardous to learners with multiple disabilities.

The researcher further observed that the lighting in four of the classrooms for learners with visual impairments was very poor. In one of the four classrooms, there was only one working light bulb, while in the other three classes, all four double bulbs were broken and non-functional. There was a need to repair and maintain the light bulbs in the classroom. There were items, such as boxes, braille machine boxes and some toys placed at the back of some classrooms; there were no storerooms available in the classrooms. Learners with disabilities could stumble over these objects, especially when fellow learners took equipment to a different place in the class and did not put it back in its designated place.

The researcher also noticed an interesting passage, about 80cm high, which everyone walking to and from the section of the learners with visual impairments to the administration office had to use. It was about 120 metres long. The researcher observed a learner with visual impairment going to the administration office and, since she did not have a cane, she kept walking off and on the passage. Although the researcher observing from the distance did not notice any injuries; there appeared to be a need for the school to rectify the situation to avoid falls and injuries. From these findings, it can be deduced that the infrastructural arrangement of the school is likely to pose barriers to the functioning of learners with multiple disabilities.

#### **4.3.1.2 The Dining Hall**

The dining hall was arranged in such a way that all learners were expected to queue when collecting food. Learners with multiple disabilities went straight to the table

and sat while the supervisors on duty brought them food. They would then sit at the table according to their class groups to eat.

There was a positive observation made regarding the arrangement of learners with multiple disabilities. The supervisors (teachers on duty) made sure that they brought food like fruits and cups of juice to the table for learners, such as those who were partially paralysed and unable to carry all their food items at the same time.

#### **4.3.1.3 Hostels**

There were six hostel blocks at the school; four were for learners with hearing impairments (hard of hearing and deaf), two for boys and two for girls. There were only two hostels for learners with visual impairments (the partially sighted and the blind), one for the girls and one for the boys. Learners were placed in the hostel according to their gender and age or class groups.

The researcher noticed that the passage to the hostel for girls with hearing impairments was almost 80 cm high. It would be difficult for wheelchair users to access the building, which was not an ideal situation for the inclusion of learners with multiple disabilities. Learners had high wardrobes that were not easily accessible by learners with multiple disabilities, like L13 who had a bent spine. No arrangement was made in this regard for these learners.

In each hostel, learners shared bathrooms and toilet facilities. No provision was made for younger learners who were three to four years old or learners with multiple disabilities to sit comfortably on the toilet pots. The toilet seats/pots seemed to be too big and could pose safety threats to learners. This finding corroborates previous research (Josua, 2013) that the facilities were a major problem in most institutions

because they were not friendly to people with disabilities. Although learners seemed to have mastered their environment and were able to navigate their way, their hygiene, was clearly compromised.

#### **4.3.1.4 Sport Facilities**

The school had a sandy soccer field and netball and volley ball courts for its learners. There was no sport facilities designed to cater for learners with multiple disabilities.

The researcher observed a Sports Day at the school where learners, teachers and institutional workers were randomly selected into teams, such as yellow, orange, red, blue and green. The researcher noticed that none of the learners who were selected for this study (L1 - L19) participated in sport activities, such as long jump, javelin or athletics. The researcher believed that a decision was done to “exclude” them to avoid them getting harmed.

#### **4.3.2 Observed Challenges and Discussion Regarding Teaching and Learning**

This part discusses the challenges as observed by the researcher regarding teaching and learning. The discussion reflects on observations regarding classroom activities, class sizes and adaptations made for the learners, and social groupings. Classroom activities were designed for every learner in the class.

#### **4.3.1.4 Classroom Activities**

The researcher opted to start observing the classes for junior primary learners before moving to the upper primary and secondary phase. Firstly, at the section for learners with hearing impairments the researcher observed that learners who were deaf and partially sighted sat in front of the class near the chalkboard or next to the teacher. The researcher observed this in one of the junior primary classes where a teacher was

presenting a lesson. Two of the learners could not finger-spell the words because they were partially paralysed (left arm and a leg); their left hands could not move. Sign language requires the active involvement of both hands for effective communication. Therefore, it can create miscommunication for learners with partial paralysis.

The school also offered four pre-vocational subjects for learners with hearing impairment only, namely haircare, home-economics, needlework and woodwork. Learners from the age of 16 in the Secondary Phase were supposed to choose from those four pre-vocational subjects. The researcher observed that some learners with multiple disabilities did not have pre-vocational subjects because they were unable to clutch with their hands and use equipment due to limited movement in one part of their bodies.

Just like the observation made at the section for learners with hearing impairments, the researcher discovered that at the section for learners with visual impairments, although learners with multiple disabilities participated well in oral activities, challenges were detected in writing because the Perkins Braille machine that the school was using was supposed to be operated with both hands. The biggest challenge was for learners who had disabilities that affected an arm or leg. They experienced difficulties to write when using only one hand; consequently, they did not write at all. Some learners with multiple disabilities tried to write, but could not finish their work in 40 minutes before the next teacher came. This was the same with reading because braille reading requires the use of both hands (index fingers) to read. Their reading and writing skills were thus negatively affected.

Learners with visual impairments relied heavily on oral tasks. Learners who had speech problems (L2 and L3) faced challenges in presenting their work. The teachers had to be patient with them and allocate them enough time, which was not possible because each period lasted only 40 minutes. If they had to add extra time, it would infringe on other lessons that were planned for the day. Therefore, it seemed practically impossible for the teacher to use the high-incidence methods whereby learners (with high-incident needs) are given work to start earlier so that they have much more time to do their work and finish them. As a result it would disrupt the daily timetable. During lessons, learners in both the sections for the learners with visual and hearing impairments were seated in a semi-circle. The rationale was that their attention and focus should be on the teacher and there should be nothing to distract them.

#### **4.3.1.5 Class Size**

In the classes having between 8 to 14 learners, the researcher observed enough walking and moving space, except in those classes where their teaching materials and equipment were kept at the back of the class. The arrangement of the school regarding storing of teaching aids and equipment was that these should be kept in the storeroom so that there would be enough space in the class for learners, especially learners with visual impairments, to move freely.

#### **4.3.1.6 Social Groups**

Most learners with visual impairments participated in the school choir, drama and cultural groups. The learners with multiple disabilities were observed taking part in the choir, that was performing at one of the parents' meetings. One could say that the learners with multiple disabilities were participating in social activities. It seemed

like there was more inclusion in social activities than there was in academic activities and little effort was done to include learners with multiple disabilities in social programmes of the school. These observations were also reported by previous research (Human, 2010; Josua 2013).

#### **4.4 Challenges of Learners with Multiple Disabilities from the Perspective of the Principal**

In this section, results from P1 who was the principal of the school are presented.

The following issues were addressed in the interview:

- The process of placing learners in the special school;
- Criteria used to admit learners at the school;
- Opinion regarding the placement of learners with multiple disabilities;
- Principal's perceptions regarding challenges of learners with multiple disabilities;
- Principal's perceptions regarding challenges that the teachers faced when teaching learners with multiple disabilities. The findings are discussed individually below.

##### **4.4.1 The Process of Placing Learners in the Special School**

The principal was asked to take the researcher through the process of admitting learners in the school. The responses were captured as follows:

The parents apply using the government form of admission that consists of two parts.

In part 1, the parents will fill in the child's as well as their particulars while Part two

contains medical reports, which is completed by the health practitioners. The parent/guardian takes the child to the hospital and then the doctor will examine the child and fill in the health condition or types of disabilities that the child has. The aim of this medical report is to confirm that the child has a particular disability. Being a special/resource school, only learners with a diagnosis of the relevant disability are admitted.

The parent will submit the fully completed form to the school, and then provide their contact details. The admission committee will evaluate the form and set up a date for an interview with the child and her/his parents. The parents will come in with the child who seeks admission, and sit with the committee. The committee members will ask them several questions concerning the child, such as the child's background, environment, sickness, and allergies, among others. The parents will then be notified by phone/emails of the outcome of their application.

#### **4.4.2 Criteria Used to Admit Learners to this School**

In response to the questions about the criteria employed to admit learners to the school, the principal had this to say:

*["We only have two requirements, the child must be visually impaired (blind or partially sighted) and/ or hearing impaired (deaf or hard of hearing)". P1].*

They are accepting learners with visual impairments from the age of six, while the learners with hearing impairment are admitted from as young as four years old because they need to be taught sign language as their first language. When these learners come to school, they do not know any sign language; consequently, they have to learn it at school.

P1 added that they do not look at other disabilities that the child had as they only focused on the two dominant ones (i.e., visual and hearing impairments). He further indicated that at first the parents might not reveal the disabilities that learners had as they tried to 'hide' these for fear that the child might not be admitted to the school. The response revealed that there was a need for parents to give detailed information about the types of disabilities that learners had, so that learners with multiple disabilities had their challenges outlined and addressed right at the beginning of the school term. Again, parents experienced rejection and stigma throughout their children's lives and had developed "hiding" as a coping mechanism (Haihambo et al., 2011). Also the fact that, part of the lack of adaptations by teachers is the fact that they do not get information promptly from the parents to allow for proper planning to make effective adaptations.

#### **4.4.3 The principal's Views/Suggestions Regarding the Placement of Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

When the principal was asked to state his opinion regarding the placement of learners with multiple disabilities, he replied:

*["So far in Namibia there is no school for learners with multiple disabilities, unless they are given a special class within the school and train teachers on how to teach those learners. They can follow their own tailored syllabus designed special for them" P 1].*

The respondent added that the learners with MPLD were not benefiting from the current curriculum because the curriculum was very demanding and left little time for individual attention. There was a need for the correct placement of learners.

The multiple disabilities that learners had were unique and not of similar degree; therefore, the correct placement of learners with multiple disabilities was necessary. Correct placement would be the introduction of the special curriculum, a well-adjusted curriculum that adjusts to the needs of learners with multiple disabilities.

#### **4.4.4 Principal's Perceptions Regarding the Challenges for Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

Asked what he perceived as challenges for learners with multiple disabilities, P1 responded:

*["Learners with multiple disabilities face many challenges such as physical infrastructure that are not friendly to people with disabilities and the curriculum that is not benefiting learners with multiple disabilities." P1]*

He gave an example of the challenge of teachers' training stating that all the teachers at school are not trained to teach learners with multiple disabilities. P1 was of the opinion that learners with multiple disabilities were not benefiting from the education they received. He further added that learners with multiple disabilities experienced communication barriers with parents, peers and teachers, which hindered the learners' development academically and socially.

It is apparent from the response of the principal that learners with multiple disabilities faced challenges, such as a shortage of trained teachers, an inappropriate curriculum and communication barriers that extended from their home to the school environment.

#### **4.4.5 Principal's Perception Regarding Challenges that Teachers Experienced When Teaching Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

Regarding the perceived challenges that teachers faced when teaching learners with multiple disabilities, the respondent pointed out that “*teachers are subjected to the situation*”. They were also forced to keep these learners in their classes although the learners were not benefiting from the lessons. He further added that teachers found themselves in a difficult situation when learners were drooling; the books became wet easily and the teachers had to wait for them to dry, before they could mark the work and this was really unpleasant.

From the response, it can be deduced that there is a negative attitude when it comes to the inclusion of learners with disabilities. Similar views were also echoed by Josua (2013) that the principals were in a dilemma regarding the inclusion of learners with disabilities and hence that reaction. The principal also alluded that both learners and teachers were also challenged by the situation, apart from being in the dilemma of how to help the learners, the fact that the principal was aware of the teachers' difficulties in teaching learners with multiple disabilities indicates that the principal, whose responsibility it was to oversee the quality of education, was aware that learners with multiple disabilities did not get such quality education. Perhaps he was intending to address the problems.

#### **4.5 Curriculum, Learning and Socialisation**

This section captures the principal's opinions about the challenges regarding curriculum, learning and socialisation. The challenges are presented according to themes.

#### **4.5.1 Alternative Teaching, Learning and Assistive Devices/Methods Utilised**

The respondent was asked about the alternative teaching/learning methods as well as assistive devices that were used at the school to support the teaching and learning of learners with multiple disabilities. The respondent said that teachers, in their individual capacity, were doing their best to ensure that learners with multiple disabilities received quality education despite lack of technology. He emphasised that apart from not having a counsellor or a nurse to assist the learners, there were no assistive devices given to learners with multiple disabilities.

He indicated that they had written several letters to request the assistive devices but their request had not been attended to. Previous research has shown principals echoing the same frustrations of lack of teaching materials in their schools. Human (2013) writes that there was a lack of resources and a lack of assistance from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. The responses show that there were lack of alternative methods used to help learners with multiple disabilities and there was a need for intervention from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture.

#### **4.5.2 Curriculum Adaptation to Accommodate Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

Regarding the curriculum adaptations made to accommodate learners, the principal stated that no adjustments were made to the curriculum to accommodate learners with multiple disabilities because teachers had no mandate to change the curriculum; they were just the implementers. He indicated that teachers could make adjustments in their individual classes; however, their efforts were limited to available resources.

## **4.6 Supports from Stakeholders**

This section captures the views of the principal regarding the support provided by the stakeholders. The responses focus on two factors: Firstly, the present training for teachers and, secondly, the support specifically from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture.

### **4.6.1 Training for Teachers of Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

The principal was asked to state the type of training that was offered to the teachers who taught learners with multiple disabilities.

The principal assured the researcher that no training had been given to teachers at the time of this research. Teachers had been receiving training on the teaching of braille (braille reading and writing), as well as on sign language. It is evident from the response that training was just focusing on the two types of impairments (visual and hearing) traditionally catered for by the school, leaving learners with multiple disabilities with little to do, this means there is a huge need for professional development for teachers in terms of learners with multiple disabilities.

### **4.6.2 Support from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture**

The principal was asked to state the support that the school received from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. He responded that they had not received any support despite numerous letters that they had written to request support and materials to support learners with multiple disabilities. He added that each year these learners were being transferred to another grade, and when they reached grade 10, they registered for the Junior Secondary Examination, but failed. They then left school to go back home.

From this response it can be deduced that there is a need for the school to request for intervention by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) to rectify the situation for these learners, because the rights of these learners to education is infringed upon since they do not receive the support they need.

#### **4.7 Suggestions and Recommendations by the Principal**

The principal was asked to make recommendations that would improve the learning and socialisation of learners with multiple disabilities at the school. The suggestions made are summarised as follows:

- The need for training, workshops and conferences about inclusive education for learners with multiple disabilities. The training should target learners, teachers, parents and the community of the school.
- The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) should provide financial assistance for the school to buy materials needed to cater for the needs of learners with multiple disabilities.

#### **4.8 Results from an Interview with Teachers Regarding Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

In this section results regarding respondents T1 to T10, who were teachers, will be presented. Firstly, their personal experiences with teaching learners with disabilities, and specifically those with multiple disabilities, are discussed and this is followed by the challenges for learners with multiple disabilities, learning and socialisation, support from stakeholders in education and, lastly, their suggestions about what should be in place to support learners with multiple disabilities.

#### **4.8.1 Teachers' Experiences Regarding Teaching Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

The teachers were asked what they found enriching/satisfying/interesting about teaching learners with multiple impairments (disabilities). All the teachers indicated that it was rewarding because, despite these learners' disabilities, they were capable of learning. They were unique in their individual ways; teachers concentrated on their abilities. Disability does not mean inability (Mohammedi, 2010). Respondent T3 further added other benefits like low learners ratio to teachers 1:8, easy classroom management and few books to mark and assess.

The teachers were also asked to discuss what they found frustrating about teaching the learners with multiple disabilities. Seven respondents pointed out issues, such as:

- The lack of materials, such as textbooks, braille machines, braille papers.
- Learners with multiple disabilities were in their classes and they did not always know how to assist them.

Respondent T5 added the communication barriers that hindered communication between the teachers and the learners. Two teachers indicated that most of learners with disabilities forgot easily. Respondent T2 stated:

*["As teachers we spend time trying to repeat things, and learners forget quickly T2].*

Teachers were also asked if they taught learners with multiple disabilities and to state the types of disabilities of the children in their classes. All the respondents agreed

that they had learners with multiple disabilities in their classes, and the categories were:

- Deafness and partially sighted
- Deafness and partial paralysis
- Partially sighted and partial paralysis
- Blindness and bent spine
- Blindness and partially sighted with speech impairments
- Blind- or deafness with emotional problems
- Deaf- or blindness with learning difficulties
- Deaf- or blindness with albinism
- Deaf- and blindness with Down's syndrome

These categories were indicated by teachers of the type of learners that were found in the classrooms; teachers as creative beings use all resources at their disposal to ensure that they cater for the diversified needs of the types of learners that are found in their classes.

#### **4.9 Challenges Faced by Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

The section captures the teachers' (T1-T10) views about what they perceived as challenges faced by learners with multiple disabilities. The challenges are presented according to the themes derived from the research questions.

#### **4.9.1 Teachers' Difficulties in Meeting the Needs of Learners with MD**

All the respondents (T1-T10) pointed out that the curriculum was the main challenge. It was hard for these learners to cope with academic activities in the classroom because of their different disabilities.

*["These learners are very slow, they need a lot of attention, explanations, and they cannot finish the task in the allocated time, so we end up not finishing the syllabus, and in the end are blamed for these learners' failures." T4]*

The slow pace of teaching meant that teachers could not finish the syllabus on time, and that could affect effective teaching. Respondent T3 also mentioned the scarcity of resources. She stated that there was a lack of resources, such as braille machines, magnifiers, acrobats and other materials, and learners often had to share these; this prevented learners from completing their tasks or achieving the lesson objectives.

Respondent T1 taught learners who were deaf and partially sighted. She stated that, although these learners sat close to the chalkboard, it took much time to copy materials from the board. She also added that whenever there was a test she had to *["enlarge [the letter] and sometimes the machine is broken and they will just have to use the available papers and they don't finish writing" T1]*. This implies that there were just many issues/challenges that teachers faced when teaching learners with multiple disabilities.

#### **4.9.2 Teachers' Ways of Dealing with Challenges of Teaching Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

Respondents were asked what they did in their capacity as teachers when faced with challenges. Respondent T5 said,

[“*Sometimes I just leave them and concentrate on those that can do the activity because even if I think I cannot make something for them in such a limited time but I always feel guilty.*” T5] from this response, it is clear that the teacher is not able or creative to apply differentiated teaching strategies. But the fact that she says she feels guilty is a sign that deeply, there is a desire to provide for all and perhaps capacity development can provide the needed skills.

This can be attributed to this specific teacher being at the school for less than two years (see Table 4.1). This seems to imply that the respondent did not have much experience in supporting learners with multiple disabilities.

Responded T3 said,

[“*I create models to suit them and sometimes I ask help from my colleagues.*” T3].

This shows positivity and the willingness of teachers to support learners despite the difficulties that they were experiencing.

Respondents T7 and T9 agreed with respondent T3 that they gave learning support and they also made sure that they gave at least something that learners would be able to do based on their abilities. Respondent T1, T2, T4, T6, T8 and T10 also agreed that they found ways to deal with the challenges in their own ways. They mentioned discussion with other teachers help them to develop ways to help their learners.

#### **4.9.3 What Teachers would like to see in Place to help them Deal with the Challenges of Teaching Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

Teachers were asked to state what they would like to see in place in order to assist and support learners with multiple disabilities. Respondents T4, T5, T7, T8, T9, and

T10, stated that they would like to see training taking place for teachers about how to support learners with multiple disabilities. Respondent T8 added that:

*["An introduction of basic prevocational skills is needed for these learners, instead of wasting time on forcing these learners to follow academic activities of which they will not excel" T8].*

This implies that respondents strongly believed that training was vital in this case in order for them to develop skills to teach learners with multiple disabilities, because all participants indicated that they had not received training to teach learners with multiple disabilities (see Table 4.1). These findings are in line with the previous research that has indicated the dire need for professional development for school teachers teaching learners with disabilities (Chitiyo, Hughes, Haihambo, Taukeni, Montgomery & Chitiyo, 2016).

Respondent T1, T2, T3, and T6 suggested that the school can establish a unit with trained teachers and a special curriculum just for learners with multiple disabilities. Respondents T1 and T3 suggested the provision of suitable materials such as braille machines for learners using one arm, hearing aids for learners with difficulties in hearing, as well as glasses for learners with low vision.

From the responses above, it can be noted that although some teachers were positive about supporting learners with multiple disabilities in their classes, because every teacher has a responsibility to teach, support the development and advance the holistic development of learners, some teachers had negative perceptions and thus were talking about the separation or isolation of these learners.

#### **4.9.4 Teachers' Confidence in Supporting Learners with Multiple Disabilities Achieve their Learning Objectives**

The respondents (T1-T10) were asked whether they felt equipped to respond to the diverse learning needs of learners. Their responses are presented below. Most of the respondents answered that they were not confident in supporting learners with multiple disabilities because they had not received training to do so. Four of the respondents (T1, T2, T3 and T6) strongly believed that they could teach these learners but they too suggested that they needed training to be equipped with knowledge and skills regarding the teaching of learners with multiple disabilities; they also needed appropriate materials to enhance the learning of learners with multiple disabilities.

#### **4.10 Curriculum and Learning**

This section provides views of the teachers on the curriculum and learning for learners with multiple disabilities. The views are presented according to themes derived from the research questions.

##### **4.10.1 Challenges Teachers Experienced when Preparing Learning Activities for Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

Teachers were asked to state the challenges that they experienced when teaching activities to learners with multiple disabilities, and the respondents found it hard to prepare learning materials and activities for learners with multiple disabilities. They felt that learners who were affected by paralysis needed manipulative tools with which to work, but there were no basic guidelines about how one could work around this. Respondent T8 stated:

*[“It is very time consuming, as I already have two categories of learners in my class that I have to prepare two different activities for them (deaf and partially sighted) and now I have another group (learners with multiple disabilities that need specialised materials as well , it is just too much work load” T 8].*

The lack of guidance to teachers to employ assistive tools and techniques to support the teaching and learning of learners with multiple disabilities negatively affected the acquisition of needed knowledge and skills of these learners. Some teachers indicated that they could differentiate their teaching but the challenge lies in the implementation of appropriate assessment strategies.

#### **4.10.2 Precautions Teachers Took When Learners with Multiple Disabilities Used Specialised Equipment**

The teachers were asked to state the precautions that they took when learners with multiple disabilities handled or used specialised equipment. All respondents outlined that they gave clear instructions, guidance and demonstrations to learners. There was also a need for close monitoring and supervision to ensure the safety of the learners. Respondent T3 added that he normally gave them protective clothes to wear when they were in the lab.

#### **4.10.3 Alternative Teaching Methods Used to Adapt the Curriculum Content to Include Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

The teachers were asked to state the alternative teaching methods that they used to adapt the content of the curriculum to include learners with multiple disabilities. Their responses pointed to a number of methods that they used such as the question-and-answer method and the learner-centred approach which respondent T8 said did

not “*yield good results*” because some learners refused to talk. Responded T9 added that, in order to award marks, she gave activities to be answered orally to those learners who had partial paralysis and were unable to write.

#### **4.10.4. Stakeholders’ Support for Teachers of Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

In this section, the teachers were asked to mention the support that they received from the following stakeholders: the principal, other teachers, parents, the regional office, and office (Division Special Education and Programmes, MoEAC). All ten respondents indicated that they had not received support to enhance their teaching of learners with multiple disabilities. Seven of the respondents (T2, T3, T5 T7, T8, T9, and T10) indicated that the only support they received was from their fellow teachers when they exchanged ideas about how to go about teaching the learners. Knouwds (2010) also support the idea of teacher-support meetings where the teachers can share ideas and experiences and express their frustrations and feelings of incompetence. They also exchanged ideas with the principal who encouraged teachers to keep on pushing for better results.

It is evident from the responses that the teachers seemed to be receiving no or minimal support from the stakeholders, and this could contribute to the challenges they experienced teaching students with multiple disabilities. This could lead to frustration among learners with multiple disabilities as they do not experience positive feedback and success.

#### **4.11 Suggestions/Comments to Help the Researcher Understand the Challenges of Teaching Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

The teachers were asked to suggest or make comments that would help the researcher understand the challenges of teaching learners with multiple disabilities, and they commented:

- Learners with multiple disabilities were unable to cope and understand the content of the mainstream curriculum.
- The content in the mainstream curriculum was extensive, and some learners with multiple disabilities forgot easily.

#### **4.12 Results from the Interview with Hostel Matrons**

Firstly, findings regarding the responsibilities of the hostel matrons and what hostel matrons perceived as challenges for learners with multiple disabilities are presented. It is followed by what hostel matrons thought should be done to help learners with multiple disabilities cope better with learning and, lastly, what hostel matrons thought should be done to help learners with multiple disabilities cope better with managing their personal lives.

##### **4.12.1 Responsibilities of Hostel Matrons at this School**

The hostel matrons were asked about their main responsibilities at the school and their results were summarised:

- Supervising the hostel; (HM3)

- Ensuring that learners have eaten and taken their medication (those who are taking medication); ( HM2, HM3)
- Taking care of children in the hostel; (HM1, HM2, HM3)
- Supervising learners when doing laundry, and also helping them making their beds; (HM1, HM2)
- Teaching them table manner; (HM1)

#### **4.12.2 Hostel Matrons' Views Regarding the Challenges for Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

The hostel matrons were asked what they thought were the challenges for learners with multiple disabilities and HM1 commented that learners with multiple disabilities, especially those with physical disabilities, faced many challenges, such as washing their bodies and their clothes, because they get tired easily. HM2 and HM3 added that these learners did not participate in sport activities because of their nature of disabilities and also because they were afraid they would be harmed by other learners.

HM2 and HM3 also pointed out that they supported learners who were unable to do their daily activities. They further stated that learners with multiple disabilities could not go to the clinic by themselves because of the distance and the sandy area they had to go through to access the clinic. The matrons had to take them there with the vehicle in the school that transport learners in case of emergency. The findings reveal that the Hostel Matrons were aware of the challenges facing learners with multiple disabilities as they were in contact with them on a daily basis.

#### **4.12.3 Hostel Matrons' Views about what should be done to Help Learners with Multiple Disabilities Cope Better and Manage their Personal Lives**

The hostel matrons were asked what they thought should be done to help learners with multiple disabilities and HM2 and HM3 stated that these learners needed moral support and encouragement from everyone from the parents, community, teachers and everyone around them; no dependency is being encouraged but support is needed in all aspects. HM1 emphasised that learners with multiple disabilities should be encouraged to do work where they could, such as basic sweeping. She further added that they had to be included in all activities so they did not feel isolated.

#### **4.13 Results from an Interview with Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

Respondents L1 to L19 were learners with multiple disabilities and the following themes were discussed with them:

- Challenges regarding their physical environment;
- Difficulties experienced by learners in handling writing equipment;
- How learners managed to do activities for daily living (ADL);
- Difficulties that learners experienced when they joined the school and how they overcame these;
- Difficulties that learners were experiencing with learning, ADL and making friends.

#### **4.13.1 Challenges Regarding Learners' Physical Environment**

The respondents were asked to state the challenges that they experienced regarding the physical environment of the school, and 13 respondents commented on the fact that the passage leading to the administration office from the section of the learners with visual impairment and the one passage from the girls hostel to the dining hall was long, especially when one was crossing it, posing danger when one fell off and had to get back to it again. Respondent L3 said:

*["I am very slow and I get tired easily and sometimes I get rained on because I cannot run to the hostel"]. (Respondent L3]*

Respondent L6 commented that:

*["I get frustrated that other learners stand on your way knowing that you can't see"]. Respondent L6]*

L6 also added that there were so many things lying around and sometimes they bumped into those items. Respondent L15 indicated that the windows in the new blocks for the Grade 1 to 3 learners with visually impairments were not "nice". He said that they kept bumping their heads on those windows, especially when it was sunny. The responses indicated various issues regarding the physical facilities that were some of the challenges, especially the passages and open-framed windows that the researcher observed.

#### **4.13.2 Difficulties in Handling Writing Equipment**

The respondents were asked whether they experienced any difficulties in handling writing equipment. This question was only asked of learners with visual impairments

because they were the ones who were using writing equipment such as braille machines.

The respondents, especially those with partial paralysis (L1, L2, L4, L5, L7, L8, L9, L16, and L17), answered that they had difficulties handling the writing machines. They needed to balance their hands on the machine so that they could write. The Perkins braille machine that they used in the school had six dots, and for one to write, they had to use energy to press those buttons hard to ensure that the dot had written

#### **4.13.3 Managing Activities for Daily Living**

The respondents were asked to relate how they managed to do their activities for daily living (ADL). Respondents L1, L2, L3, L5, L7, L8, L9, 10, L13 and L16 answered that they had problems doing many activities such as bathing/showering, making up a bed, dressing, handling of kitchen appliances etc. Many of them mentioned that they got tired easily and they also had problems to bend down when washing their clothes. But some respondents like respondent L14, showed persistence by doing basic activities like cleaning their room.

The respondents indicated that their friends/roommates, as well as the hostel matrons, helped them with ADL. They also helped them to wash their clothes, tie their shoelaces and button their shirts. However, Landsberg et al. (2011) encourages independent living; help should be provided to a certain extend but as far as possible learners should be independent. Having many learners that needed assistance with ADL was a challenge to the hostel matrons because they had many children in their hostels that needed support in the given areas. However, respondents L4, L6, L11,

L12, L15, L17, L18 and L19 indicated that they had no problems in doing their daily living activities. Most of these respondents were in the age categories of 15 to 18 years. From these responses, one can conclude that it was because of experience that the learners had mastered the skills for carrying out their own ADL.

#### **4.13.4 Challenges Learners Experienced when First Joining the School**

In this section, respondents were asked to state the challenges that they (learners) experienced when they first joined the school. They responded:

*["Some kids were pushing me and when I told them to stop, they laughed because they could not understand what I was saying, I have speech problem so I just kept quite because I did know who to talk to" L13, partially sighted, microcephaly (small head), kyphosis (bent spine) slow and slurred speech].*

*["I didn't want to move, I was afraid of falling or bumping into things. There were so many things on the way. I was so happy when the matrons told us to sit" L3, optic atrophy, blind, speech impairments and minor deformity on both ankles].*

Respondent L10 who had hearing and speech impairments and some degree of weaknesses on his upper limbs and drooling felt lost when he came to this school because the Sign Language that his siblings used at home was not the same as the one used by teachers. He added that the teacher was signing fast and he could not see her hands properly.

All the respondents concurred with respondents L13, L3 and L10 about the challenges they experienced as first timers in this school, while L15 and L18 pointed out that they were very happy to see other children who were also disabled like them,

and that they were mainly happy that they had their own beds and mattresses. The responses show some positivity in interacting with others who had the same problem.

#### **4.13.5 Challenges Experienced with Learning, ADL and Making Friends**

The respondents were asked to state the challenges that they currently experienced with learning and ADL. Their responses yielded many different results.

##### **4.13.5.1 Challenges Experienced with Learning**

Most of the learners pointed out the shortage of materials, resources and assistive devices as their biggest challenges to learning. Respondent L4 from the secondary phase commented that they shared a braille machine with other learners and because she was slow, they always made her the last to use the machine and sometimes she could not finish her work. Some respondents felt that the work was “*too much*” and this resulted in them being overwhelmed and having incomplete work.

Respondent L9 pointed out that the challenge that he experienced was with signing because Namibian sign language requires using both hands. He was unable to use his left hand due to illness and it was just difficult to sign. Two of the respondents pointed out that they forgot easily; therefore, when they learned something new, they could forget it the next day and that hindered their academic performance.

##### **4.13.5.2 Challenges Experienced with ADL**

Learners, in response to the challenges they experienced with the activities for daily living, responded that they did not have many problems because the matrons helped them. They mentioned that the matrons washed their clothes and helped them make their beds. Many children had mastered their skills through practical experience.

All the respondents (L1 to L19) confirmed that they had no challenges with making friends. They had made friends with their classmates or their roommates.

Learners with multiple disabilities experiences challenges regarding their academic life, and ADL, however, there seemed to be overwhelming support from their teachers, hostel matrons and their peers.

#### **4.14 Curriculum and Attainment of Learning**

This section captures the views of learners with multiple disabilities: firstly, how they coped with their school work, followed by challenges they experienced in following instructions in class and how the challenges affected their learning.

##### **4.14.1 Coping with Schoolwork**

Learners were asked to respond to the question how they coped with their schoolwork, and they responded as follows:

The learners pointed out that they were experiencing difficulties when it came to schoolwork. They mentioned that school had a lot of work and every teacher gave them work (class activities) to be done. Respondent L17 commented that she would not have coped was it not for the support of her classmates. She indicated that her classmates were very considerate and they helped her a great deal, especially with writing summaries because they were faster in writing with the braille machine. Respondent L16 from the Secondary Phase was supposed to take a pre-vocational subject, for example, but because of his physical disabilities, he did not have that choice because the available subjects were haircare, woodwork and needlework that required much body movement.

#### **4.14.2 Challenges with Following Instructions in Class and how these Affected Learning**

Respondents were asked if they had problems with following instructions in classes and how these challenges were affecting their learning.

The respondents (L1- L19) indicated that they did not have any problem following instructions in the class. The only problem was to put into action what they taught, especially if it involved writing. Respondents L11 and L12, however, pointed out that they did not see well when the teacher was signing and sometimes too much light from outside made it difficult for them to see well. The respondents mentioned that those challenges were affecting their learning negatively. This resulted in some learners repeating a grade once or twice. However, some learners indicated that those challenges did not affect their education at all.

#### **4.15 Supports from Stakeholders in the School**

This section captures the views of learners with multiple disabilities regarding the support that they received from stakeholders in the school, such as the principal, teachers and matrons. Finally, the availability of a teacher-counsellor in the school is also discussed.

##### **4.15.1 Types of Support those Learners Received**

Learners were asked to state the type of support that they received from stakeholders in the school, and the respondents had different opinions regarding the support that they received. Some respondents felt that they did not receive support from any of the stakeholders. This is in contrast with some learners who stated that they received support from the stakeholders. The respondents also mentioned that the principal

encouraged them to try their best and work hard despite their difficulties. The teachers also supported them by giving them extra classes in order to master the content. The hostel matrons supported them in doing the work that they were unable to do and by also delivering food to the rooms when it was raining. From the responses one can conclude that the stakeholders in the school were supporting the learners although not with the support that the learners needed.

#### **4.15.2 Teacher-Counsellor or Life Skills Teacher**

The respondents were asked to respond to the question whether there was a teacher counsellor/ life skills teacher at the school that learners could talk to when they felt that they were not coping with pressures threatening their wellbeing or academic performance. All the respondents (L1 to L19), stated that there was no teacher-counsellor in the school. The learners in the secondary phase talked to their “teacher parent” allocated to all the learners in Grade 10. The learners in other grades had no one to talk to; they often kept their problems to themselves or talked to any adult who they trusted. The absence of a teacher counsellor in the school may cause frustration to the learners as they needed someone to talk to.

#### **4.16. Summary**

The observations made by the researcher revealed a number of challenges for learners with multiple disabilities, such as physical facilities and infrastructure, learning and socialisation, as well as activities for daily living (ADL). Challenges regarding physical facilities and infrastructure were such as passages that posed a danger to learners with visual impairments and those with multiple disabilities.

In some classrooms the lighting was poor and the open doorframes could also pose danger to learners with disabilities.

It is evident from this chapter that most of the respondents had positive views regarding learners with multiple disabilities despite the lack of skills to render the needed support. However, some respondents had different views and were strongly calling for a special curriculum and units for learners with multiple disabilities. The findings revealed a gap in skills of education stakeholders in the school to support learners with multiple disabilities, thus calling for training for staff members (hostel matrons and teachers) to this effect. Adjustments with regard to specialised teaching and learning materials and the physical makeup of the school and some classrooms would be needed to make schooling a pleasant and beneficial experience for learners with multiple disabilities in accordance with the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education.

There was evidence that learners with multiple disabilities seemed to be more included in the social activities of the school than in the academic activities. This aspect raises concerns for the holistic development of learners with multiple disabilities and their future standing as independent citizens of our country who are able to hold employment and contribute to nation building with both academic and social skills and values.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in accordance with the research questions and ends with recommendations. Firstly, a discussion about challenges faced by learners with multiple disabilities in learning and adapting to ADL at school are discussed. Secondly, a discussion about how these challenges inhibit the learning and socialisation of learners with multiple disabilities are presented, followed by a discussion on how the stakeholders (teachers, school management, and hostel staff) in the school address these challenges. Lastly, a discussion of what measures should be put in place in the schools to support learners with multiple disabilities are presented. The chapter ends with conclusions and various recommendations for the school, for the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture as well as for further research.

### **5.2 Discussion of the Challenges in Learning and Adapting to the Activities for Daily Living (ADL) at School for Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

The discussion of the challenges in learning and adapting to ADL at school, for learners with multiple disabilities, will first address the challenges experienced in learning and with ADL as well as the physical environment of the school.

#### **5.2.1 Lack of Training for Teachers**

It should be noted that, although the school in this case study is a school for learners with sensory disabilities, the school follows the same curriculum as mainstream schools. They have the same syllabi, textbooks, and timetable but with the addition of subjects like braille, mobility and sign language.

At the time of data collection for this study, there were talks of special education curriculum that was yet to be implemented. None of the 11 respondents comprising 10 teachers and one principal received training on either inclusive education or on teaching learners with multiple disabilities. Several studies have indicated that the lack of training of staff, especially teachers, was one of challenges that inclusive education faced (Human, 2010; Lambe & Bones, 2006; Mayumbelo, 2006). When teachers who deal with the learners on a daily basis have a better understanding of what inclusion is then they will be able to provide the necessary support to the learners with diverse learning needs.

Teachers indicated that they faced challenges and sometimes found themselves in a situation where they did not know what to do to guide the learners. When this happens the right to learners' "quality" education is infringed and compromised (Goal 4, Sustainable development Goal, 2015). This finding is in line with Mostert (2001) who stated that most teachers had little or no training in inclusive education and were not in a position to give the necessary support to learners with special educational needs.

Findings of this study demonstrate that the teachers were trained for general education but they found themselves in a school for learners with sensory impairments where they were expected to teach these learners to excel academically. It is, therefore, important for the Department of Special Education and Programmes to organise workshops or short courses for teachers teaching learners with multiple disabilities so that they can gain knowledge and skills in teaching these learners and be confident to develop differentiated teaching activities for learners.

The findings also revealed that the pre-vocational subjects that were currently available at the school were woodwork, haircare and needlework that were taken by learners with hearing impairments, and computer skills and home economics for learners with visual impairments. Some learners did not take any of the prevocational subjects because of their physical disabilities as they were unable to hold the equipment used for those subjects. It is vital that the school requests for additional pre-vocational subjects that learners with physical (multiple) disabilities will be able to take and that do not require many physical movements such as book-binding, packaging and organisation.

### **5.2.2 Lack of Teaching and Learning Materials**

One of the challenges faced by learners with multiple disabilities is the lack of teaching and learning materials. The study demonstrated a lack of assistive devices that helped with learning for learners with hearing and visual impairment and those with multiple disabilities. Emvula (2007) indicates that it is a challenge to find assistive technologies because they are expensive. It is, therefore, a challenge for the school to acquire these because the process takes time. The procedure is that a school needs to obtain two quotations from suppliers, which they submit to the regional office. The challenge is that, when there are only one or two suppliers of those items, it will take time. Most of the devices, like Perkins braille machines, are not manufactured in Namibia and it becomes very difficult to obtain quotations. This is a challenge to teachers because they are left with little or nothing to use in order to help learners with multiple disabilities.

Keller (2005) advises that learners who are partially sighted can use video systems that magnify print, hand-held magnifiers attached to eye glasses and other telescopic aids. Learners who are blind can use braille in speak, a battery-powered pocket size, braille note-taker which has a small keyboard for data entry and voice output. The device translates Braille into synthesised speech or into print (Hardman, Drew & Egan 2005). Blind learners with physical impairments will be able to use these devices. The school will need to find some of the equipment if not all in order to ensure the best education for these learners.

The school admitted that they received donations from Non-governmental Organisations (NGO'S) in the form of devices, such as talking calculators, magnifiers and tape recorders. More sophisticated assistive devices were still needed in order to include learners who were deaf-blind, partially sighted, learners with physical impairments and learners with communication problems.

Unfortunately, most of the assistive technologies are expensive and the school may find it hard to purchase them. The school therefore needs to find alternative means to increase learners' chances of being able to access the curriculum in a 'normal way'. Trained teachers are also needed to be able to handle those assistive devices.

### **5.2.3 Barriers to Activities of Daily Living (ADL)**

To help the learners participate fully in the society, they must be taught independent (daily) living skills, such as banking, taking care of health needs, using public and private services, and shopping, among others (Knouwds, 2010). Visual impairment causes barriers to daily activities, such as getting dressed, eating, cooking, table manners, shopping and organisation. The barriers become huge when another disability, such as a speech and/or physical disability, is added.

Hearing impairment causes barriers, such as miscommunication and loss of opportunities due to incorrect understanding of instructions. While this is the cause, deaf-blind learners face challenges with communication. These views are in line with Knouwds' (2010) who outlines the barriers experienced by learners with sensory disabilities.

This study also found that learners with sensory disabilities had motor and physical developmental barriers, such as sensation, perception, language, as well as intellectual and social-emotional interaction. This occurs as an integrated part of the whole development of the child. All of these processes are interlinked and have an impact on one another. Landsberg et al. (2011) explains that development progresses from one stage to another as the central nervous system matures. This process of maturation is directly influenced by information received, interpreted and integrated from the sensory organs of sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste.

The study further found that the learners with sensory impairments acquired important skills, such as mobility and social skills, only when they went to school. At home, parents were often over-protective, thus limiting the children's interactions with the environment. This finding agrees with Knouwds' (2010) who discovered that children with severe visual impairments showed specific delays in the development of head control and weight-bearing on their arms. Children primarily lift up their heads in order to look around these results in neck muscles and trunk control linked with the bearing of weight on the arms. This can be a challenge as it adds another strain to the child, making it difficult for him or her to do his or her daily living activities.

The study also found that only one hostel matrons who have received training on taking care of learners with general disabilities (see Table 4.2) no other training given to the matrons on orientation and mobility to be able to help those learners well. This was also a challenge experienced by the learners.

The school is therefore challenged to ensure that they request/organise training of this sort for hostel matrons so that they can be in better position to help the learners with multiple disabilities.

#### **5.2.4 Physical Environment**

The observation of the physical environment of the school revealed that the environment was not friendly to learners with physical disabilities, such as blindness, partially sightedness or low vision. The interviews as well as the researcher's observation suggest a number of reasons why the environment was not conducive to learners with multiple disabilities. The literature shows similar results (Haihambo, February, Brown & Hengari, 2009; Haihambo, 2010; Human, 2010; Josua, 2013). Also, the Ministry of Education (2008) stressed that most of the schools' physical facilities are not accessible to people with disabilities. The respondents cited problems, such as high passages, open-frame windows and items lying around at the school, as well as unhygienic conditions in the toilets.

There is evidence that the environment is not conducive to people with multiple, sensory disabilities. The situation regarding the environment of the school has been like that for many years despite the fact that it is a school for learners with sensory impairments.

Since its establishment, as learners with multiple disabilities have joined the school, no adaptations or adjustments were made to physical facilities to accommodate learners with other disabilities. This finding is in line with Spear (2013).

Mayumbelo (2006) emphasises that buildings at resource schools should be renovated to make them disability-friendly. The buildings of this school are old and they need to be renovated to accommodate modern challenges that emerge. Currently the school relies on the Universal Primary Fund (UPE) to cover renovations at the school but it is not enough because it also covers other teaching and learning materials, such as braille machines and magnifiers. Teaching and learning materials for learners with hearing and visual impairments are expensive; therefore, the situation calls for the school to explore other means to obtain income to address the issue of renovation.

The challenges outlined in this section calls for immediate attention in order to include learners with multiple disabilities smoothly. It will not be beneficial to include them in the school physically and yet exclude them academically or socially.

### **5.3 Discussion on How the Challenges Inhibit the Learning and Socialisation of Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

This discussion addresses how the challenges that are experienced by learners with multiple disabilities inhibit their own learning and socialisation.

The study found that the learners in this school were socially adjusted. The learners made friends with other learners with similar characteristics. The learners with hearing impairments made friends with others who also had hearing impairments while those with visual impairments made friends with other learners with visual

impairments. These findings can perhaps be like this due to communication barriers that exist naturally between these groups (hearing and visual impairment). These findings were affirmed by Konarska (2005, p. 755), who outlined that “individuals with impairments accept themselves to the extent that they are accepted by others”.

The participation of learners with multiple disabilities in various activities depends on the severity of their disabilities and their choice of social activities. Murphy, Carbone and the Council on Children with Disabilities Paediatrics (2008) opined that the participation of children with disabilities in social activities, such as sports programmes, promotes physical, emotional and social wellbeing.

The study also revealed that learners with multiple disabilities did not take part in sport activities. It is attributed to the fact the sport field was sandy and one could become tired easily or they could bump into other learners and be injured. They preferred activities that required limited movements. There were no special facilities for them that were friendly and catered for learners with impairments. They normally stayed away from such activities. However, they took part in other activities, such as singing and dancing.

#### **5.4 Discussion on How the Stakeholders (Teachers, School Management and Hostel Staff) in the School Address the Challenges of Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

This part discusses the findings regarding how the stakeholders in the school address the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities. The study indicated that stakeholders in the school addressed the challenges (mentioned in 5.2) by providing the necessary support within their reach to learners with multiple disabilities. Hostel

matrons took responsibility for the general care of learners with multiple disabilities to ensure that, despite having multiple disabilities, they functioned just like their peers with only one disability. Also, as indicated in their responses, hostel matrons together with teachers provided basic orientation and mobility skills as well as basic skills for daily living covering major themes like personal appearance and hygiene (bathing/showering, brush teeth, hair care, toileting), housekeeping (cleaning, laundry, making up of bed), food management (basic table manner, handling of Cutlery), and transportation (road signs, crossing the road, pedestrian safety tips) (NIED syllabus: Orientation and mobility 2014).

The study also shows some stakeholders displaying negative attitude towards learners with multiple disabilities by calling for isolation of learners with multiple disabilities; this can be attributed to the fact that they were not informed on what inclusion entails and they may have been frustrated at times because they did not know how to help these learners. The researcher strongly believes that training for the stakeholders in school (teachers, school management and hostel matrons) will yield positive results for the school. The school management is therefore encouraged to ensure that teachers and other stakeholders in the school do everything in their capacity to ensure that learners with multiple disabilities benefitted from education, despite the lack of teacher training, shortage of teaching and learning materials and other challenges experienced at the school.

### **5.5 Discussion of What Should be in Place in the Schools to Support Learners with Multiple Disabilities**

This section discusses what should be in place to support learners with multiple disabilities in the school.

This study found that there was no teacher counsellor or life skill teacher in the school. There was need of a school councillor/life skill teacher to be present at the school so that learners had a professional person to talk to should the need arise. The Ministry of Education (2013) has outlined it in their sector policy on inclusive education that there was a need for the availability of such services in the Special/resource school and inclusive schools.

The study also reveals that there is a need for effective partnerships between teachers and with parents of learners at the school. In the study the principal of the school stated that learners with multiple disabilities faced communication barriers that extended from home to school and then to the community. This finding revealed a gap in the ecological theory as outlined by Landsberg et al., (2011). The respondents stated that sometimes parents did not provide all the information relevant about their children that would help the teachers to make all the necessary arrangement and also for the school to plan for differentiated activities for the learners that possibly addressed their needs. The challenge lies in the school management, teachers and staff to ensure that they encouraged the parents to fully participate in the affairs of the learners. The school needs support from the stakeholders that range from financial, materials and moral to ensure the smooth running of the school.

## **5.6 Recommendations**

### **5.6.1 Recommendations for the School**

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the admission committee at the school should screen all learners at admission and make an individual learner profile for children with multiple disabilities, and with the help of the parents/guardians they can identify and address the needs according to the learner's disabilities.
- The school is also advised to organise fund-generating activities in order to buy some of the assistive devices used for teaching learners with multiple disabilities.
- Lastly, it is also recommended that the school should be modified in order to remove the infrastructural barriers that pose danger to the learners.

### **5.6.2 Recommendations for the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture**

The recommendations to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture are as follows:

- It is recommended that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture provides the school with assistive devices to ensure that young learners with multiple disabilities can become active participants in all aspects of their lives and make a meaningful contribution to the society in which they live. Assistive devices include hearing aids, augmentative communication devices (picture communication boards or computer-driven, voice-output devices), mobility and positioning devices.
- Finally, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture appoints specialists, such as occupational therapists, psychologists, audiologists, social workers, speech/language therapists as stipulated in the Sector policy of Inclusive Education (Ministry of Education, 2013).

It is clear from the findings that most learners with multiple disabilities did not benefit from the mainstream curriculum; therefore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture introduce the special needs curriculum for learners with multiple disabilities who cannot benefit from the mainstream curriculum and basic pre-vocational curriculum, and also implement teacher training and developmental courses aimed at meeting the diverse needs of all learners, because there is a huge professional training needs for teachers in the management and teaching of learners with multiple disabilities.

- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) can be strengthened by organising workshops and in-service training aimed at benefiting teachers, especially teachers who do not have specialised qualifications, as in the case of this school.

### **5.6.3 Recommendations for Further Research**

It was noticed that there were some issues that were not completely addressed that came out during the study; therefore, the following recommendations for further research are provided:

- Firstly, investigate how novice teachers manage class groups for learners with sensory disabilities.
- Secondly, investigate the provision of resources for inclusive schools by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
- Thirdly, how teacher-education can support the teaching and learning of learners with multiple disabilities both in resource- and inclusive schools

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This study does not claim to be telling the whole story regarding the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in a special school setting. However, it has attempted to digest a case study of one particular school in the Oshana region. The lessons learned can go a long way in providing ideas regarding the inclusion of learners with multiple disabilities in Namibian schools and the implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education.

The final conclusion of this study is that learners with multiple disabilities have unique needs and challenges. They struggle to communicate their needs, to move their bodies freely to access and engage their world and to learn to understand abstract concepts and ideas. They also face challenges of physical infrastructure, a lack of teachers trained for their needs and a lack of teaching and learning resources. Although the school has made an effort to ensure that learners with multiple disabilities are included in the school, the challenges remain for learners to access the curriculum and access the quality education that they deserve.

In the light of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education, there is a need for special/resource schools to depart from their original mandate of serving some children to serving all children. Schools may need assistance in making this mind shift.

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## **7. APPENDIXES**

### **Appendix A: Interview guide for teachers**

#### **Introduction**

My name is Johanna Ambili (student number 200726234). I am a Master of Education (Inclusive Education) student at the University of Namibia. The purpose of this research is to explore the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in a special school setting. I am assuring you of the highest confidentiality of the information you share with me throughout this research process. The information you provide will be used for the purpose of this study only.

#### **Instructions**

- Please answer questions with all honesty.
- Please feel free to answer in any language you feel comfortable conversing in.
- Kindly be advised not to discuss the content of this interview or your responses with your colleagues as this could interfere with the reliability of the information.
- There is no right or wrong answers in this interview. Please feel free to respond to the best of your knowledge.
- Feel free to ask for clarifications where you do not understand any question.
- Your name will not be used in a manner that links to your responses.

#### **Section A: Biographical information**

Code .....

1. Age

Your age group	Cross
	(X)
20-30	
30-40	
40-50	
50 and above	

2. Numbers of years teaching at this section: .....

3. What academic qualifications do you have?

4. In addition to your academic qualifications, do you have any qualifications in teaching learners with impairments?

5. If your answer to question 5 is yes, please specify the courses and qualifications you have attained/ attended

6. Which category of learners do you mainly teach (were you appointed to teach)?

**Section B: Challenges of teachers when learners with multiple disabilities**

1. What do you find most enriching/ satisfying/ interesting about teaching learners with the impairments you stated in question

2. What do you find most frustrating about teaching learners with the impairments you stated in question?

3. Do you teach learners with multiple disabilities? ( *if yes explain the types of disabilities that they*

4. What do you think are the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in your school?

5. What do you do in your capacity as a teacher when faced with those challenges?
6. What would you like to see in place in order to help you deal with challenges of children with multiple disabilities?
7. Do you feel that you are able to help learners with multiple disabilities achieve their learning objectives? Please explain your opinion

### **Section C: Curriculum and Learning**

1. What challenges do you experience in preparing learning activities for learners with multiple disabilities?
2. What precautions do you need to take when learners with multiple disabilities have to use specialised equipment?
3. What alternate teaching methods do you use to adapt the content of the curriculum to include learners with multiple disabilities?

### **Section D: Support from stakeholders**

1. What support do you receive while teaching learners with multiple disabilities?

From:

1.1 The principal

1.2 Other teachers

1.3 Parents

1.4 Regional Office

1.5 Head Office (Division Special Education and Programmes)

**Section E: What should be in place to support learners with multiple disabilities?**

Suggestions/comments to help the researcher understand the challenges in teaching learners with multiple disabilities better?

## **Appendix B: Interview guide for the principal**

### **Introduction**

My name is Johanna Ambili (student number 200726234). I am a Master of Education (Inclusive Education) student at the University of Namibia. The purpose of this research is to explore the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in a special school setting. I am assuring you of the highest confidentiality of the information you share with me throughout this research process. The information you provide will be used for the purpose of this study only.

### **Instructions**

- Please answer questions with all honesty.
- Please feel free to answer in any language you feel comfortable conversing in.
- Kindly be advised not to discuss the content of this interview or your responses with your colleagues as this could interfere with the reliability of the information.
- There is no right or wrong answers in this interview. Please feel free to respond to the best of your knowledge.
- Feel free to ask for clarifications where you do not understand any question.
- Your name will not be used in a manner that links to your responses.

### **Section A: Biographical information**

Code .....

1. Age

Age group	Cross (X)
20-30	
30-40	
40-50	
50-60	

2. Number of years at this school: .....
3. Number of years as a principal at this school.....
4. What academic qualifications do you have?

**Section B: challenges of learners with multiple disabilities.**

1. Kindly take me through the process of placing learners in this special school?
2. What criteria are used to admit learners to this school?
3. What is your opinion regarding the placement of learners with multiple disabilities? (Do you have suggestions regarding which school is best suitable for learners with multiple disabilities?)
4. What do you perceive as the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in your school?
5. What do you perceive as challenges teachers face in teaching learners with multiple disabilities?

**Section C: Curriculum learning and socialisation**

1. Within the classroom, what alternate teaching learning and assistive devices/ methods are used?
2. How has the curriculum been adapted to accommodate learners with multiple disabilities? (*please elaborate*)

3. Do you think your teachers are making those adaptations in order to support learners with multiple disabilities?

**Section D: support from stakeholders**

1. What training was offered to teachers teaching learners with multiple disabilities in your school? *(if there is any)*
2. What support has the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture provided to the school?

**Section E: Learners support**

What can you recommend to improve the learning and socialization and improve the support of learners multiple disabilities in your school?

## **Appendix C: Interview guide for Learners with multiple disabilities**

### **Introduction**

My name is Johanna Ambili (student number 200726234). I am a Master of Education (Inclusive Education) student at the University of Namibia. The purpose of this research is to explore the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in a special school setting. I am assuring you of the highest confidentiality of the information you share with me throughout this research process. The information you provide will be used for the purpose of this study only.

### **Instructions**

- Please answer questions with all honesty.
- Please feel free to answer in any language you feel comfortable conversing in.
- Kindly be advised not to discuss the content of this interview or your responses with your colleagues as this could interfere with the reliability of the information.
- There is no right or wrong answers in this interview. Please feel free to respond to the best of your knowledge.
- Feel free to ask for clarifications where you do not understand any question.
- Your name will not be used in a manner that links to your responses.

### **Section A: Biographical information**

Code .....

1. Age

Age	Cross (X)
8-12	
12-15	
15-18	

2. Class groups

Junior primary phase grade 0-3	
Upper primary phase grade 4-7	
Secondary phase grade 8-10	

3. Numbers of years at this school.....

4. Diagnosed impairments of learner

**Section B: Challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in learning and adapting to activities of daily living (ADL) at school**

1. What are your challenges regarding physical environment of the school?
2. Do you experience any difficulties in handling writing equipment (*if so explain*)
3. How do you manage to do the other Activities for Daily Living (ADL) such as laundry, making up your bed etc.?
4. What difficulties did you experience when you first joined this school?
5. How did you overcome such challenges?
6. What challenges do you currently experience with:

6.1 Learning

6.2 ADL

### 6.3 Making friends

#### **Section C: Curriculum and attainment**

1. How do you cope with school work?
2. Do you experience challenges following instructions in class?
3. How do the challenges affect your learning?

#### **Section D: Support from stakeholders within the school**

1. What type of support do you receive from:
  - 1.1 Principal
  - 1.2 Teachers
  - 1.3 Matrons
2. How do your teachers help you learn?
3. Is there a teacher-counsellor in the school that you can talk to when you feel that you are not coping?

## **Appendix D: Semi structured interview guide for Hostel matrons**

### **Introduction**

My name is Johanna Ambili (student number 200726234). I am a Master of Education (Inclusive Education) student at the University of Namibia. The purpose of this research is to explore the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in a special school setting. I am assuring you of the highest confidentiality of the information you share with me throughout this research process. The information you provide will be used for the purpose of this study only.

### **Instructions**

- Please answer questions with all honesty.
- Please feel free to answer in any language you feel comfortable conversing in.
- Kindly be advised not to discuss the content of this interview or your responses with your colleagues as this could interfere with the reliability of the information.
- There is no right or wrong answers in this interview. Please feel free to respond to the best of your knowledge.
- Feel free to ask for clarifications where you do not understand any question.
- Your name will not be used in a manner that links to your responses.

Code: .....

1. Age

<b>Your age group</b>	<b>Cross</b>
	<b>(X)</b>
20-30	
30-40	
40-50	
50 and above	

1. Gender

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Cross</b>
	<b>(X)</b>
female	
male	

1. What are your main responsibilities in this school?
2. How long have you been at this school?
3. What do you think are the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in managing their daily lives?

4. Have you received training on how to help and care for learners with multiple disabilities? *(if yes describe the nature of training received)*
5. If no, how do you support learners with multiple disabilities?
6. How did you acquire those skills?
7. What do you think should be done to help learners with multiple disabilities coping better with learning?
8. What do you think should be done to help learners with multiple disabilities coping better with managing their personal lives?

## Appendix E: Observation schedule

Date	
observer	
	Physical environments (comments)
classrooms	
Dining hall	
Hostels	
Sport facilities	
	Teaching and learning in the classrooms
Classrooms activities	
Grouping in the room	
Numbers of learners in the room	
Adaptation made to learners	
Social groups	
General school atmosphere	

Other comments

.....

.....

.....

## **Appendix F: Research participant consent form**

Dear participant,

You are asked to participate in the research study that is aimed at **exploring the challenges experienced by learners with multiple disabilities in a special school setting.**

Please note that you will receive no direct benefit for participating in this study. However, your participation may help the researcher to better understand the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in the special school setting.

All information obtained about you during this study will be strictly confidential. To ensure confidentiality, a code will be assigned to you.

### **Please circle the appropriate choice beside each statement**

1. I agree to participate in the study

**Yes**

**No**

2. I agree to have the interview tape recorded

**Yes**

**No**

Taking part in this study is voluntary where one is at liberty to withdraw at any point in time. I thank you very much for your time.

**Participant's signature and date**

---

**Person obtaining consent and date**

## **Appendix G: Consent form for parents/ guardian**

### **Parent/guardian consent form**

Dear parent/guardian

You are kindly asked to give authorisation for your child to participate in the research study that is aimed at **exploring the challenges experienced by learners with multiple disabilities in a special school setting.**

Please note that your child will receive no direct benefit for participating in this study. However, his or her participation may help the researcher to better understand the challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in the special school setting.

All information obtained about your child during this study will be strictly confidential. To ensure confidentiality, a code will be assigned to him/her.

### **Please circle the appropriate choice beside each statement**

3. I agree for this learner to participate in the study

**Yes**

**No**

4. I authorise the researcher to tape record this interview

**Yes**

**No**

Taking part in this study is voluntary where one is at liberty to withdraw at any point in time. I thank you very much for your time. Should you need further elaborations and clarifications please do not hesitate to contact me at cell 0852337744.

**Parent/guardian's signature and date**

---

**Person obtaining consent and date**

---

## Appendix H: Ethical clearance certificates from the University of Namibia



### ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

**Ethical Clearance Reference Number: FOE/141/2016**

**Date: 5 December, 2016**

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (UREC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee sitting with the Postgraduate Studies Committee.

**Title of Project:** Challenges of Learners with Multiple Disabilities in a Selected Special School in Oshana Education region

**Nature/Level of Project:** Masters

**Researcher:** J. Ambili

**Student Number:** 200726234

**Faculty:** Faculty of Education

**Supervisors:** Dr. C. Haihambo (Main) Dr. A. Hako (Co)

Take note of the following:

- (a) Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the UREC. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
- (b) Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the UREC.
- (c) The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the UREC (through the Chairperson of the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by UREC.
- (d) The UREC retains the right to:
  - (i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
  - (ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

UREC wishes you the best in your research.

Prof. P. Odonkor: UREC Chairperson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "P. Odonkor", written over a horizontal line.

Ms. P. Claassen: UREC Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "P. Claassen", written over a horizontal line.

## Appendix I: Permission letter to the PS in the ministry of Education

Johanna Ambili  
P.O. Box 11429  
Oshakati  
Republic of Namibia

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Cell: 0812337744/0852337744

Date: 17 January 2017

Email: [joanambili@yahoo.com](mailto:joanambili@yahoo.com)

The permanent secretary

Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture

Private Bag 13391

Dear Mrs Steenkamp

**Subject: request for permission to conduct research and collect data at Eluwa Special School in Oshana region**

I am a registered Master of Education (M.Ed.) student with the University of Namibia; part of the curriculum requires students to do a research after completing their course work. I am intending to do a study focusing on challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in a special school of hearing and visually impaired learners. This research is purely for academic purpose and it is tailored to help finding out those challenges and how to go about addressing them.

I am hereby requesting permission to conduct research at Eluwa Special School in Ompundja circuit of Oshana region. The principal, ten teachers, four hostel matron and nineteen learners will be interviewed. The research ethics will be adhered to and for anonymity sake, the respondents names will not appear in the report and also the interview will not interfere with the respondents 'scheduled teaching and learning activities. The respondents will be asked to sign a consent form and have every right to withdraw from the research at any given point. Attached kindly find the ethical clearance certificate as granted by the University of Namibia Post Graduate Committee.

I thank you very much for the earliest consideration to this request.

Faithfully yours

J. Ambili

Student numbers: 200726234

## Appendix J: Response from the Ministry of Education, Arts and culture



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

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### MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

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Tel: +264 61 -2933200  
Fax: +264 61- 2933922  
Enquiries: C. Muchila  
Email: [Cavin.Muchila@moe.gov.na](mailto:Cavin.Muchila@moe.gov.na)

Luther Street, Govt. Office Park  
Private Bag 13186  
Windhoek  
Namibia

File no: 11/1/1

Ms Johanna Ambili  
P O Box 11429  
Oshakati  
Cell: +264812337744/0852337744  
Email: [joanambili@yahoo.com](mailto:joanambili@yahoo.com)

Dear Ms Ambili

**SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT ELUWA SPECIAL SCHOOL, OSHANA REGION**

Kindly be informed that permission to conduct research for your Master's Degree in Oshana region is herewith granted. You are further requested to present the letter of approval to the Regional Director to ensure that research ethics are adhered to and disruption of curriculum delivery is avoided.

Furthermore, we humbly request you to share your research findings with the ministry. You may contact Mr C. Muchila at the Directorate: Programmes and Quality Assurance (PQA) for provision of summary of your research findings.

I wish you the best in conducting your research and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours

Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture  
Office of the  
Permanent Secretary  
2017-02-08  
  
SANET D. STEENKAMP  
PERMANENT SECRETARY  
Private Bag 13186  
Windhoek, Namibia

08.02.17  
Date

*All official correspondences must be addressed to the Permanent Secretary*

## Appendix K: Permission letter to the director of Oshana Education region

Johanna Ambili  
P.O. Box 11429  
Oshakati  
Republic of Namibia

---

Cell: 0812337744/0852337744

Date: 25 January 2017

Email: [joanambili@yahoo.com](mailto:joanambili@yahoo.com)

The Director

Oshana education region

Private Bag 5518

Oshakati

Dear Mrs Amukana

**Subject: request for permission to conduct research and collect data at Eluwa Special School**

I am a registered Master of Education (M.Ed.) student with the University of Namibia; part of the curriculum requires students to do a research after completing their course work. I am intending to do a study focusing on challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in a special school of hearing and visually impaired learners. This research is purely for academic purpose and it is tailored to help finding out those challenges and how to go about addressing them.

I am hereby requesting permission to conduct research at Eluwa Special School in Ompundja circuit. The principal, ten teachers, four hostel matron and nineteen learners will be interviewed. The research ethics will be adhered to and for anonymity sake, the respondents names will not appear in the report and also the interview will not interfere with the respondents 'scheduled teaching and learning activities. Attached kindly find the ethical clearance certificate as granted by the University of Namibia Post Graduate Committee.

I thank you very much for the earliest consideration to this request.

Faithfully yours

J. Ambili

Student numbers: 200726234

## Appendix L: Response from the director of Oshana Education Region



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

OSHANA REGIONAL COUNCIL

DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

ASPIRING TO EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION FOR ALL

Tel: 065 - 230057  
Fax: 065 - 230035

Private Bag 5518  
Oshakati, Namibia

Email: sakariae@yahoo.com  
Enq: Ester Sakaria  
Ref: 15/2/19

**Ms Johanna Ambili**  
**Student Number: 200726234**  
**Cell: 0812337744/ 0852337744**

**Dear Ms Ambili**

**Subject: Request to conduct an academic research in Eluwa Special School**

Your letter dated 25 January 2017 requesting permission to conduct research and collect data in Eluwa Special School is hereby acknowledged and referred to.

Oshana Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture is pleased to inform you that permission has been granted for you to conduct research and collect data for academic purposes in Eluwa Special School. Kindly take note that research activities should not interrupt teaching and learning activities in the school, and that participation is on voluntary bases. You are advised to contact the school in advance to make the necessary arrangements.

We encourage you to share with us the findings of your research in order to enhance the education of learners with multiple disabilities.

We wish you success in your studies.

Yours sincerely,

  
Hileni M. Amukana  
Director of Education, Arts and Culture



*All correspondence should be addressed to the Chief Regional Officer*

## Appendix M: Permission letter to the pilot school

Johanna Ambili  
P.O. Box 11429  
Oshakati  
Republic of Namibia

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Cell: 0812337744/0852337744

Date: 02 February 2017

Email: [joanambili@yahoo.com](mailto:joanambili@yahoo.com)

The Principal  
Outapi special school  
Private Bag  
Oshakati  
Dear Sir/madam

**Subject: request for permission to pilot research instruments at Outapi special school**

I am a registered Master of Education (M.Ed.) student with the University of Namibia; part of the curriculum requires students to do a research after completing their course work. I am intending to do a study focusing on challenges of learners with multiple disabilities in a special school of hearing and visually impaired learners. This research is purely for academic purpose and it is tailored to help finding out those challenges and how to go about addressing them.

I am hereby requesting permission to carry out a pilot study at Outapi special school, in Oshana education region. The principal, one teacher, one hostel matron and one learner will be interviewed. The research ethics will be adhered to and for anonymity sake, the respondents names will not appear in the report and also the interview will not interfere with the respondents 'scheduled teaching and learning activities./ Attached kindly find the ethical clearance certificate as granted by the University of Namibia Post Graduate Committee.

I thank you very much for the earliest consideration to this request.

Faithfully yours

.....  
J. Ambili

Student numbers: 200726234

