

EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS AND LEARNERS ABOUT THE NATURE OF LEARNING
SUPPORT SERVICES IN TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS
IN OSHANA REGION, NAMIBIA

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of teachers and learners about the nature of learning support services in two secondary schools in the Oshana region of Namibia. The study employed qualitative research approach/method with descriptive and phenomenological research designs. The population for this study comprised of willing Grade 8, 9, or 10 teachers and learners. The study was underpinned by Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism under the concepts of Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding. Focus group interviews were employed as data collection methods, one for the teachers, and one for learners. The research instruments were checked for validity and reliability.

The key findings showed that the provision of learning support to learners in the two secondary schools was compromised by lack of skills and inadequate training among teachers, inadequate teaching and learning support resources, teacher attitudes, workload, time constraints, and lack of parental involvement. However, despite these adverse circumstances, teachers provided learning support services to learners whenever possible. Implications for enhancing learning support practices in the two schools include teacher in-service training and compulsory workshops for all teachers on learning support provision practice, making the learning support teachers' manual available in schools where there is none and training teachers on how to use them. Furthermore, having separate learning support lesson/period on the school timetable. Areas for future research have been suggested.

Key words: Learning Support, Learners with barriers to learning, and Learning difficulties.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

JSC	Junior Secondary Certificate
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEAC	Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
NAMCOL	Namibia College of Open Learning
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
PS	Permanent Secretary
SPIE	Sector Policy on Inclusive Education
UNAM	University of Namibia
UNESCO	United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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DEDICATION

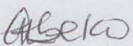
I dedicate this thesis to my late mother Anna Nzwana Nasilele Nawa (Bana Mooka). I hope this achievement will complete the dream that you had for me all those many years you strived to give me the best education you could. To my three children Mushaukwa, Mushabati and Anna Nzwana, whose affection, love, encouragement gave me the will to keep on keeping on. You guys have always been my greatest inspiration.

DECLARATIONS

I, Catherine Mutalifelile Situmbeko, hereby declares that this study is my own work and is a true reflection of my research, and that this work, or any part thereof has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution.

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Date

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the background of the study in the investigation into the views and experiences of teachers and learners regarding the nature of learning support services in two selected secondary schools in the Oshana region of Namibia. This chapter includes the statement of the problem, the research questions, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations as well as the definitions of the core concepts used in this study. The chapter then ends with an outline of the entire thesis.

1.1 Background of the study

This study focuses on the provision of learning support services in two secondary schools in the Oshana region of Namibia. The study evaluates the nature of the current learning support services available to learners in secondary schools. Education is an important vehicle through which all children can be empowered to enhance their life opportunities and to obtain the means to participate more fully in their communities. However, many marginalised and vulnerable Namibian learners experience barriers to accessing not only quality education, but also many other basic services (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Hailombe (2011) describes quality in education as teaching and learning processes that bring the curriculum to life and determine what happens in the classroom, and subsequently, the quality of the learning outcomes. This also means an education that includes the provision of curricula, learning materials, facilities, teachers and instructional experiences that enable learners to achieve high academic standards. Furthermore, quality in education also relates to

the absence of barriers that prevent the smooth implementation of learning and teaching support to learners who experience barriers to learning in schools.

Learning support provides a platform to transform and guide teaching towards the realisation of the national policy on inclusive education (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2014).

Learning support also offers teachers a chance to explore other teaching strategies to provide diverse learning opportunities to all learners, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities.

Hannah (2015) notes that the provision of learning support is based on the mind-set of teachers that any child with learning difficulties can be helped to overcome those difficulties through good teaching. However, the process of bringing about change in the way teaching is conducted not a quick process and often teachers find it challenging remain patient with the process.

Teachers' clear understanding of what constitutes learning support is crucial since a wrong understanding will affect the role that learning support plays in the classroom. In this regard, Swart and Pettipher (2011) pointed out that secondary school teachers' interpretation of learning support plays a central role in the way they identify and assess their learners and the way they respond to each learner's individual needs. Therefore, Booth and Ainscow (2002) argued that support to learners should not be perceived as a component of the teaching process in which all staff is involved but should rather be perceived as a cornerstone of a successful inclusive education.

In Namibia, the provision of learning support is one of the ways towards the realisation of the national policy on inclusive education by ensuring that learners who experience barriers to

learning are identified and receive early intervention plans to address such barriers to learning. Learning support is provided to learners who are perceived to be at the risk of failure, that is, learners with learning backlogs accumulated due to either failing a particular grade, or from being transferred from one grade to the next without successfully achieving the grade's basic competencies (MoEAC, 2014). However, inclusive education in Namibia has been a gradual process characterised by many challenges for teachers at all levels of education, i.e., primary, secondary and tertiary levels (MoEAC, 2014).

According to Sichombe, Nambira, Tjipueja, and Kapenda (2011), Namibian schools are faced with high grade repetition and the transfer of learners to the next grade without achieving the basic competencies for the grade. Moreover, the National Promotion Policy Guide of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture [MoEAC] (2017) states that learners who do not progress to the next grade must receive counselling to help them understand their situation and they must receive learning support, focusing on the competencies which they did not achieve. Nevertheless, Sichombe et al. (2011) found that not much is known about the learning support practices in schools, and that learners who experience learning backlogs are left on their own without the provision of learning support. Further, the authors argue that learners who repeat a grade and are not provided with learning support are increasingly at risk of failing their grade again or being transferred without having achieved the basic competencies for the grade.

Learners who experience barriers to learning need to be provided with the necessary support to overcome the barriers. An effective learning-support service plays a central role in the raising of national standards in literacy and numeracy and in providing the opportunity for every pupil to reach a competent level in those areas (Government of Ireland, 2000).

According to the MoEAC (2013), barriers to learning may take the form of impairments (physical), psychosocial disturbances (educational neglect/deprivation of basic essentials), and differences in abilities (cognitive or intellectual disability). These barriers may also take the form of life experiences (socio-economic e.g. poverty), negative attitudes (teacher or school's attitude towards children/learners with disabilities), and an inflexible curriculum (content, methodology and assessment). The other barriers to learning may include the language of instruction/learning (English as a medium of instruction), inaccessible or unsafe learning environments (learning environments not easily accessible to learners using wheelchairs), the policies and legislation (Language policy), and education managers' and teachers' lack of skills or inappropriate skills (inadequately trained teachers in special education curriculum, lack of skills in differentiating content or assessment methods to meet learners' diverse needs). Figure 1 summarises some of these barriers to learning amongst learners.

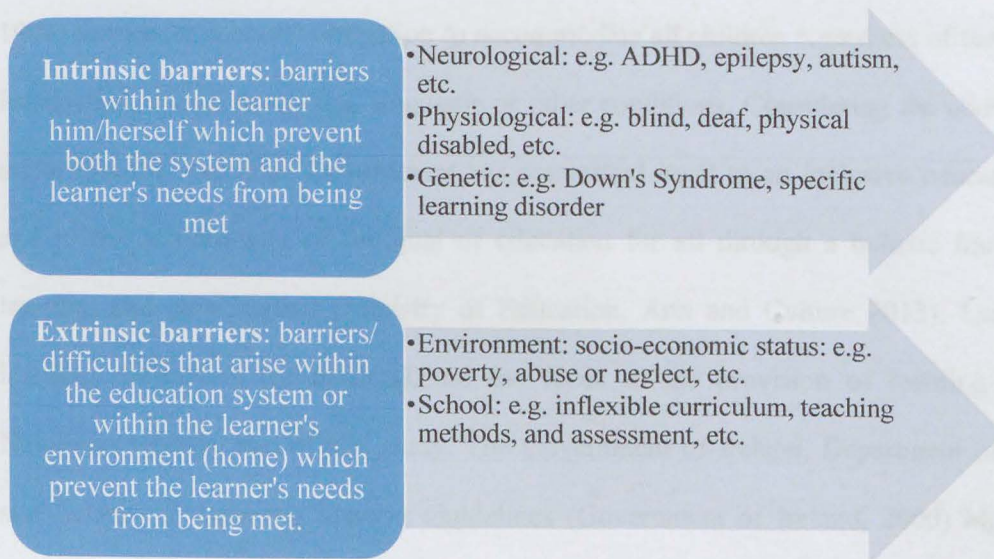


Figure 1. Types of barriers to learning and their examples. Adapted from Addressing barriers to learning: A South African Perspective (2nd Edition) by E. Landsberg, D. Kruger, & E. Swart (Eds), 2011. South Africa. Van Schaik Publishers.

It is crucial to note that Namibia is a member of the international community and is a signatory to international agreements that uphold the view that education is not only a right for all children, but should also be accessible to all children irrespective of their ability or disability. For example, the Government of the Republic of Namibia ratified international agreements such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) which outlines the right to education and training of all children to achieve the greatest degree of self-reliance and social integration possible. Namibia also signed the Dakar Framework for Action: Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All, which highlights commitment to a child-centred pedagogy where individual differences are accepted as a challenge and not as a problem (UNESCO, 2000). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO,

1994) reinforces schools' obligation to accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. Considering the above, one can argue that the Namibian Government has committed itself to an inclusive education system and to the achievement of the goal of education for all through a holistic framework for learning and participation (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture 2013). Learners with learning difficulties (or barriers), are the focus in the provision of learning support in Namibian schools, and of this study. The Government of Ireland, Department of Education and Science in Learning Support Guidelines (Government of Ireland, 2000) highlights the principal aim of learning support as those activities which enhance the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school. In Namibia, the provision of learning support is a way of ensuring that all learners are able to make academic progress and achieve their academic goals.

Nevertheless, the provision of learning support to learners with barriers to learning is a compulsory activity in both private and public schools. Schools are required to provide learning support at all phases of schooling to all learners who are repeaters in a grade, learners who are transferred without having met all expected learning outcomes to the next grade, learners who are unable to achieve the required competencies of a subject as well as intellectually gifted learners (Circular 2/2015 in MoEAC, 2014). According to Circular No. 6 of 2006 as cited in Sichombe et al. (2011), the goal of compensatory teaching (learning support) is to ensure that all learners with learning backlogs receive the required support. In addition, this support should address learning problems, the possible lack of background knowledge to academic topics, help learners to develop the necessary skills and competencies

for successful learning, and ensure that learners are promoted to the next grade. In its quest to address the barriers to learning experienced by learners at all phases of Namibia's public and private schools, the Ministry of Education through the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) developed a manual called Learning Support Teachers' Manual. This manual was developed as a guiding tool to assist teachers on how to provide learning support to learners in their respective classrooms (MoEAC, 2014). One of the guidelines in this manual stipulates that teachers are expected to identify learners in need of learning support and include learning support in their everyday lessons. Additionally, when they administer learning support, teachers should put special emphasis on reading, writing and spelling skills, mathematics, homework, study skills and skills on writing examinations. One can argue that such a manual provides the basics of what learning support entails.

Despite good policies and numerous efforts in ensuring that barriers to learning are minimised or removed, evidence from both national (Namibia) and international research studies show that teachers are not adequately trained to provide effective learning support services to learners (Bojuwoye, Moetsane, Stofile, Moola, & Sylvester, 2014; Mackay, 2014; Mahlo, 2011; Sichombe, et al. 2011). This becomes a cause for concern in a country like Namibia, which is seeking to educate its population, including children with learning disabilities. In another South African study, Mavuso (2014) strongly contends that teachers in mainstream schools are ill equipped to provide learning support and consequently many learners are not being appropriately supported on time. The current study intends to find out whether teachers in two schools in the Oshana region are adequately equipped to provide learning support services. The researcher is not aware of any such studies conducted in the Oshana education region. Thus, there is a need to carry out a study on experiences of teachers and learners about

the nature of learning support services in the two selected secondary schools in the Oshana education region of Namibia.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Joorst (2010) and Sichombe et al. (2011) reiterate the importance of providing learning support to individual learners in Namibian schools. According to these scholars, learning support is essential as it attempts to make the learning context and lessons accessible to all learners. The Namibian Government's commitment to "education for all" led to the development of a policy on inclusive education in 2013 (MoEAC, 2013). The 'Ministry of Education's Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (SPIE)' aims to ensure that all learners receive education in the least restrictive educational setting and in schools in their neighbourhood to the fullest extent possible. In fact, one of the policy's main objectives is to support learners with a wide range of individual disabilities and needs in compulsory education at early childhood development, pre-primary, primary and secondary levels (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2013).

Considering the background provided for this study, it could be argued that by not providing appropriate learning support to learners who experience barriers to learning, and who are in need of such support services, one defies the principles on which the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education is based. According to Sichombe et al. (2011), a lack of effective learning support in schools has a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning and on the promotion of learners in schools.

The present study is predicated on the findings of the scholars referred to above who concurred that learners who experience barriers to learning in secondary schools lack learning support services, and thus their learning needs are not adequately met. In addition, this study postulates that teachers in secondary schools have observed that there are challenges with regard to providing learning support services to learners who experience barriers to learning. Therefore, in order to understand the nature of learning support services and practices in Namibian schools, this study aimed at investigating the experiences of teachers and learners regarding the effectiveness of learning support services in the two selected secondary schools in the Oshana region of Namibia.

1.3 Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the views and experiences of learners with regards to learning support services available at their school in the Oshana region?
2. What are the views and experiences of teachers about learning support services available at their school in Oshana region?

1.4 Significance of the study

Few studies have been carried out in Namibian schools to investigate the views and experiences of teachers and learners regarding the nature of learning support services that exist in secondary schools (Sichombe et al., 2011). The study will attempt to explore in depth and shed some light on the views and experiences of teachers and learners regarding the nature of learning support provision in selected secondary schools in the Oshana region of

Namibia. This study is significant in that it will provide more information to teachers about the nature of learning support provision. Out of this information, more strategies can be offered to policy makers and teachers about the optimisation of learning support services.

The findings of this study will provide policymakers, regional education planners, school management and learners with more information regarding prevailing barriers to learning and how they are being experienced at participating schools in the Oshana region. In this way, the findings of this study can lead to the identification of barriers in the learning support services in the identified two schools and such findings could lead to an improvement of the learning support services that will eventually benefit the children with learning backlogs.

The study also aims to contribute to the domain of inclusive education, especially regarding the hiccups in the provision of learning support services to learners with barriers to learning in secondary schools. The study could also contribute to the knowledge base of available literature on learning support provision in schools and evoke suggestions and recommendations on possible and better ways of enhancing learning support practices and the provision of such services to learners in secondary schools.

A planned learning support programme is vital in that it promotes effective provision of appropriate learning support to learners. The recommendations made by this study could constitute an important step forward in the realisation of inclusive education and learning support service provision in Namibia's schools. In addition, results of this study could serve as a point of entry for other studies to be carried out in the field of inclusive education.

1.5 Limitations of the study

While qualitative research is considered appropriate for researchers who desire to investigate the actual experiences of the participants and thereby obtain rich information about people in understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem, the results reported herein should be considered in the light of some limitations.

The use of a single research method of data collection, which in this study is focus group interviews, poses some limitations. It is worth noting that the use of focus group discussions as the only data collection instrument proved to be less efficient in eliciting richer data/information from respondents as expected. Thus, it is suggested that future researchers who may desire to expand on the current phenomenon (learning support provision) should consider using a multiple of data collection research instruments instead of only a single one, such as pairing focus group discussions with either individual interviews, observation schedules transcripts, and/or document analysis for richer data and as required in any qualitative research study (see suggestion for future research to this effect in Chapter 5, 5.4 no. 3 on page 115). Another limitation is that the findings of this study are limited to the context of the two particular secondary schools studied in the Oshana region and cannot be generalized to the entire region or to the entire Namibia. The researcher has taken cognisance of social desirability of responses as another limitation of this study in that, some participants' responses to questions were made to socially please the researcher. However, the researcher emphasized to respondents that there were no right or wrong responses and encouraged participants to say what they know and not what they thought the researcher needed to hear.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

The scope of this study is delimited in that only Grade 8, 9, and 10 teachers and Grade 8, 9, and 10 learners from the two selected secondary schools who gave consent participated in the study. In view of this, the research findings from teachers and learners cannot be generalized to other regions. The study used only two selected secondary schools in the Oshana Education region.

This study is also delimited to the following scopes:

- a. Discussing the experiences of teachers and learners about the nature of learning support services at the secondary school level;
- b. Exposing the barriers to learning support services to teachers and learners at the secondary school level;
- c. Defining key areas and presenting relevant theories from literatures that review experiences of teachers and learners about the nature of learning support services;
- d. Analysing and discussing findings gathered from the empirical data;
- e. Suggesting possible solutions and recommendations towards improving learning support services to ensure effective inclusive learning at secondary school level.

1.7 Definition of operational terms

It always remains vital to explain the concepts that could lead to ambiguity and misunderstanding in order to establish a framework of reference in which the investigator

approaches the problem of interest (Best and Kahn, 2014). Accordingly, the following terms should be understood as explained herein:

- 1.7.1 *Learning support*: this term refers to a collaborative process of identifying learning difficulties, the development and implementation of intervention programmes in the curriculum such as special concessions, curriculum differentiation and adaption, in order to support learners experiencing learning difficulties (Mavuso, 2014).
- 1.7.2 *Barriers to learning*: this expression refers to those factors or obstacles (something) that prevents learners from benefiting from education; or from accessing a full range of learning opportunities and limit their participation in education or in society (Visser as cited in Lessing & de Witt, 2010; Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture 2015).
- 1.7.3 *Differentiated instruction*: refers to “a set of strategies that helps teachers meet each child where they are when they enter class” (Levy, 2008, p162).
- 1.7.4 *Teachers’ experiences*: refers to the practices, skills and knowledge that teachers have about learning support and learning support services.
- 1.7.5 *Learners’ experiences*: refers to the available learning support services that are in existence at their school and available to them at school to help them improve and cope with learning at school.

1.8 Layout of the thesis

This thesis has five chapters. Chapter 1 provides a brief introduction, background information, the problem statement, research questions, and significance of the study, limitations, as well as

delimitations to the study. Finally, the chapter gives an outlay of the operational terms used in the study. Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the theoretical framework that underpins the study and literature reviewed relating to experiences of teachers and learners with regards to the nature of learning support services in secondary schools. Chapter 3 provides a discussion of the research methodology and design used in the study. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the results obtained from the study. This chapter analyses and interprets the data gathered for this study. Chapter 5 provides the conclusion of the study and includes recommendations for further studies about the nature of learning support service provision in a secondary school setting.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the background to the study, the statement of the problem, as well as the research questions. In addition, the chapter includes the significance of the study and the limitations of the study. It also sheds light on the reasons for undertaking the study. The chapter includes a section that clarifies important concepts that were used throughout the study. This chapter concludes by drawing attention to the way in which the thesis is arranged and what information each chapter contains. The next chapter provides a description of the theoretical framework that underpins the current study, followed by an overview of literature on learning support and learning support services.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that informed the current study, the literature relevant to the study, a description of the meaning of learning support, outlining the eligibility of learners for learning support and learning support practices and a discussion of the organisation of learning support. The challenges experienced with the provision of learning support and other findings from other research relevant to this study are also included in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a summary, and a preview to Chapter 3.

2.2 Theoretical framework

This study was informed by Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism under the concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's theory is built on the premise that human beings possess the ability to construct their own knowledge, and that learners have prior learning experiences that they acquired from the environment where they live (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky states that children learn through social interactions with a more skilful person who may model behaviour to the child and/or may verbally instruct a child. Motitswe (2011) agrees with Vygotsky that learning is a social process that takes place in a social context like a classroom that allows for social interaction and communication between learners where they construct new meaning and further develop together as they draw knowledge from each other. According to Motitswe (2011), social constructivism implies that teaching should be undertaken always to create opportunities that

lead to active learning, whereby teachers search for effective teaching and learning methods that are inclusive of all learners in a classroom. Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism is thus regarded as an appropriate base on which the current study can rest.

2.2.1 Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Vygotsky (1978:86) defines ZPD as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers”. Using the ZPD, Vygotsky (1978) argues that the learner's thinking and problem-solving ability falls into three categories namely: what can be performed independently (what the child can do alone without help), what can be performed with assistance (what the child can do with help) and what cannot be performed even with assistance, (what the child cannot do). In the same vein, Adam (2017) defines the ZPD as the difference between what children can do on their own and what they can do with assistance from others. In the context of this study, the ZPD implies that the teacher should have prior knowledge about those activities that learners can do on their own, and those tasks that they would need assistance with.

Siyepu (2013) points out that teachers should use the ZPD to bridge the gap between what a learner can do without help and what a learner can do with assistance by teaching within the ZPD. For Siyepu, teaching within the ZPD refers to teaching that focuses on the properties of the learner, which is the learner's potential and/or readiness to learn. Similarly, Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, and Miller (2003) point out that teaching in the ZPD does not necessarily mean teaching that results in the easiest or most effortless form of learning for the child, but

rather the aspect of teaching that focuses on properties of the learner, which means the notion of a learner's potential or readiness to learn. For example, on a reading task, a learner's ZPD would constitute the ability to read at different levels that challenge a learner to read well without causing them frustration or loss of motivation. Knowledge about the ZPD would assist teachers to plan activities that are inclusive for all learners. Learners learn at a different pace and therefore teachers should differentiate activities with everyday lessons to suit the learners' needs and level of understanding (MoE, 2014). The document, Learning Support Teachers' Manual, provides guidelines on how to differentiate teaching and assessment in order to support learners (see MoE, 2014, p.10).

Roosevelt (2008) posits that the goal of education according to Vygotsky is to keep learners in their own ZPDs as often as possible. However, Denhere, Chinyoka, and Mambeu (2013) argue that learners learn best when working together with others during joint collaboration, and that it is through this collaborative endeavour with more skilled persons that learners learn and internalise new concepts. Campbell and Skovdal (2015) agree with the views above by suggesting that after the learner completes the task with others, it is presumed that the learner would be able to complete the same task individually the next time. Through this collaborative process, the learner's ZPD for that particular task would have been raised. If need be, the process could then be repeated at the higher level of task difficulty that the learner's new ZPD would require (Campbell & Skovdal, 2015).

However, Denhere et al. (2013) caution that it is imperative that teachers establish the kind of help that the learner has at his/her disposal during homework time, and consider also the learner's ZPD, when assigning homework to learners. The above-mentioned "help" at the learner's disposal is referred to as the learner's "assets" (Dednam, 2011). The "assets" of the

learner refers to the learner's home circumstances that influence academic learning, such as the encouragement the learner is likely to receive from his/her parents and the environmental resources such as the availability of a library or connection to the internet (Dednam, 2011). It is thus crucial that teachers should keep the ZPD of their learners in mind when preparing lessons and when dishing out homework/class activities.

2.2.2 Scaffolding

Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) introduced the term scaffolding. In the context of the ZPD, scaffolding is used to explain the social and participatory nature of teaching and learning which occurs in the ZPD. According to Van de Pol, Volman, Oort, and Beishuizen (2015), the metaphor of scaffolding is derived from construction work where it represents a temporary structure that is used to erect a building. In education, scaffolding refers to support that is tailored to students' needs. According to Mayaba (2008), instruction involves scaffolding. For example, during scaffolding the learner works with experts or more capable others (teachers, peers and/or parents) on challenging tasks that he/she could not solve independently. Vygotsky (1978) explains that during scaffolding, the expert models appropriate problem-solving behaviours, present new approaches to the problem, and encourage the learner to use her or his emergent skills to assume responsibility of some parts of the task. While the ZPD is constructed through collaborative interaction and mediated by verbal interaction where a student's current or actual understanding is developed in those interactions towards their potential understanding, scaffolding can be seen as the support a teacher offers to move the student toward his/her potential. Scaffolding is thus an instructional structure whereby the teacher models the desired learning strategy or task, then gradually shifts responsibility to the

learner. It can be assumed that as the learner develops the abilities required, he or she would receive less assistance and would be able to solve more of similar problems independently. In the same vein, if a learner displays signs that he/she is still encountering challenges on the modelled tasks, the support from the more knowledgeable other would continue. However, Denhere et al. (2013) advocate that as soon as the learner demonstrates that he/she can do the task independently, the adult dismantles the scaffold, which then indicates that the child has benefited from the assisted performance and has internalized the problem-solving processes provided.

McKenzie (1999, as cited in Mishra, 2013) outlines six benefits of scaffolding instruction or teaching strategy for the learner. Firstly, scaffolding provides clear direction and reduces learners' confusion since the teacher anticipates beforehand problems that learners might encounter and then develops step by step instructions, which explains what a student must do to meet expectations. Secondly, scaffolding clarifies purpose – scaffolding helps learners understand why they are doing the work and why it is important. Thirdly, scaffolding keeps learners on task by providing structure, as the scaffolder lesson provides pathways that can help the learner to make decisions about which path to choose without having to wander off the designated task. Fourthly, scaffolding clarifies expectations and incorporates assessment and feedback. What the students are expected to do is made clear in the beginning from the examples shown to learners. In the fifth place, scaffolding points learners to appropriate learning materials that are provided by the teacher to reduce time wasting, confusion, and frustrations as the learner may decide which of the source to use. Finally, scaffolding reduces uncertainty, surprise, and disappointment in that teachers can test their lessons to determine possible problem areas and then refine the lesson to eliminate difficulties so that learning is

maximized. Furthermore, Vygotsky (1978) explains that scaffolding influences the curriculum, instruction, and assessment and at the same time has implications for learning and teaching. Since children learn much through interaction, curricula should thus be designed to emphasize interaction between learners and learning tasks. Vygotsky believes that with appropriate adult help, learners often perform tasks that they are incapable of completing on their own. Therefore, scaffolding where the adult continually adjusts the level of his or her help in response to the child's level of performance, is an effective form of teaching.

Assessment methods should also take the ZPD of learners into account. This means that what the learners can do on their own is their level of actual development and what they can do with help is their level of potential development (their ZPD) (Lajoie, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky believes that two learners might have the same level of actual development, but given the appropriate help from an adult, one might be able to solve more problems than the other might. Therefore, assessment methods should target both the level of actual development and the level of potential development. Applying the concepts of the ZPD and scaffolding to the context of the current study implies using different types of support such as giving guidance to learners when they are working on a given task, explaining the task process or instructions, showing learners ways to complete a task, assigning capable learners to assist less capable learners, and sometimes assigning different tasks to learners according to their level of ability, as well as assigning tasks that learners can actually complete without much struggle. It is thus imperative that teachers are being made aware that not all learners will master a task at the same time hence, the teacher should continue to provide support to the slower learner until the learner is able to perform the task on his/her own.

2.3 The concepts learning support and inclusive education

Inclusive education is a process of enabling all children to learn and participate effectively within mainstream school systems without segregation. It is about shifting the focus from altering disabled people to fit into society to transforming society and the world by changing attitudes, removing barriers and providing the right support (Mwangi & Orodho, 2014). Further, Mwangi and Orodho (2014) assert that the inclusive education philosophy ensures that schools' learning environments and educational systems meet the diverse needs of all learners irrespective of their learning difficulties and disabilities. Ndinisa (2016) postulates that inclusive education ensures that no learner is excluded because of disability but rather be included because of his or her abilities and what he or she can achieve. According to Engelbrecht and Green (2001, p.6), "inclusive education is not simply a question of making special arrangements for some learners with disabilities in a system designed for others. It is about designing education for all in such a way that it becomes normal for differences to be accommodated rather than seen to be an exception".

According to Bornman and Rose (2010), as cited in Dreyer (2015), the provision of learning support is aimed at reducing learning barriers for learners who may have learning support needs by developing conducive and supportive, non-restrictive learning environments. In this case, the provision of learning support is underpinned by the philosophy of inclusive education. From a Namibian perspective, inclusive education can thus be understood as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, and provision of appropriate educational resources, and learning support services to all learners in all schools. In line with the support given by the Namibian Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO,

1994), the MoEAC in Namibia has gradually shifted its focus towards the inclusion movement that acknowledges that schools should support all learners regardless of their differences in abilities or disabilities. In Namibia, the philosophy of inclusive education as stipulated in Namibia's Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (MoE, 2013) is an approach that involves balancing the education playground by being cognizant of the different barriers to learning either in learners, the curriculum, or in the school system, and by addressing those barriers through the provision of appropriate educational resources, and/or by providing learning support to learners who may experience the barriers. This means that learners with disabilities and others defined as having special educational needs are increasingly registered in regular schools in their local neighbourhood with peers of their age.

Thus, the inclusive education policy aims at including all children, with or without disabilities, in the schooling system and to meet their needs as much as possible in ordinary mainstream schools. In addition, as a responsive and inclusive education system, the government of Namibia through the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture views the provision of learning support as a platform to transform and guide teaching towards the essential support system that addresses the needs of learners with special education needs in its schools (MoE, 2014). The researcher posits that the overall aim of learning support in the Namibian context is to provide the necessary physical, emotional and intellectual support to learners who experience barriers to learning, so as to enhance their ability to learn.

2.4 Identifying eligible learners for learning support services

According to Mkhuma (2012), the process of identifying learners who experience barriers to learning is a critical step towards the provision of effective learning support. Teachers are

expected to possess the knowledge and expertise to identify such learners. Bouwer (2011) supports the views of Mkhuma by asserting that assessing learners for learning support requires teachers to decide on the information they need for each learner's case in order to inform the learning support team on the support needs of each particular learner, to render optimal support. In the same vein, Bouwer (2011) suggests that teachers should make use of continuous assessment to identify learners in need of learning support. Bouwer explains that using assessment determines how learning support for individual learners may best be facilitated.

In Namibian schools, teachers are mandated to assess the learner's eligibility for learning support services from continuous assessments, and from recommendations made by teachers and the principal (MoEAC, 2017). In addition, the Namibian National Promotion Policy Guide for Junior and Senior Secondary Phases (MoEAC, 2017) stipulates that learners identified for learning support should receive additional instructional support at school (in-class or afternoon learning support). Equally, other intervention services targeting specific learning areas of difficulty should be sought through referrals to special education resource schools or paraprofessionals like educational psychologists, speech therapists, and social workers, to name just a few. According to the Republic of Namibia's Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture's promotion policy guide (MoEAC, 2017, p. 7), a learner may be in need of learning support in the following context: (1) if a learner's level of achievement in relation to the grade competencies in the subject syllabi is in the range of 50-59%, such a learner may require support only in some areas of their learning; (2) a learner may require learning support in most areas of their learning, if a learner's performances is in the range of 40-49%; (3)

whereas a learner is regarded as 'seriously in need of learning support' if a learner's performance is in the range of 0 - 39%.

Additionally, learners who are repeaters, and those who have been transferred to new grades, are supposed to form a significant percentage of learners eligible for learning support in Namibian schools (MoE, 2014). Certain national policies (the National Promotion Policy Guide; Sector Policy on Inclusive Education) make provision that learners in the above category, irrespective of their phase of schooling (lower primary, upper primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary), should be provided with learning support. Despite the stipulations of the mentioned policies, the reviewed related literature indicates that these mentioned categories of learners do not always receive the necessary assistance (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture 2015; Sichombe, et al. 2011).

2.5 Organisation of learning support services

Primarily, a specialist either in a special school or in a special education classroom (MoE, 2014) offered the provision of learning support to learners with special learning needs as remedial teaching. Unlike remedial teaching, learning support acknowledges the potential of learners (the learner's strengths) and allows learners each to grow at their own pace towards their maximum level of independence in their learning, using strategies and practicing learning styles of choice, and each reaching a level of achievement in accordance with their unique abilities. In accommodating and/or meeting specific support needs, learning support relies on collaboration of people from the systems to which the learners belong, to participate in the process of their learning (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). With the SPIE (MoEAC, 2013) the MoEAC acknowledges the views of Swart and Pettipher by saying that barriers to learning

exist and that they arise when learning needs are not met. Thus, in order to pave the way for all learners (with or without disabilities/barriers) to learn and participate fully in the education system in schools commonly known as “mainstream” schools, a supportive learning environment which is accommodating have to be created (Ministry of Education, 2013). To ensure that barriers to learning are minimised, all schools in Namibia are encouraged to establish learning support programmes.

According to the Government of Ireland Learning Support Guidelines (2000), a learning-support programme should be fully integrated into the general organisation of the school, and its activities should form an element of the broader school plan that deals with all aspects of the school’s operations, including provision of support for learners with special needs. In particular, the broader plan should indicate how the different resources available to the school would be integrated to best meet the needs of learners who struggle with low academic achievement and/or learning difficulties. The government of Namibia, through the MoEAC, made it mandatory for all schools to have in their establishment a learning support team and learning support programme (MoE, 2014). The Learning Support Teachers’ Manual (MoE, 2014) states that learning support should be provided to learners who experience barriers to learning in class, or as an afternoon activity. Teachers should assess the learner’s eligibility for learning support from continuous assessment, and from recommendations made by subject teachers and/or the principal (MoEAC, 2017). The procedures in the National Promotion Policy Guide for Junior and Senior Secondary Phases, (MoEAC, 2017) stipulates that learners who are identified for learning support should receive additional instructional support at school, as well as other intervention services targeting specific learning areas of difficulty. In

Table 1

Organisation of learning support services

When it should be done	How it should be done	Areas of emphasis/type of support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In class - should take place immediately when a problem is identified during the lesson; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporated in every day's planned lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading (literacy), writing and spelling skills Mathematics (numeracy) Homework Study skills Examination writing skills-how to interpret Questions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the afternoon – on weekdays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support should be arranged for smaller groups of learners (10 to 15). The teacher should not repeat a lesson already taught, instead the teacher should determine the learner's backlog and should not repeat the same exercises the learner could not do in the current grade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New lesson Focus on the learner's understanding of the previous grade's work in order to identify the gaps (backlogs), in case of repeaters and learners who have been Transferred.

Note. Adapted from Learning Support Teachers' Manual by NIED MoE, 2014.

The information contained in Table 1 depicts the what (content), when (time), and the how (process) of learning support provision. It also shows that in order for teachers to be able to carry out learning support activities in class or in the afternoon, they need to differentiate their teaching methods as well as assessment methods in order to provide the appropriate learning support to learners with learning barriers.

2.5.1 Composition of the learning support team

Although the focus of this study is on the experiences of teachers and learners regarding the nature of learning support services in the selected secondary schools, the manner in which

learning support services are supposed to be organised has a direct impact on the process of providing support to learners. According to the learning support teachers' manual document (MoEAC, 2014), each school is supposed to establish a learning support team to facilitate the activities of the learning support programme in the school. This team should comprise of the principal, the learning support group coordinator, the learning support group teachers, subject/class teachers, parents, and a member of the counselling support group (MoEAC, 2014).

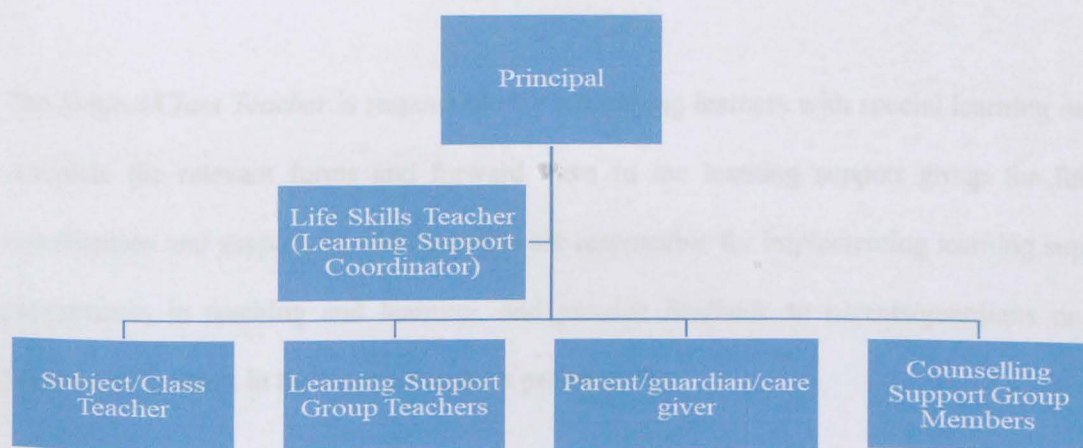


Figure 2: Structure of the Learning Support Team. Adapted from Learning Support Teachers' Manual, Ministry of Education, 2014.

2.5.2 Roles and responsibilities of the learning support team

According to the document Learning Support Teachers' Manual (MoEAC, 2014), the following are responsibilities of the learning support team in Namibia:

The *Principal* is responsible for ensuring the execution of the learning support programme in the school, monitoring teachers' daily lesson plans to ensure that the learning support

activities are included, and select competent and willing teachers to spearhead afternoon learning support classes.

The *Learning Support Group Coordinator* (Life Skills Teacher) is responsible for coordinating and sensitizing all teachers on the importance of learning support, advising and monitoring all learning support group teachers to ensure that they complete required forms for every learner in need of support, and keep a copy of the record for learners' profile in the cumulative record card annually.

The *Subject/Class Teacher* is responsible for identifying learners with special learning needs, complete the relevant forms and forward them to the learning support group for further investigation and support. In addition, they are responsible for implementing learning support programmes in teaching and learning, and provide feedback to parents/guardians on the progress of learners in the learning support programme.

The *Learning Support Group Teachers* are responsible for providing reading, writing, mathematics, and study skills to learners in the learning support programme and assess the exact nature of the learning difficulties, as well as select learners with the most urgent needs for support. Furthermore, these teachers provide advice to subject/class teachers on appropriate classroom activities, keep records of the planned learning support activities of each learner in the learning support programme, keep an attendance register for afternoon learning support sessions, and provide feedback to class/subject teachers and parents/guardians on the progress of the learner.

The *Parents/Guardians/Care Giver* are responsible for monitoring the work done by their child in the learning support programme, motivate their child to cooperate in the learning support programme, visit the school to show interest in the progress of the child, attend parent-teacher days/meetings, and seek advice on how to support the learning of their children at home.

The *Counselling Support Group Members* are responsible for providing counselling to learners who may experience emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, and should work in co-operation with the learning support group teachers in assisting the learner.

2.6 Significance of learning support to learners

The provision of learning support to learners who experience barriers to learning, or any form of learning difficulty, is crucial for achieving success and quality education for all learners irrespective of their differences. Hence, the provision of learning support to learners is considered one of many inclusive education practices, which calls for a change of how teaching and learning should happen in the school's classroom (Campbell & Skovdal, 2015). According to the Government of Ireland document Learning Support Guidelines (2000), the aim of learning support is to help learners with learning difficulties to achieve academic success at school.

Habulezi (2012) agrees with views of the scholars above by asserting that learning support facilitates access to the curriculum and improves learners' confidence, skills of social interaction and independence. The Government of Ireland (2000) outlines the general benefits of providing learning support to learners in the school. These include that learning support: (1)

improves learning with learners (2) enhances basic skills and learning strategies to a level which enables learners to participate in the full curriculum (3) enables learners to achieve adequate levels of competency in literacy and mathematics (4) enables learners to apply independent learning strategies that would increase their commitment to, and involvement in their own learning, develop positive attitudes to school and high levels of self-esteem.

While schools worldwide continue to adopt an inclusive education practice, they should be cognizant of learners' individual differences and adopt a curriculum that is flexible enough to enable all students to achieve their educational goals. To this effect, the provision of learning support to learners who experience barriers to learning or any form of learning difficulty is thus crucial for achieving success and quality education for all learners irrespective of their differences. According to Nasen (2015), increased demands on learning at any phase of schooling pose extra challenges for learners who experience barriers to learning. Without the necessary support, learners with barriers to learning struggle to access the curriculum and may not cope with the quantity of learning that the increased demands place on their abilities.

2.7 Learning support practices

According to Adelman and Taylor (2008), learner support may be offered to all learners in a school, to those in specified grades, or to those identified to be at risk. The activities may be implemented in regular or special education classrooms or as "pull-out" programs, and may be designed for an entire class, groups, or individuals. For example, in a large class, learners with learning difficulty in reading or those who struggle in mathematics may experience barriers to learning because of fear of ridicule from peers. In that case, the teacher would have to pull-out

this specific group from the regular classroom and provide support to them in a smaller group or as individuals, to meet their learning needs.

Moreover, the way teachers worldwide provide leaning support services to learners in their schools is influenced by many factors, some of which are intrinsic (within the teacher) whilst others are extrinsic (outside of the teacher). According to Hannah (2015 p. 94), “teachers’ beliefs, understandings and perceptions have an impact on the provision of effective learning support”. In the same way, Campbell, McNamara, and Gilroy 2013, (as cited in Hannah, 2015) argue with Hannah’ views by stating that teachers support learners in the way they do, not because of the skills they have or have not learned, but because of their backgrounds, their biographies, and the kind of teachers they have thus become. Teachers’ careers, their hopes and dreams, their opportunities and aspirations, or their frustrations are all influencing teachers’ commitment, enthusiasm and morale. Namibia’s Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (SPIE) is supported by international conventions and frameworks. According to SPIE, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in Namibia recognises that all children need educational support, and that this support should be integral to every school and to the work of every teacher (MoE, 2013). Therefore, the researcher advocates that the mission of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in Namibia is to create an enabling, supporting environment in every school for all learners and teachers. As specified by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2014), learning support provides a platform to transform and guide teaching towards essential support system that the teacher’s needs.

2.8 Challenges to learning support provision

There are various challenges that teachers face concerning provision of learning support to learners with barriers to learning. Many scholars (Thomson (1998) as cited in Hay, Smit, & Paulsen, 2001; Mkhuma, 2012; Sichombe, et al., 2011) pointed out large classes, teachers' negative attitudes to disability, a lack of support services, rigid teaching methods, and a lack of parent involvement as some of the challenges that teachers face. In the same vein, Mkhuma (2012) and Sichombe, et al. (2011) shared same sentiments regarding challenges to learning support services by identifying some extra paperwork for teachers, lack of knowledge to offer learning support and shortage of time as other challenges that hamper the provision of inclusive education and learning support services in schools in both South Africa, and Namibia. Hay, Smit, and Paulsen (2001), explained that the average teacher in South Africa is neither prepared nor ready to teach learners in an inclusive classroom effectively.

Secondary school teachers continue to face the same challenges concerning the provision of learning support services to learners due to inadequate teacher training skills. Hannah (2015) highlights that inclusive education should not only be concerned with transforming classroom support, but should consequently be dependent on the teachers' willingness and ability to successfully put the concept into practice. In view of this, teachers need to be provided with opportunities to be able to guide and support learner diversity in their classrooms as learning support teachers. Moshweu (2016) acknowledges that the demands in mainstream classes are challenging and require committed teachers who have the necessary skills and expert knowledge to provide appropriate teaching and learning experiences for all learners. As a result, the researcher concludes that the teachers with no professional training and teaching

experiences in special education and support education find it difficult to cater for learners with barriers to learning in the secondary schools.

2.9 Summary

This literature review confirms the recognition of learners with special education needs or barriers to learning and the necessity of the provision of learning support services in regular schools. Challenges facing teachers in the implementation of inclusive education and learning support services to learners with special educational needs/barriers to learning have also been highlighted in this chapter. These include: inadequate teacher training, overcrowded classrooms, high teacher workload, time constraints, negative teacher attitudes, and lack of knowledge on inclusive education and/or learning support practices, lack of or inadequate resources, and lack of parental involvement.

The next chapter discusses the research methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the research design, population, sampling procedures, research instruments used, data collection procedure and analysis. The validity and reliability of the research instruments, as well as the ethical issues that guided the research process are also presented in this chapter.

3.2 Research design

This study adopted a qualitative, descriptive and phenomenological research designs to acquire and analyse data pertinent to the topic of study. According to Creswell (2009), this approach is a way of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human phenomenon. Creswell (2014) asserts that qualitative research enables the researcher to investigate the actual experiences of the participants and thereby obtain in-depth information about people and places.

In this qualitative study, the effectiveness of learning support services is described in terms of the actual and personal experiences of teachers and learners in the two secondary schools chosen, without having to change the participants' self-report (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2006). Qualitative researchers are interested in how people make sense of their world and the meanings they construct. The research tools for this study were based on the descriptive phenomenological design. For Mertens (2010) phenomenological research puts emphasis on the individual's subjective perception of meaning and essence of lived experiences. It focuses

on the understanding and description of an event or phenomenon or experience from the point of view of the participant.

3.3 Population

Mertens (2010) and Creswell (2014) defined research population as a group of individuals who fit the conceptual definition of people with the same characteristics the researcher wants to base his or her study results on. The population of this study comprised of Grade 8, 9, and 10 teachers and learners in the two selected secondary schools in the Oshana Education region of Namibia. The researcher chose Grade 8-10 learners because they had some lived life experiences with learning support services at secondary school level, as well as wider knowledge and understanding to answer the interview questions for this study than younger learners. Also, as older learners (in Grade 11 and 12) were probably more focussed on preparing for examinations at the time of data collection, it was feared that they might have been distracted and not favourable research participants. Thus, the Grade 8-10 group was considered to be able to provide useful and helpful information. Also, the Grade 8 - 10 learners were selected because of the curriculum phase they follow which allows for learners who repeat the phase to receive learning support services. The Grade 11 and Grade 12 teachers and learners were excluded because they follow a two-year senior secondary phase curriculum, for which the provision of learning support services is not explicitly specified. The Grade 8, 9, and 10 teachers were selected as potential participants as they work with the targeted learner population. The two mentioned schools were selected because 1) they shared similarities concerning the phases they offered, that is Grade 8 – 12; 2) had learners with learning support needs who were either repeaters in either Grade 8, 9 or 10, or transferred to

either Grade 8, 9 or 10 without meeting the requirements to be promoted, or experienced learning difficulties; 3) the two schools offered the Grade 8 to 12 curriculum; and 4) the researcher was able to get knowledgeable respondents from these schools who were willing and available to participate in the study and share their views and experiences on the nature of learning support services. The population of this research study was limited to the Oshana region because it has been among the top 10 performing regions in Namibia on the Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC – Grade 10) examination. The two schools had an estimated population of 1567 learners of which Grade 8, 9 and 10 learners made up about 570 learners. The total number of teachers in the two schools was 73, that is, 43 teachers in school S2 and 30 in school S1.

3.4 Sample

The sample for this study was selected using a non-probability sampling technique known as purposeful sampling. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is a method that helps the researcher to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher to find answers to the research questions. In the same vein, Yin (2011) defines purposeful sampling as the selection of participants or sources of data to be used in a study, based on their anticipated information-richness and relevance in relation to the study's research questions. Mertens (2010) describes purposeful sampling as a process that involves selecting research participants according to the needs of the study. Patton (2002:264) refers to "information-rich cases" as cases that allow for a more insightful and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied.

For teachers, the criteria that were to be met for participating in the study were: a) they had been a teacher at the school for two to three years; (b) must have taught in either Grade 8, 9 or 10 for two to three years; (c) and one of them must be a Life Skills teacher at the particular school for two to three years. The reason for these criteria of inclusion were:

1. the junior secondary phase from Grade 8 to 10 is a three-year curriculum; and
2. if a learner repeats a grade or have been transferred to the next grade in the phase, such a learner would be entitled to learning support services which subject teachers should provide;
3. two to three years teaching either Grade 8, 9 or 10 learners at the school is long enough for teachers to evaluate the effectiveness to the learning support services offered; and
4. two to three years of teaching either Grade 8, 9 or 10 learners at the school is considered by the researcher to be long enough for teachers to monitor the progress of learners who participated in the learning support programme for them to make the necessary adjustments to either continue or discontinue the service.

For the learners, the criteria to be met for participating in the study were that: a) they must have been learners at the participating schools for two to three years; b) must have been a learner in either Grade 8, 9 or 10; and c) must have participated in one or more types of learning support services available in the participating school. The reasons for these criteria of inclusion were:

1. that a learner who had been at the school for two to three years, and had participated in the learning support service or program of the school would be able to share their lived experience on the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of the learning

support services provided to learners in the school; and in addition,

2. such a learner would even be able to share ideas on how the learning support services could be enhanced or maintained.

The study in total had 18 participants. Of these participants, 12 were learners (six learners per school) and six were teachers (three teachers per school). The researcher purposefully selected the 18 participants as purposeful sampling renders the researcher the opportunity to select participants who can potentially contribute useful data to the purpose of the study (Mertens, 2010). The number of participants (18) was deemed appropriate for this study as Creswell (2009) indicates that five to 25 participants should suffice for a phenomenological qualitative study.

3.5 Research instruments

Researchers like Creswell (2014), Kumar (2011) and Yin (2011) postulate that focus group discussions are a method of data collection which allows the researcher to attain various views on the phenomenon under study. Kumar (2011, p.124), further avers that focus group interviews are “a form of strategy in qualitative research in which attitudes, opinions or perceptions towards an issue, product, service or programme are explored through a free and open discussion between members of a group and the researcher”. Kumar (2011) also postulates that, in focus group discussions, the researcher facilitates the discussion by asking questions that stimulate conversation among members. These discussions in turn elicit high-quality data in a social environment where participants consider their own view in the context of the views of others. In short, focus group discussions invoke respondents to share their opinions on a subject of study in the company of others.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) acknowledge that the use of focus groups in educational research is growing, albeit more slowly than for instance in business and political circles. The above scholars are of the opinion that focus groups are a form of group interview, though not in the sense of a backward and forward between interviewer and group. In a focus group discussion, the participants interact with each other rather than with the interviewer, such that the views of the participants can emerge - the participants' rather than the researcher's agenda can predominate (Cohen, et al., 2007). Focus groups are more socially oriented than individual interviews (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). To this effect, focus groups are more relaxed and interactive, which makes them more enjoyable and thereby producing the information needed by the researcher. Focus group discussions were considered an appropriate research tool for this study since this tool helps to yield more information in a short space of time, and it allows a researcher to obtain in-depth information through probing. According to Cohen et al. (2007), focus groups yield insights that might not otherwise have been available in a straightforward interview, and they are economical on time whilst producing a large amount of data in a relatively short period.

In this study, the researcher used four focus groups composed of two groups of three teachers in each school, and two groups of six learners in each school to collect data from the two participating schools. The focus group discussions were audio-recorded and lasted between 45 to 60 minutes each. All participants consented to have the deliberations audio-recorded.

3.6 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted using two mini focus group discussions with two Grade 8 and two Grade 9 subject teachers, and again with two Grade 8 and two Grade 9 learners from one

school in the Khomas region. According to Ary et al. (2010), a pilot study helps the researcher to decide whether the study is feasible and whether it is worthwhile to carry out. Ary et al. (2010) add that the pilot study provides the opportunity to assess the appropriateness of the data-collection methods and other procedures and enables the researcher to make changes if necessary. A pilot study also permits a preliminary testing of the research instrument and questions, which may give some indication of its validity, clarity and suggest whether further refinement is needed. In addition, Cohen et al. (2007, p.341-2), point out that “piloting a study increases the reliability, validity and practicability of the research instrument”.

The pilot study helped the researcher to refine unclear questions, determine the pace of interview questions, refine probing skills, and estimate time for each focus group discussion. It was also good for the researcher to experience the unanticipated challenges on facilitating focus group discussions and devise ways to resolve them. For example, the pilot study helped the researcher to understand how best to ask and probe questions, take notes, and listen to participants' responses simultaneously.

3.7 Validity and reliability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that the trustworthiness of a study is important in evaluating its worth. Trustworthiness involves establishing the following: (1) Credibility - confidence in the 'truth' of the findings; (2) Transferability - showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts; (3) Dependability - showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated; and (4) Confirmability - a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not the researcher's bias, motivation, or interest.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness in a qualitative study as determined by the four indicators above, reflects validity and reliability in qualitative research. In the same vein, Ary et al. (2010) posit that although the qualitative researcher typically does not have generalisability as a goal, it is his or her responsibility to provide sufficiently rich, detailed, thick descriptions of the context so that potential users can make the necessary comparisons and judgments about similarity and hence transferability. Ary et al. (2010) further explain that transferability of a set of findings to another context depends on the similarity or goodness of fit between the context of the study and other contexts. However, the transfer of findings is made by the potential user of the findings, who must compare and decide on the similarity of the two contexts.

In order to ensure validity and reliability of the findings derived from the research instrument used in this study, the researcher firstly asked a fellow colleague and doctorate researcher to go through both the teachers' and learners' focus group discussion interview schedules to check whether the wording of the questions was clear. Secondly, the researcher conducted a pilot study to test the validity and reliability of a focus group discussion as a qualitative research instrument. Thirdly, the researcher ensured that the focus group discussion schedule meant for a specific group (for teachers or for learners) was used with the corresponding group during each focus group interview. Finally, the researcher employed the following extra procedures to ensure validity and reliability of the study's findings: triangulation, member checking, peer review, thick rich descriptions and to clarify bias the researcher brought to the study. A concise discussion of each of these strategies is provided below.

3.7.1 Triangulation

The first validity procedure that the researcher employed was to check for common themes or categories of data from similar focus groups. For example, the teacher focus group of School 1 (S1) was compared against the teacher focus group of School 2 (S2). According to Creswell and Miller (2000 p.26), “triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study”. As a validity procedure, triangulation is a step taken by researchers employing only the researcher’s lens and is a systematic process of sorting data to find common themes or categories by eliminating overlapping areas (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In order to triangulate the findings of this study, the researcher looked for correlating data between S1 and S2 focus groups.

3.7.2 Member checking

According to Creswell and Miller (2000) member checking entails that participants have the opportunity of checking how accurately their contributions have been represented in the final account of the study. Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe member checks as the most crucial technique for establishing credibility of the interpreted data and participants’ narratives. In this study, the researchers employed member checking by actively involving participants in assessing whether their interpretations were accurately represented. The researcher ensured member checks by asking two participants from the teacher focus group (one from each teacher focus group) to review the transcripts of the focus group discussion using the WhatsApp social media platform and then the teachers had to confirm the accuracy

of the transcripts. Two learners from each learner focus group discussion were likewise asked to review the transcripts of their focus group discussion and provide feedback.

3.7.3 Peer review

Peer reviewing was the third validity procedure which the researcher employed in this study. According to Creswell and Miller (2000), a peer review is the review of the data and research process by someone who is familiar with the research study or the phenomenon being explored. In the context of this study, a fellow colleague and doctorate researcher played the devil's advocate in the form of discussions and comments made on the study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a peer reviewer provides support, plays devil's advocate, challenges the researcher's assumptions, pushes the researcher to the next step methodologically, and asks hard questions about methods and interpretations.

3.7.4 Thick rich description

The fourth procedure employed by the researcher to establish credibility of the findings of this study involved a thorough description of the setting, of the participants, and of the themes drawn from the data. According to Denzin (1989, p.83), "thick descriptions are deep, dense, detailed accounts which the researchers use to help readers understand that the account is credible. According to Creswell and Miller (2000), the process of writing using thick description is to provide as much detail as possible that would enable readers to make decisions about the applicability of the findings to other settings or similar context.

To use this procedure for establishing credibility to the findings, the researcher employed a constructivist perspective to contextualize the participants and sites studied. The process involved writing each participant's responses to the questions asked in the focus groups verbatim in order to provide as much detail as possible. It also involved transcribing every spoken word or utterance/sound (laughs, and the "ayeh" expressions) of participants. As Denzin (1989) noted, the researcher described the experiences of participants in this study by providing a detailed rendering of how participants felt about the nature of learning support services in the two schools.

3.7.5 Researcher's role

The fifth procedure used to ensure the validity of this study involved the self-disclosure of the researcher's assumptions, beliefs, values and biases that might have shaped this inquiry. Creswell and Miller (2000) point out that it is particularly important for researchers to acknowledge and describe their initial beliefs and biases early in the research process in order to allow readers to understand their positions, and then to bracket or suspend those biases as the study proceeds.

In this study, it was imperative to understand the role that the researcher's personal background played in relation to the current study, the participants, and the sites. The researcher is a teacher by profession and has taught at the two participating schools for a combined period of close to seven years. The researcher has taught promotional subjects (examinable) at both junior secondary and senior phases until 2011, when she was appointed as a full time Life Skills teacher at one of the participating schools.

The researcher currently is a Life Skills teacher at a school in a different region. Having taught for so many years, the researcher was concerned about how learners who experienced learning difficulties in secondary schools, particularly Grade 8, 9, and 10, were supported in their learning. This led to an interest to establish, from the experiences of teachers and learners, how learning support services were facilitated and implemented. However, the researcher acknowledges the biases that may have been involved because of the connection that existed between the researcher and the participating subjects and the sites where the research was based.

Creswell (2014) argues that the researcher's past experience with the research problem or with the participants or research site where the data is collected could cause researchers to lean towards certain themes, look for evidence to support their positions, and create favourable or unfavourable conclusions about the sites or participants. However, in the context of this study, the researcher was cognizant of such a bias and made sure that only the participants' meanings of the phenomenon were focused upon, hence, the researcher used a voice recorder to capture the participants' views, which the researcher then transcribed verbatim and interrogated to arrive at a conclusion for this study.

3.8 Data collection procedure

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Committee before the commencement of this study (see Annexure A). The Executive Director of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, as well as the Director of Oshana Education Region (see Annexure B and C) granted the researcher permission to conduct this study in the

chosen region and schools. The researcher also sought permission telephonically from the principals of the two schools and such permission was granted.

Data collection for this study took place from the 30th of October to the 2nd of November 2017. The participants for each of the four focus group interviews were identified on the day of the interviews. Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher explained the purpose of the research study to all the participants, and sought the participants' written consent (assent for the minor learners and their parents' consent), as well as consent to use a voice recorder during the interviews. All the participants consented to the use of a voice recorder.

Four focus group interviews were conducted, two groups (teacher group, learner group) per school. The focus group method was thought to be appropriate for this study as it is a flexible method in which prompting allows for deeper and fuller discussion, and triggers new understanding and ideas (Hannah, 2015). According to Kumar (2011), in a focus group interview, the researcher explores the perceptions, experiences and understandings of a group of people who have some experience in common with regard to a situation or event. In the context of this study, the researcher explored the experiences of both teachers and learners with regard to the nature of learning support services in two secondary schools. Since this study comprised of more than one focus groups, it helped the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' experience of the phenomenon under study.

In a qualitative focus group interview (FGI), the researcher conducts a group discussion or interview with six to eight interviewees (Creswell, 2014). The two focus groups in each school consisted of three teachers (one group), and six learners (one group). Each group was

met on a separate day, and the interview lasted for 45 minutes to one hour. All focus group interviews were conducted in the afternoon after school ended at 14h00. Schools were identified by pseudonyms as School 1 (S1) and School 2 (S2). The interviews were conducted in the offices of the Head of Department (HOD) for Languages, HOD for Commerce, and in the Life Skills Department Office. The two focus group interviews conducted in S1 were held in the same venue, while two venues were used in S2. As the interviews commenced directly after school, the participants could not go for a lunch break. The researcher thus made provision for light snacks and refreshments which participants could enjoy after the interviews were conducted.

The researcher used an interview schedule with non-structured questions for each group. The questions were intended to elicit the views and opinions of participants in the groups (Creswell, 2014). Both the teachers and learners' interview schedule comprised of two sections – Section A and B. With Section A, questions in both cases required the participants' personal information on gender, age group, years at the school, teaching experience and grade taught (in the case of the teachers). Section B comprised of questions regarding their knowledge about learning support, experience with learning support, challenges faced either with providing learning support services (teachers), or with accessing learning support services (learners) in the school, and also their views regarding the strategies to enhance the provision of learning support in a secondary school.

3.9 Data analysis

According to Creswell (2014), data analysis in a qualitative study is moving from an inductive to a deductive format. Terre-Blanche et al. (2006, as cited in Hannah, 2015, p.321) maintain that an inductive process of data analysis is “a back and forth movement between what one knows and what one wishes to know, description and interpretation, foreground and background, part and whole, to achieve a compelling account of the phenomenon being studied”.

In the current study, the four focus group interviews conducted during fieldwork provided valuable and meaningful data on teachers and learners’ experiences about the effectiveness of learning support services in two secondary schools. The researcher organised the four audiotaped discussions into two main computer folders per school, and transcribed them verbatim for a descriptive analysis. The inductive to deductive data analysis process of the current study allowed the researcher to work back and forth by listening to the recorded interviews repeatedly, reading transcripts of the interviews and studying the themes that were extracted from the transcripts. The interview transcripts were coded, and the emerging themes and patterns were noted. Rossman and Rallis (2012, as cited in Creswell, 2014) define coding as a process of organising the data by bracketing chunks of text and writing a word representing a category in the margins next to the bracketed text.

Analysis of the transcribed text for this study was conducted according to the method of Walliman (2011). According to this method, codes in the form of labels were used to allocate units of meaning to the data. The following codes were used: to assist learners, to help learners who have problems to learn better, to guide learners on study methods, to motivate

learners to be serious with their studies, and to give learners extra resources for them to use in their studies. These units were coded as “knowledge about learning support”. Five main themes emerged from the data, which represent the major findings of this study. The findings of this study are recorded in Chapter 4.

3.10 Ethical considerations

The University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee approved the study in October 2017. The Executive Director of Education, Arts and Culture, the Director of Education, Arts and Culture of Oshana Education Directorate as well as the principals of the two participating schools granted fieldwork approval in October 2017. Fieldwork was conducted between the 30th October 2017 and 2nd November 2017. See attached appendices B and C for permission granted by the respective education authorities for data collection.

As Creswell (2009) advises, the following ethical safeguards were employed in this study: written permission (informed consent) was granted by the participating teachers and parents of participating learners and assent was attained from all participating minor learners before data collection commenced. The purpose of the study (research objectives) was explained verbally to the research participants. Extra care was taken during this explanation that it was conducted in a learner-friendly way, so that learners clearly grasped the purpose of the study. The participating learners and teachers were also presented with the purpose of the study in writing through the written consent form. Participants were also informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and that they had the right to withdraw at any time from the study without any negative consequences. The collected data will be stored for three years in a lockable

cupboard. Thereafter data in hard copy form will be shredded, whereas data in soft copy form will be formatted.

Confidentiality and anonymity: With focus group discussions, the researcher cannot guarantee the confidentiality of information provided and the anonymity of the participants as the participants in a group hear and see each other. However, the researcher included a clause in the consent and assent forms to which participants declared to uphold the confidentiality of the discussions by not divulging any information shared in the group not disclosing who participated in the group. The researcher ensured that participants understood what the clause entailed by explaining it to them prior to the commencement of each focus group interview. The researcher conducted the interviews and worked with the collected data alone without any other assistant in order to maintain as much as possible confidentiality and anonymity.

Dissemination of results: Participants were informed that the final report of the study would be in a form of a bound research report (thesis), which is intended to grant to the researcher a Master's degree as well as to gain knowledge about learning support services in Namibian schools. The final report would be disseminated as follows: one copy of the thesis would remain with the researcher whilst another copy will be forwarded to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. A copy of the thesis would also be delivered to the Oshana Education Directorate whilst another copy would be kept in the University of Namibia's library. The principals of each of the participating schools will also receive a copy of this thesis.

3.11 Summary

This chapter provided a synopsis of the research methodology used to collect data for the study. The chapter outlined the research design, population, research instruments, sample and sampling procedures and procedures for data collection that were used. In this chapter the validity and reliability of the research instrument was addressed. Furthermore, the procedure of data analysis, how the data was collected and the ethical issues regarding this study were addressed.

The next chapter, Chapter 4, presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of teachers and learners regarding the effectiveness of learning support services in two secondary schools in the Oshana education region of Namibia.

This chapter presents the findings of this study according to the themes, which emerged from the focus groups discussion interviews. The themes reflect the views and experiences of six teachers and 12 learners in relation with the nature of learning support services in the two secondary schools in the Oshana region of Namibia. Due to this study being a qualitative, descriptive and phenomenological study, data in this study is presented by describing participants' exact words verbatim.

This study sought to answer the following two main research questions:

1. What are the views and experiences of teachers with regard to the nature of learning support services available at their school in Oshana region?
2. What are the views and experiences of learners with regard to the nature of learning support services available at their school in Oshana region?

4.2 Contextualisation

In this section, the researcher provides participants and participating schools' pseudonym profile data used during the focus group interviews as follows: School One (S1); School Two (S2); three teachers from school one (T1s1, T2s1, and T3s1), and the six learners from school

one (L1s1, L2s1, L3s1, L4s1, L5s1, and L6s1). Similarly, the three teachers from school two are referred to as (T4s2, T5s2, and T6s2), whilst the six learners from school two are referred to as (L7s2, L8s2, L9s2, L10s2, L11s2, and L12s2).

The following table provides demographic information of teacher participants in this study.

4.3 Demographic information of participants and themes

Table 2

Teachers' demographic information

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage %
Age	20 – 30	1	16.7
	30 – 40	4	67
	Over 40	1	16.7
Gender	Male	2	33.3
	Female	4	67.7
Grade taught	Grade 8	1	16.7
	Grade 9	5	83.3
	Grade 10	0	0
Years in current school	1 – 2 years	0	0
	2 - 3 years	1	16.7
	3 – 4 years	2	0
	More than 5 years	3	83.8
Teaching experience	1 – 2 years	0	0
	2 - 3 years	1	16.7
	3 – 4 years	0	0
	4 years and more	5	83.3
Professional qualification	Diploma in Education (BETD)	1	16.7
	Degree in Education (B.ED, B.ED Honours)	4	67
	Other: Non-Education Qualification	1	16.7

Note. Demographic information of teacher participants

Table 2 presents the results of the demographic information of the teachers by gender, age, the grade they teach, years of teaching experience, years they have been in the current school, and their professional qualifications. A total of four out of six teacher participants were females and only two were males.

The ages of the teacher participants ranged from 20 to over 40 years, and four out of six teacher participants fell within the age bracket of 30-40 years, one within the age bracket of 20-30, and another one above 40 years. Most of the participants were Grade 9 teachers, and only one teacher indicated that he/she taught Grade 8 and some Grade 11 and Grade 12 classes.

Out of the six teachers who participated in the study, five had four or more years of teaching experience and only one had two to three years teaching experience. Furthermore, three of the teacher participants indicated that they had been teaching at their current school for more than five years, two taught three to four years, and one teacher indicated that he/she had been teaching at the current school for two to three years.

It is also clear from Table 2 that most of the teachers had a B.Ed. Honours teaching qualification, whilst one had a Diploma in Education (BETD) and another one indicated "Other" (Diploma in African Languages) a non-education qualification.

The following table presents the demographic information of learner participants in this study.

Table 3*Learners' demographic information*

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage %
Age	14 – 15 years	2	16.7
	15 – 16 years	9	75
	Over 16 years	1	8.3
Gender	Male	7	58.3
	Female	5	41.7
Grade	Grade 8	0	0
	Grade 9	10	83.3
	Grade 10	2	16.7
Years in the current school	1 – 2 years	0	0
	2 – 3 years	3	25
	3 – 4 years	9	75

Note. Demographic information of learner participants

Table 3 presents the results of the learner demographic information by age, gender, grade, and years in the current school. The age of the learner participants ranged from 14 to 16 years, and nine out of 12 learner participants fell within the age bracket of 15 - 16 years, two within the age bracket of 14 – 15, and one was older than 16 years. A total of seven learner participants were male, while five were female. The majority of the learner participants were Grade 9 learners (10 learners), and two were in Grade 10. Out of the 12 learners who participated in the study, nine had been in the current school for 3 to 4 years, and three had been in their current school for only two to three years.

4.4 Themes derived from teachers' and learners' views and experiences

In this section, the researcher presents the findings according to the themes, which emerged from the collected research data. Table 4 gives an overview of the themes derived from the interview questions, organised under topics and sub-topics, which were derived from the two main research questions.

Table 4

Themes derived from teachers' and learners' views and experiences

Topic 1: Teachers' views about learning support	Topic 2: Learners' views about learning support
<p>Sub-topic 1.1: Meaning of learning support</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. assisting learners b. observing learners c. supporting learners d. encouragement 	<p>Sub-topic 2.1: Meaning of learning support</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. assistance or support to learners b. teaching methods c. giving advice on self-confidence and study skills d. use internet to teach learners e. give information/ extra resources f. explaining things
<p>Sub-topic 1.2: Learners eligible for learning support services</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. learners with negative attitude towards the subject b. learners who are not gifted in the subjects c. learners who tend to look for help from peers d. girls who take mathematics e. gifted learners f. slow learners g. learners weak in English h. learners from low socio-economic backgrounds 	<p>Sub-topic 2.2: Learners eligible for learning support services</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. all learners b. slow learners who do not catch up fast on academic content c. Grade 10s

<p>Sub-topic 1.3: Identification for learning support services</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. formative assessments b. knowing learners from their past performances c. observe from their interactions with other learners in class d. consult other teachers who teach the same learners 	<p>Sub-topic 2.3: Identification for learning support services</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. use test results from assessment b. select learners who perform poorly on tasks/test c. learners who do not participate in class d. learners who are playful during lessons e. learners who dodge or bunk classes f. learners with high absenteeism g. observe interaction of learners
<p>Sub-topic 1.4: Types of learning support services</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. in-class support b. material support c. financial support d. on-the-spot support e. enrichment activities 	<p>Sub-topic 2.4: Types of learning support services</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. examination preparation b. study skills c. extra classes d. experiments
<p>Sub-topic 1.5: Organisation of learning support services</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. during lessons b. remedial classes c. extra classes d. call the expert e. by some teachers individually and not as a program by the entire staff 	<p>Sub-topic 2.5: Organisation of learning support services</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. teachers should identify learners b. Rössing Foundation c. in a class d. after school and Saturdays e. use computers during learning support f. small groups g. all learning support learners should feel comfortable h. all learners should get help with extra focus on learners who struggle more

<p>Sub-topic 1.6: Significance of learning support services</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. helps learners who experience learning difficulties b. it is necessary to help learners to understand how to interpret questions c. needed when teacher introduces a new topic d. improves performance 	<p>Sub-topic 2.6: Significance of learning support services</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. improves learners' ability to learn better b. it helps learners to experience a richer learning experience c. helps learners to get ready for university d. helps learners to read websites e. it helps learners to do well
<p>Topic 3: teachers' experience of learning support</p>	<p>Topic 4: learners' experience of learning support</p>
<p>Sub-topic 3.1: Learning difficulties encountered</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. spelling, writing, speaking, listening b. problems with basic mathematics e.g. adding, multiplying 	<p>Sub-topic 4.1: Learning difficulties encountered</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. study skills b. language barrier
<p>Sub-topic 3.2: Strategies to address learning difficulties encountered</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. teach at slower pace b. use simpler examples c. use group work, pair work, and peer-tutoring d. give corrections on work done e. give extra work or tests f. teacher fostering learners g. communicate with parents of learners with learning difficulties regularly h. re-teach topics 	<p>Sub-topic 4.2: Strategies to address learning difficulties encountered</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assign understanding learners to struggling learners b. Mix groups with able and struggling students c. use group work d. use more demonstrations e. giving learners clues to answers

<p>Sub-topic 3.3: Challenges experienced</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> inadequate teacher training with regard to learning support provision lack of resources overcrowded classrooms/poor teacher-learner ration heavy workload and time constraints parents not actively involved 	<p>Sub-topic 4.3: Challenges experienced</p> <p>Themes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> lack of resources negative teacher attitudes difficult to express self in English
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Note. Themes

4.5 Teachers' and learners' views of learning support

This study's main aim was to explore the experiences of teachers and learners concerning the nature of learning support services offered in their schools. The main aim of the study was divided into two objectives: teachers and learners' views about learning support and teachers and learners' experiences with learning support. Teachers' and learners' views about learning support was subdivided into meaning of learning support, learner eligibility for learning support, identification for learning support services, type of learning support services, organization of learning support services and significance of learning support services. Teachers' and learners' experiences with learning support was subdivided into learning difficulties encountered, strategies to address learning difficulties and challenges experienced with provision of learning support.

4.5.1 Meaning of learning support

Table 5

Teachers and learners' views about learning support

Meaning of learning support	
Teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• assisting learners• observing learners• supporting learners• encouragement	Learners <ul style="list-style-type: none">• assisting/supporting learners• teaching methods• advise on self-confidence and study skills• use internet• provide extra resources and information• explain comprehensively

Note. Meaning of learning support.

In this section of this study, the researcher presents the views of teachers first, followed by learners' views of learning support. The findings presented in this section aim to answer the first question: What does learning support mean to you?

In their response to the question about meaning of learning support, teachers' expressed their views as follows:

T1s1: "...learning support is the support that the teachers give to the learners in the case of learning difficulties". T1s1 added that not all learners are intellectually strong, therefore, those falling below average with academic performance would need to be supported. In T2s1's

view: *“learning support is like you (the teacher) observe learners around in the community, or at school and you assist them”*. According to T6s2: *“learning support means giving learners support where they have problems, where they don’t understand later in the day...like during studies in the afternoons”*. T5s2 described learning support as follows: *“I will describe it as something that... eh, the support teachers give to kids who are lacking that needs to be supported educationally. For example, some strategies on how to reach out to the kid that needs such support, or the encouragement that a child needs to be given”*

Learners’ views to the same question yielded the following responses:

L1s1 described learning support as the *“assistance or support that teachers gave to struggling learners”*. L3s1 referred to learning support as *“the teaching methods the teacher uses to teach learners”*. In his view L6s1 said: *“It means, giving advice to learners on self-confidence, on study skills; or when the teacher uses the internet to teach learners, give them information that encourages them to focus more on their studies”*. L5s1 had this to say: *“Learning support is the support that the teacher gives to learners by explaining things that learners do not understand and giving learners extra resources to read on what they don’t understand”*.

As shown in Table 5, and from both teachers’ and learners’ views on the meaning of learning support, the meaning of learning support varied. The learners’ description of the concept was more comprehensive than the teachers’ description (assisting, observing, supporting learners, encouragement). Learners’ meaning of learning support included the assistance and support of learners, innovative teaching methods, advise to learners on self-confidence and study skills,

provision of extra academic resource material and access to internet services, as well as explaining content/work clearer to learners.

4.5.2 Eligibility to learning support services

Table 6

Teachers and learners' views about learning support

Eligibility of learners to learning support services	
Teachers	Learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learners with negative attitude towards the subject • learners who are not gifted with numbers • learners who tend to look for help from peers • girls who take mathematics • gifted learners • slow learners • learners who perform poor in English • learners from low socio-economic backgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all learners • slow learners who do not catch up on academic content faster • Grade 10's

Note. Learners are eligible for learning support.

In this section of this study, the researchers present the views of teachers first then followed by learners' views regarding learning support. The findings presented in this section aim to answer the question: Who is eligible to receive learning support?

T1s1 said: *"I would also give support to the gifted learners"*. In addition T4s2 stated that: *"I would give support to those learners who are naturally not gifted with numbers, learners who portray negative perceptions towards the subject...I found that girls are the ones who have or who need learning support only in mathematics"*. She added: *"...also, I would give support to learners who tend to look for help from their neighbour or...yah, their peers during lessons and eh...when they do activities"*. Meanwhile, T6s2 mentioned that: *"I would give learning support to slow learners who take time to grasp new concepts, to learners who perform poorly in English. And I would also give non-academic support to learners from low socio-economic backgrounds"*

In response to the same question learners in this study responded as follows: L10s2 said: *"I feel all learners irrespective of the grade they were in need learning support. Because, sometimes one learner may understand things better than others, another learner might not get all the things better than other people do; also sometimes, one learner might understand one subject better than other subjects which other people do"*. However, L3s1 is of a different view and he said: *"...in my own view, I feel learning support should be provided more specifically to the slow learners, those learners who do not grasp the academic content faster than their peers"*. On the other hand, L6s1 mentioned that the only type of support common in his school was given to some grades and not to all learners in the school. He said: *"extra classes were only for the Grade 10s and not for the whole school"*.

As shown in Table 6, teachers presented a much more comprehensive view of which categories of learners should be regarded as eligible to receiving learning support services (learners with negative attitude towards the subject, learners who are not gifted with numbers, learners who

tend to look for help from peers, girls who take mathematics, gifted learners, slow learners, learners who perform poor in English, learners from low socio-economic backgrounds not only limited to learners with academic barriers to learning and the gifted, but also those learners from low socio-economic backgrounds in need of financial and/or material support) than the learners did. Learner participants were divided in their opinion of which learners should be considered for learning support (all learners, slow learners who do not catch up on academic content faster, all the Grade 10's).

4.5.3 Identification of learners for learning support services

Table 7

Teachers and learners' views about learning support

Identification for learning support services	
Teachers	Learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formative assessments • knowing learners from their past performances • observe from their interactions with other learners in class • consult other teachers who teach the same learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use test results from assessment • select learners who perform poorly on tasks/test • learners who do not participate in class • learners who are playful during lessons • learners who dodge or bunk classes • learners with high absenteeism • observe interaction of learners

Note. Identification for learning support services

In this section, the researcher will presents teachers' and learners' views in response to the question: How were learners identified for learning support services in the two participating schools?

Teachers' views were expressed in the following way:

T1s1 said that she knew when a learner was in need of support, because, "*...every teacher knows his/her learners by name, their failures, and their performances*". Similarly, T3s1 explained that teachers possess this knowledge about learners in their classes because they spend more time with the learners than their parents do. She said: "*...as a teacher you are the one who know your learners more than their parents. So, this can be done through interactions in the class, through assessment you assess them, also when you consult other teachers because teaching is collaborative*". In the same vein, T4s2 also noted that she is guided by learners' performance, but also by how they react to the lessons. She explained this by saying, "*...when they do activities, you will find that some tend to look for help from their neighbour or their peers*".

In their response to the same question, learners in this study responded as follows:

L12s2 mentioned that teachers should use test results from assessments to select learners for learning support services. In addition, L10s2 said: "*...teachers should select learners who perform poorly on tasks/tests, those who did not participate easily in class, and even some learners who are playful during lessons, or those that dodge or bunk classes as well as those with high rates of absenteeism*".

The themes in Table 7 indicate that both teachers and learners are somewhat in agreement about how learners should be identified for learning support services. Both teachers and learners feel that academic assessment results and observation of learner interactions with other learners can help with the identification of learners eligible for learning support services. Teachers added that the academic history of learners as well as the views of other teachers can help with the identification of learners who are eligible for learning support services.

Learners, on the other hand, indicated that learner behaviour (learners who do not participate in class, learners who are playful during lessons, learners who dodge or bunk classes, learners with high absenteeism) can be a key indicator in the identification of learners who are eligible for learning support services.

4.5.4 Types of learning support services

Table 8

Teachers and learners' views about learning support

Types of learning support services	
Teachers	Learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in-class support • material support • financial support • on-the-spot support • enrichment activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examination preparation • study skills • extra classes • experiments

Note. Types of learning support services

In this section, the researcher presents teachers' views first followed by learners' views on the question: What types of learning support services are available at your school? The teachers' views are expressed as follows:

T4s2 mentioned that she offered '*on-the-spot*' support to learners she identified as in need of immediate support. Upon probing on what 'on-the-spot' support entailed, T6s2 explained that: "...*some teachers support learners in classrooms, when teaching, for example, learners who struggle to understand the learning content due*

to low English proficiency are supported by simplifying the difficult words used in teaching". T6s2 stated that teachers also provided non-academic support to learners. He said: "...while others give material items to learners from poor economic backgrounds such as school wear, shoes, shirts, schoolbags, stationery items, etc. sometimes teachers provide financial support (transport money) to learners in need". When prompted on whether the material support given was a formal school initiative, T6s2 said: "...in many cases this is done by individual teachers, especially when a teacher has observed that a certain learner's school wear – a shirt or trouser is worn out or torn, such a teacher may decide to help. But when it comes to stationeries, the school provides". In addition, T1s1 mentioned that she gives different type of support to gifted learners. T1s1 said: "...ok, with the gifted learners, um...at times I look for more challenging questions that requires critical thinking or even depth thinking to do research. Sometimes, I check for some questions maybe in textbooks for upper grades or previous question papers that I think, maybe this ones, will keep him or her busy..."

Learners were also asked to describe the type of learning support services available in their schools. Learners' views were expressed as follows: L3s1 said: "I think the best would be extra classes. And I think that during extra classes, teachers should assist learners where they experience difficulties; they can also give us experiments in subjects like Physical Science". L6s1 also commented on extra classes and said: "Like on...extra classes...we...have no experience on that. No, we did not. Like in my own view...I only experience it with the Grade 10s...uh...not for the whole school". L10s2 mentioned that extra classes were offered to Grade 10 learners in some

subjects only. He said: “...our mathematics teacher used to give us extra classes on certain days of the week (Wednesdays and Thursdays) in the afternoon as well as on some Saturdays. He would teach us where we didn't understand, and also on some topics we still hadn't gone into (new topics)”. According to L5s1 “some teachers give learners advice on study skills and exam preparation...”

As shown in Table 8 and from the views of both teachers and learner participants in this study, there was rather great discrepancy found between the types of learning support suggested by teachers and learners. The teachers in this study reported that they employed different types of learning (in-class support, material support, financial support, on-the-spot support, enrichment activities). According to learners in this study it appears that examination preparation, teaching of study skills and the offering of extra classes is the learner support activities that they were exposed to. Some learners also would like teachers to do experiments during science lessons.

4.5.5 Organisation of provision of learning support services

Table 9

Teachers and learners' views about learning support

Organisation of learning support services	
<p>Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • during lessons • remedial classes • extra classes • call the expert • by some teachers individually and not as a program by the entire staff 	<p>Learners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers should identify learners • Rössing Foundation • in a class • after school and Saturdays • use computers during learning support • small groups • all learning support learners should feel comfortable • all learners should get help with extra focus on learners who struggle more

Note. Organisation of learning support services

In this section, the researcher presents the views of teachers and learners on the question: How is learning support organised in your school?

In response to the above-mentioned question, teacher T6s2 explained that: *“I give support to learners during the lesson, and in some cases, other teachers give remedial teaching in the afternoons. Apart from in-class support, teachers give extra classes in the afternoon to learners in specific subjects, and some teachers would even call in ‘experts’ from the regional office to come and...you know, clarify on the topics learners experience difficulties”*. When prompted on how afternoon support to learners were organised, T4s2 said: *“...teachers take time after the lesson for the day to support these learners”*. Asked the same question, teacher

T3s1 said: *"...learning support to learners is done by individual teachers and there is no formal programme of activities for teachers to follow"*. T3s1 further said: *"I feel learning support should be organised and implemented as a compulsory, whole-school programme for it to be more effective than when it is done by individual teachers"*.

In their response to the question on how learning support services is organised in their school, learner participants' responses seem to suggest how learning support services should be organised and not how it is organised. Some learner participants in this study indicated that only those learners who need support services should be given such a service. To clarify this, L1s1 said that not all learners learn in the same way or at the same pace. *"...teachers should identify only those learners that need support, like the slow learners and take them to facilities where they can even use computers to support their learning even after school or on Saturdays"*. L1s1 added that: *"...in some cases, teachers need to group learners in smaller groups and provide them with support in an environment where such learners will feel comfortable and will learn more"*.

Learner L10s2 also believes these learners would benefit from being supported in an environment that would enhance learning. L10s2 said: *"...sometimes when learners who experience learning difficulties become afraid and shy to ask questions when they are in a class with their peers who understands, some ...so they would rather decide to keep quiet always"*. Learner L7s2 supported L10s2's perceptions relative to how learning support is organised and said: *"...the teachers should organise such support after school, whereby they can gather all the learners who do not understand well, and put them in a certain class where they can teach them all the things they did not understand and they (learners) should also ask questions"*.

While several learner participants perceived identifying and grouping learners with barriers to learning as a positive approach to learning support, L9s2 had different views and said:

“It is not good to identify only some learners for example, only those who do not understand and provide learning support to them separately, because other learners will start teasing them saying that they are the stupid ones”.

However, L9s2 shared the view that learners with barriers to learning should be kept in the same class as their peers while the teacher provides the additional support they need. L9s2 said: *“...providing support to all learners in the same class while at the same time the teacher can still focus on only those with major learning difficulties. This would prevent such learners from being made fun of by their fellow learners”.*

As shown in Table 9, teachers supported the idea that learning support should be organised as a compulsory, whole-school programme. It seems that teachers believe that when learning support is implemented as a whole-school programme, it would be more effective than when it is done by individual teachers. Learner participants' views were divided with some in support of separating learners in need of support from classmates, while others supported the view that learners should not be separated from the class, because by doing so, such learners would fall victim to ridicule by insensitive classmates.

4.5.6 Significance of learning support services to learners

Table 10

Teachers and learners' views about learning support

Significance of learning support services	
Teachers	Learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps learners who experience learning difficulties • it is necessary to help learners to understand how to interpret questions • needed when teacher introduces a new topic • improves performance • encourages collaboration among teachers on learning support teaching strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improves learners' ability to learn better • it helps learners to experience a richer learning experience • helps learners to get ready for university • helps learners to read websites • it helps learners to do well

Note. Significance of learning support services

The views of teachers and learners on the significance of learning support to learners in secondary schools was extracted by the question: What do you think is the significance of learning support? Teachers and learners provided the following views:

T5s2 stated that: *“Learning support is essential, because, there are those learners that are lacking and that have learning difficulties that may need help and would need to be attended to in that particular way”*. T2s1 was more elaborative and expressed her view on the significance of learning support to learners as follows: *“learning support is necessary to help learners understand how to interpret questions when they prepare for examination. It is also needed especially when the teacher introduces a new topic, so that everyone (learners) can be*

included and can be helped, at the same time". T3s1 mentioned that: *"it (learning support) is necessary to achieve academic success of learners with barriers to learning"*. Participant T1s1 also noted that: *"it (learning support) is necessary, and it is not a waste, because learners need to be guided in areas where they lack understanding"*. In her view, T3s1 stressed that the success of learning support services depends on the context in which each school operates. For example, at schools with a boarding facility, teachers offer learning support programmes in the form of afternoon classes. Learners can attend such classes easily as they do not have difficulties reaching the school for the classes. When a school does not have a boarding facility, learners can often not attend the learning support programme due to practical problems such as a lack of transport or due to chores that they have to fulfil in the afternoons at home as in the case of S1. Furthermore, T3s1 mentioned that extra-curricular (sport activities) and after school academic activities (Grade 12 extra classes and learners support classes) are often organised to take place concurrently in the afternoons. Learners then often opt to attend the extra-curricular activities instead of the academic activities.

In response to the question about the significance of learning support services to learners in the two schools, several learners mentioned that learning support was indispensable to every learner's academic success in the school, especially to learners with barriers to learning. Learners expressed their views as follows:

L10s2 said: *"...learning support improves learners' ability to learn better. Because, even if a learner is in Grade 12, there are still some things that they may not understand. However, with the support from their teachers or other peers, they are able to understand. So, I am saying, yes, learning support is necessary because it helps learners"*. Another learner (L8s2)

seemed unsure about the question, but said: “*In my view if they (teachers) do that (meaning providing learning support)...the learners will experience more...and, it will help them out.* She further explained that “*...Let me say for the Grade 12’s...who are heading to the university now...some of them don’t even know how to read via a website...they need this (learning support) ...at least to do well*”.

As indicated in Table 10, teachers and learners acknowledged numerous benefits of learning support to learners, thus agreeing that learning support is essential in schools.

4.6 Teachers’ and learners’ experience of learning support

4.6.1 The learning difficulties (LD) encountered

Table 11

Teachers and learners’ experience of learning support

Learning difficulties encountered	
Teachers	Learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spelling, writing, speaking, listening • problems with basic mathematics e.g. adding, multiplying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study skills • language barrier

Note. Learning difficulties encountered

In response to interview questions related to the learning difficulties (LD) encountered, several teachers reported that most learners in their classes experienced learning difficulties in the areas of writing, speaking, listening, and mathematics. In particular, T1s1 mentioned that spelling was a major problem with some learners who had a tendency of omitting, adding letters, or even writing a complete word in their mother tongue language – Oshiwambo. T1s1

said that: *“some learners experienced difficulties in expressing themselves fluently on written, speaking, listening comprehension, and spelling tasks”*. T1s1 perceived the situation daunting to the extent that some learners in the subject she teaches struggled with listening comprehension activities, even after they have been exposed to several practical activities on listening. She said: *“listening is a problem, even if you give a lot of listening activities, including the music that they listen to every day, aye...um-um-um, they still experience difficulties”*. Another teacher T3s1 for mathematics recounted her experience as follows: *“I have had a lot of learners who have problems with the simple basics in mathematics. However, I realized they have problems with multiplication, just these basic mathematics skills. Even if you ask $2+2...$, $2x2...$, some of them are just quiet. Stuff that they were supposed to have mastered in the primary school”*. Another mathematics teacher, T4s2, also discussed the learning difficulties she encountered in her class and subject, which she attributed to fear of the subject. She said: *“It seems to me that many girls feared mathematics compared to boys”*. She added that: *“learning support helps with most girl learners who do not do well on simple mathematics sums to succeed”*.

Similarly, learners were asked what specific learning difficulties they encountered. However, the learners were not specific in their responses. For example, L3s1 mentioned that he struggled with study skills because he does not know which study methods were effective. Another learner L12s2 explained that due to language barriers, some learners find it difficult to express themselves fluently in English whenever they had to answer questions. She further suggested that teachers should explain subject content in Oshiwambo, or allow learners who struggle with English to express themselves, or answer questions in Oshiwambo (their mother tongue). According to L12s2 said: *“Some of the learners might learn better if teachers can*

explain what they teach from English to Oshiwambo, sometimes. For example, you are in the class, and you have a question...if you ask...in English, the teacher will not understand you, and the other learners will laugh at you, so the teacher should just say that: 'if you have a question...ask in Oshiwambo...'. L1s1 echoed the same sentiments than L12S2: "Teachers should explain English words in vernacular to assist learners that struggle because of language barrier to understand what they are teaching about".

Based on the findings as illustrated in Table 11, it is clear that learners emphasised study skills as a major contributor to learning success, whereas, teachers provided more specific areas of learning difficulties.

4.6.2 Teaching strategies used by teachers to address learning difficulties

Table 12

Teachers and learners' experience with learning support

Strategies to address learning difficulties encountered	
Teachers	Learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teach at slower pace • use simpler examples • use group work, pair work, and peer-tutoring • give corrections on work done • give extra work or tests • teacher fostering learners • communicate with parents of learners with learning difficulties regularly • re-teach topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign understanding learners to struggling learners • Mix groups with able and struggling students • use group work • use more demonstrations • giving learners clues to answers

Note. Strategies to address learning difficulties encountered

In response to the question about which teaching strategies teachers in the two schools apply in order to address learning difficulties, teachers shared the following experiences:

T4s2 said: *“when I pick up that a learner does not understand a topic in my subject, I teach at a slower pace, and use examples that are simpler in order to accommodate that specific learner or learners who display learning difficulties in mathematics”*. T3s1 also stated that: *“I prefer to support learners with learning difficulties in a collaborative way. So, I use group work, pair work, and peer-tutoring which I think works better in mathematics”*. Meanwhile, T1s1 said: *“I give learners corrections on work done, and learners who do not perform well*

on tasks/tests, I give them extra work or tests. Sometimes I would even re-teach a topic that learners did not understand well". Apart from the in-class teaching strategies that teachers in this study use, T3s1 mentioned "*teacher fostering learners*". She described this strategy as a situation whereby learners of a certain grade (for example, Grade 10) are divided among teachers, and each teacher gets an equal number of learners to guide and/or mentor. Another strategy that T3s1 mentioned was that, she normally communicates with parents of learners whom she suspects to have learning difficulties in her subject. She said that she communicates with parents of learners with learning difficulties in order to initiate collaboration between teachers and parents". To conclude, T3s1 said that: "*...at times, parents can also try to help...maybe, to tell the child with learning difficulties to try to study at home*".

Learners in this study were asked about the teaching strategies that teachers use to address learning difficulties that learners encounter in different subjects or learning situations. Learners shared their experiences in the following extracts:

L3s1 mentioned that: "*teachers should use group work, and assign learners who understand the content better to groups so that they can support those who struggle to understand the content*". In addition, L1s1 said that: "*groups should be formed by mixing those learners who are capable to help other learners that are struggling in the different subjects in one group*". L3s1 further said: "*the teacher should also use more demonstrations to explain the process of how something is done. For example, the teacher can show learners how something is done and then allow them to try too*". L10s2 mentioned that teachers should give clues to learners who have trouble in understanding or answering questions. He said: "*If the teacher finds out that this learner does not perform, the teacher should then make a random selection pointing*

on them and give them clues to see if the learner has an idea”.

In summary, it can be seen from the themes contained in Table 12 that teachers and learners agreed that group work and peer teaching are helpful in assisting slower learners. It seems that the utterances of the learners contained strategies which they wish the teachers can apply (mix groups with struggling and able learners, give clues to answers, use more often practical demonstrations) besides the strategies that the teachers already use.

4.6.3 Challenges of learning support

Table 13

Teachers and learners' experience with learning support

Challenges experienced	
Teachers	Learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inadequate teacher training with regard to learning support provision • lack of resources • overcrowded classrooms/poor teacher-learner ratio • heavy workload and time constraints • parents not actively involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of resources • negative teacher attitudes • difficult to express self in English

Note. Challenges experienced with learning support

Teachers in this study were asked about the challenges they faced with the provision of learning support in their schools. Teachers stated the following challenges:

T3s1 stated that she started teaching with a BETD Diploma in education and has since upgraded to a bachelor's degree, but the training she received was not specific on issues related to how to support learners with learning difficulties in the classroom. She said:

"Myself, I can remember, uh, it was not actually the training, I think it was included in a...I only studied at the College, when we used to, is it 'Educational Philosophy' (sic), something like that. it's only that I can't really recall the module...but I remember, they were some...only maybe not many but few-few-few topics that were mixed up...with that module,...that yah, how are you going to support learners with special needs...it's only that we learnt, it was not really emphasized...yah. T3s1 added by saying that, "I remember also after completing the College...while I was a teacher, I went for a training in Ongwediva Teachers Resource Centre...it was about inclusive education" – on how to assist all learners in a class. T1s1 is the only teacher participant who mentioned that she had a module in her bachelor's degree programme on guidance and counselling, but its content was not specific on learners with learning difficulties. T1s1 said: "...with me, I did at the University of Namibia, Guidance and Counselling, it was a module offered in our final year. Although, it was not very based on learners with difficulties in learning, it was more or less general, just like my colleague was saying...uh...mostly...it had to do with...uh...learners, I mean...inclusive education and a little bit of learners with special needs. And then, in my teaching methodologies of English, we have discussed about them, but it was not really...even a month maybe one or two weeks, mum... yah!"

From what the teachers explained, it seemed that the teacher participants in this study were not adequately trained in offering learning support, but rather were adequately trained to teach the subjects they specialised in. Also, only one teacher in this study reported that he/she

attended a workshop on inclusive education and learning support provision. None of the other five participating teachers in this study had the opportunity to attend any such courses.

Other challenges to the provision of learning support as identified by teacher participants in this study were indicated as follows: Teacher T3s1 and T6s2 recounted that textbooks for learners were insufficient to the extent that in some subjects, four to five learners had to share one textbook. T6s2 stated that two challenges were pressing: *“especially like in some subjects...you wanted to share some of the things with the learners...you cannot get hold of them [textbooks]”*. According to T3s1, the situation of insufficient textbooks was more critical with the newly introduced Grade 8 curriculum in 2017. T3s1 said: *“when you want to do peer-tutoring, I remember like in one Grade 8 class, we gave eight textbooks to be shared amongst 30 learners, just imagine. Now if you want to say, go and teach those ones with learning difficulties, now it is a problem...five learners sharing one textbook. It’s also a challenge of resources”*. Meanwhile, T4s2 noted that apart from the lack of textbooks for learners, there was also a need for teaching apparatus in some subjects. T4s2 said that: *“...as a mathematics teacher, sometimes one may need mathematical apparatus like a big ruler, a big compass, protractor, etc. when teaching certain topics that require the teacher to demonstrate (scaffold) to the learners how to use such apparatus”*. T1s1 talked about the high number of learners per teacher and said: *“...there must be a specific ratio that ensures that the ratio between teachers is manageable”*. She further explained: *“... for the children to get the necessary attention they need from the teacher, teachers need to be assigned a manageable number of learners in a class. Having 37 to 40 learners in a class is unpractical”*. In the same vein, another teacher from school two T4s2 highlighted that: *“when you (the teacher) teach a class of 40 or 45*

learners, it's barely that the teacher would really be able to pick up all the kids who need help". Another challenge to the provision of learning support as identified by teacher participants in this study was, heavy teacher workload and time constraints. Teacher T1s1 explained this and said: "...the workload need, the number of periods, especially, for us teachers who teach both English and Oshindonga the same time, same components which is marked maybe three or four times per week...it's just a lot...kids are a lot, and so is the workload". For example, in English, a teacher is expected to give those long pieces of writing, but because kids are a lot, the teacher would only be able to mark just one class in two days or one day and a half. At the same time, a teacher is expected to pay attention to those kids again, those ones that require learning support, especially, those that cannot really write those long pieces in English, like the essays, and letters. So, you can't just give the necessary attention to the kids because the workload is a lot."

Similarly, the issue of workload was not only an issue for teachers that teach promotional subjects. One Life Skills teacher also mentioned that the workload was too high. She was responsible for teaching all the grades in her school, that is, from Grade 8 to 12. She recounted that the combination of teaching and providing psychosocial support to learners was overwhelming for one teacher. She said: "...you might be teaching, then you are called, there is a learner doing what...you have to run to that learner; you may be invigilating, there's a learner standing in the sun there...you also need to plan, to teach and assess. Maybe, we are supposed to be two at school...because, sometimes being alone, the whole school from Grade 8 to 12...it's just not easy." Another teacher participant, T4s2, expressed discontent with the heavy workload in the following words: "...the workload...it's heavy! It is heavy. From morning till the last period, you have a lesson, and yet you need to attend to those kids...after

school...it's a heavy load". "...sometimes, we just need to look at...eh...eh...at humanity...we just need to be human...really...yah. ...we tried, we try but, it's too much".

Another challenge that teacher participants mentioned was "time". Teacher participants reported that they did not have enough time to plan for individualised learning support to learners who may have learning difficulties. T4s2 expressed the view that teachers in the two schools did not have enough time to rest between the normal teaching time (07h20 a.m. to 13 or 14h00 p.m.) and the afternoon learning support sessions. For example, when asked about how they planned support for individual learners, none of the teachers mentioned ever developing an Individual Learning Support Plan (ILSP) for learners receiving learning support because it requires time. It appeared that teachers in the two schools require enough time to not only provide support to learners but also to adequately identify suitable learners, organise suitable learning materials and activities, as well as, decide on what teaching strategies to use for learning support. T3s1 raised the concern of time and said: *"One of them is time. We seriously, do not have enough time. In addition, this one (learning support) fits especially after school, that is where you are supposed to provide assistance. Because you cannot really, it will not really work effectively in the class; with the whole class...because you have to give those identified ones, you need to gather somewhere. Some of us we have got Extended Level Subjects and the afternoon is the time we are attending to our learners".* T6s2 also commented on the lack of time, especially with regard to the planning of learning support activities, and said: *"...the planning of learning support activities is normally a challenge. Because, you do it during school hours, during the time when you are teaching at the same time...and so, time will always be a challenge. Moreover, the time again, when you carry out*

that (learning support activities) at school is a challenge. Because, you might knock off at 1 or 2 O'clock, and then, you must be with them (learners who need learning support) for an hour maybe or so, which may cause some challenges for the teacher".

Still another challenge to the provision of learning support as identified by teacher participants in this study is lack of parental involvement. The following selected extract from a teacher participant's response gives a detailed account in this regard: *"parents do not come to the school on their own, I mean, voluntary. I think like in my case, it only used to happen during parents' meetings. Whenever we (teachers) present topics that learners are not studying, they are not committed to their work, they are misbehaving and because they are misbehaving, they are also failing subjects, only then will the parents come in".*

It appeared that parents' involvement in their children's education was unplanned and not on purpose of being collaborates in the education of the children in the two schools. This was made clear by T3s2 who indicated that parents need to be reminded during teacher-parent conferences about their responsibilities towards the education of their children.

When learners were asked about the challenges they experience with learning support services in their schools, learners responded in the following ways: L3s1 shared his experience as follows: *"...there are not enough textbooks for all the learners in some subjects".* L6s1 and L9s2 expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of computers and the state of the computers services in the two school. L6s1 said: *"we need more computers in the computer lab so that more learners can use them. Because, now there are only few-few computers and learners have to take turns to use them. Also, the internet speed is very slow".* In the same vein, L9s2 stated that: *"our school has two computer labs but, the computer software in the old computer lab is outdated, meanwhile, small computers (Notebooks) in the new computer lab are not*

enough for all learners to use during the Information Communication Lesson (ICT) lesson".

Another challenge to the provision of learning support identified by learner participants was teacher attitudes. Learners in this study specifically spoke about the attitudes of some teachers who, according to the learners, rendered learning support services in the two schools inaccessible to some learners. When asked about how teacher attitudes were a challenge to learners, some learner participants pointed out that negative teacher attitudes was a sign often associated with lack of interest in learners with learning difficulties in class and a barrier to not only learning support services, but, to academic success. The following are a few observations made by a few learners in this study about teacher attitudes: L3s1 said: *"Some teachers don't focus a lot on the slow learners...they only like the smart learners, the ones who perform very well in their classes. Because, sometimes when the teacher is teaching something, he will not even bother to ask a slow learner because, he/she is slow. They only ask the smart learners because they know that, this learner is going to give me the answer".*

Another learner, L4s1 recounted that: *"...some teachers do not talk to learners in a polite way, and that they call names to learners who are slow. And when they do that, learners get discouraged to participate in class..."* L9s2 showed a bit of emotions when she said: *"teachers should talk to learners that are usually quiet in class and ask them like...whether something was happening at home, which is like distracting them from concentrating in class. Because, if teachers don't talk to those learners, they will not know how they can support them or help them to pass..."*

Still another challenge to the provision of learning support as identified by learner participants was the language barrier. Some learners in this study mentioned that certain learners found it

difficult to express themselves fluently in English. The learner participants explained that some learners struggled to understand what was taught simply because they are not competent in English. L1s1 expressed this view that: *“that maybe teachers should explain English words in vernacular to assist learners that struggle because of the language”*. On the same note, L12s2 also stated that: *“Some of the learners might understand the content better if the teacher could explain in Oshiwambo or if learners could ask questions in Oshiwambo. Because if you ask...in English the teacher will not understand you and the other learners will laugh at you, so the teacher should just say that: if you have a question, ask in Oshiwambo”*.

In summary, based on the themes summarised in Table 13, it became clear that teachers and learners offered information stemming from their different contexts. For example, teachers mentioned time constraints, heavy workloads, lack of parental involvement, whereas learners complained that they experience some teachers not sympathetic to their learning difficulties and lack of English fluency.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher presented the findings of the data collected from the focus group discussions of the teacher and learner participants in the two secondary schools in the Oshana region of Namibia. The sources that informed this study, as stated earlier, were six teachers and twelve learners from two secondary schools in the Oshana region of Namibia.

The next chapter presents the discussions of the findings, recommendations, limitations, and conclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“If education is a “key” to unlocking a student’s potential then it is teachers who should help them to design their key and determine which lock they wish to open”

Gray (2013: 41)

5.1 Introduction

This study aimed at exploring the views and experiences of teachers and learners concerning the nature of the learning support services offered in the two selected secondary schools in the Oshana Education region of Namibia. The study generated data through qualitative focus group discussions. The data was obtained from six teachers and 12 learners from Grade 8, 9 and 10 from two secondary schools in the Oshana educational region of Namibia.

In this study, the researcher explored the views and experiences of teachers and learners who are purported to be the providers and recipients of learning support in the two selected secondary schools in the Oshana region of Namibia. The main aim for this study was to find out how teachers and learners view and experience learning support services available in the two secondary schools. In view of this study’s two main research questions (What are the views and experiences of learners with regards to learning support services available in their schools in the Oshana region?; What are the views and experiences of teachers with regards to learning support services available in their schools in the Oshana region?), focus group interview questions were developed to extrapolate data that would address the research

questions and to address this study's research aim. As a result, the following topics and sub-topics were developed:

2.1.1 Topics one and two: to explore the views of teachers and learners regarding learning support. The following sub-topics guided the discussion section of this study:

- a. Teachers' and learners' view on meaning of learning support,
- b. Teachers' and learners' view on learners eligible to learning support services,
- c. Teachers' and learners' view about how learners should be identified for learning support services,
- d. Teachers' and learners' view about the types of learning support,
- e. Teachers' and learners' view on how learning support should be organised,
- f. Teachers' and learners' view about the significance of learning support services to learners,

2.2.1 Topic three and four: to explore teachers and learners' experience of learning support. The following sub-topics guided the discussion section of this study:

- a. Teachers' and learners' experience regarding the learning difficulties teachers encountered from learners, and the learning difficulties learners experienced,
- b. Teachers' and learners' experience regarding the strategies teachers should use to address the learning difficulties encountered,

- c. Teachers' and learners' experience regarding the challenges that hamper the successful provision of learning support services in their schools.

5.2 Discussion of findings

In this section, the researcher discusses the findings of the current study under sub-topics derived from topics 1, 2, 3 and 4, which were further derived from the two main research questions (See Table 4). Therefore, findings from topic one will be discussed together with that of topic two under the same sub-topics. Similarly, the findings from topic three will be discussed together with those of topic four under the same sub-topics.

5.2.1 Findings based on teachers and learners' views on learning support

5.2.1.1 Meaning of learning support

The key findings of this study indicated that both teacher and learner participants had basic knowledge about the meaning of learning support relative to the context from which they stemmed. This means that teachers and learners in this study viewed learning support from different angles of teaching and learning. For example, according to the findings of this study, it was observed that the majority of teacher participants perceived learning support as observing learners and then giving assistance, support and encouragement to those learners who experience learning difficulties with parts of the academic content. Teacher participants thus offered a more global (and thus vague) definition of learning support. In examining the responses of the learner participants it was noted that they offered more specific examples of their view of learning support, including the giving of advice on self-confidence, good teaching methods, application of internet technology in teaching, provision of a wide range of

information during teaching and the offering of teacher guidance and advice to learners on how to study effectively.

The above findings correlate with the literature review of Namibia's Ministry of Education that defines learning support as planned extra support that involves teaching methods and materials that enable learners with learning difficulties and other disadvantaged learners to reach essential basic competencies in the different subjects and skills (MoE, 2014). The literature reviewed for this study suggested that learning support is about identifying learning barriers that learners experience and deciding on the appropriate teaching and learning support resources, strategies and collaboration activities to reduce and/or to remove the barriers so that all learners can benefit from the curriculum offered in the school (Landsberg, 2005; Mashau, et al., 2008; Mavuso, 2014; MoE, 2014).

The researcher concurs with views of the learner participants in this study that learning support should not only be limited to assistance related to the learning content, but should also include aspects such as learning support resources and teaching and learning methods that respond to the diverse learning support needs of learners in secondary school classrooms. In this regard, it might be well worth considering the views of learners regarding the meaning of learning support and see how teachers can adapt their learning support practices in response to the learning support needs of the learners in their schools.

5.2.1.2 Eligibility for learning support services

During focus group discussions, teacher and learner participants identified certain groups of learners as eligible for learning support services. According to the teachers, learners who

portray a negative attitude towards and are not gifted in certain subjects, learners who seek help from their peers, girls who take mathematics, gifted learners who may experience boredom with mainstream class activities, slow learners, those who are struggling with English and learners experiencing socio-economic challenges, should be regarded as eligible for learning support services. Learner participants were divided in their opinion regarding eligibility for learning support and included Grade 10 learners, all learners, and slow learners. Teacher and learner participants in this study commonly agreed that learning support services should be offered to learners who are eligible to such services. Also, by looking at the overall response of teachers and learners regarding who should be counted as eligible for learning support, it seems that all learners should be considered (challenged as well as gifted learners). The findings of this study concur with literature of the Ministry of Education document Learning Support Teachers' Manual (MoE, 2014) in which it is stated that challenged as well as gifted learners should be considered as eligible for learning support. In addition, and not mentioned by teacher and learner participants in this study but presented in the Ministry of Education document Learning Support Teachers' Manual (MoE, 2014), learners repeating a grade, learners who are transferred to a subsequent grade, and learners who did not achieve the required competencies of a subject should also be considered as eligible to learning support services. Sichombe, et al. (2011) also stated that learners who are transferred from one grade to the other should receive learning support in the next grade in those subjects in which they could not achieve the competencies required, as this would help them cope with the backlogs in those subjects.

5.2.1.3 Identification of learners for learning support

Teacher and learner participants were asked how learners were identified for learning support services in the two schools. Teacher participants used data obtained from formal classroom-based assessments to identify learners in need of learning support. Teachers also used information from topic tasks/tests, individual or group projects, and from end of term or end of year examinations to identify learners suitable for learning support. In this study, learners agreed that assessment task should be used as a basis for selecting learners for learner support. Likewise, in studies conducted by Bouwer (2011), Conway (2017) and Mkhuma et al. (2014), evidence was given of continuous assessment marks that were utilised to identify learners in need of learning support. According to Mkhuma et al. (2014) identification of learners for learning support provides an overall picture of the learner's strengths and weaknesses, which in turn gives the teacher directions in terms of the type and quality of support that the learner needs. Teacher participants also indicated that knowledge about a learner's academic performance over time helps with the identification of such a learner for learning support. In the same sense, Powell and Kusuma-Powell (2011) emphasise that teachers who go the extra mile to learn to know their learners better, experience more success with their teaching. Teachers, as well as learners in this study indicated that the observation (by teachers) of how learners interact with their peers in the classroom and how they behave (no participation, playful, bunk classes, high absenteeism), should provide an indication of which children need academic help. Teachers also indicated that teacher consultations with colleagues about learners' performance can assist them with the identification of learners in need of learning support. According to Friend and Cook (2007), collaboration is the interaction between professionals who offer different areas of expertise, but share the same responsibilities. For

teachers to collaborate in order to identify learners who are in need of learning support, active and responsible participation in the process is essential (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, & Soodak, 2006). Forlin, Earle, Loreman, and Sharma (2011), Haider (2008), and Hannah (2015) note that classroom teachers need to work collaboratively with their colleagues and other specialists to plan, coordinate, and maintain a network of support to address learning difficulties in the classroom. Similarly, Ndemuweda (2011) asserts that collaborative learning is important because it is contextual and teachers serve as support for each other in improving their teaching practice.

The findings of this study indicate that teachers and learners have ample of knowledge about the process of identification of learners in need of learning support.

5.2.1.4 Types of learning support provided

In this study, teacher participants indicate that they provide both academic (in-class, on-the-spot, enrichment activities) and non-academic (material, financial) support to the learners in their schools. Academic support, according to the participating teachers, encompass an array of teaching and learning strategies used to support learners with learning difficulties, such as extra classes, study skills, examination preparation, giving clues to learners who struggle to answer questions, and/or enrichment activities for the intellectually gifted learners. Dreyer, Engelbrecht, and Swart (2012) refer to in-class support as the first level type of support that teachers should provide to learners. Teachers can thus take note of the problem the learner experiences in the moment and then give support “on-the-spot”. The Ministry of Education (MoE, 2014) asserts that learning support should be given as soon as difficulties are identified to prevent the development of an academic backlog with a learner. In a study by Mashau et al.

(2008) with South African schools a wide variety of learning support services were identified by teachers such as supplementary, remedial or extra class instructions, curriculum advice, academic mentoring, assistance to students to work in groups, helping with the development of study and note-taking skills, seeking and providing school psychological services, as well as medical and social work services, introducing a feeding scheme at school, and all other services that are designed for meeting special needs of learners and for preventing learning difficulties. These learning support services are greatly corresponding with the services that the teachers in the current study mentioned. The non-academic support types (material such as school wear, financial such as taxi fare) that the teachers in the current study mentioned seem to be regarded as learner support also in the Mashau et al. (2008) study.

Teachers in the current study mentioned that they offer “enrichment activities” to gifted learners who are getting easily bored in the mainstream classroom. These activities are selected in a way that they present the learner with a challenge that needs to be solved, aiming to achieve learner academic growth and stimulation. Powers (2008) indicates in this regard that all learners, also gifted learners, are entitled to a respectful and meaningful education in this decade where it is believed that no learner should be left behind, and yet attention to the gifted wanes with the emphasis on standards-based education. It is thus important that teachers in Namibia attempt to include gifted learners in learner support activities.

Regarding extra classes as a type of support to learners, learners in this study indicated that during extra classes, learners who experienced difficulties in specific subject topics were taught additionally. Learner participants reported that teachers repeated and sometimes revised

the topic that learners were unable to understand during normal class teaching. According to the understanding of learners in the current study, the intended objective of extra classes is to simplify learning content and to provide support to learners with barriers to learning to meet learning objectives of the subject topics taught in class. The Learning Support Teachers' Manual (MoE, 2014) likewise states that during afternoon extra classes the teacher may teach a new topic or continue with a topic not completed during their normal teaching schedule to the whole class or to two or more classes grouped together.

Participating learners in this study furthermore indicated that examination preparation, help with study skills as well as pairing practical demonstrations (like experiments in the science class) in class to abstract academic content. Although the researcher agrees that examination preparation, good study skills and practical demonstrations can enhance learning, research also found that study skills are more effective if they were taught as part of the subject content from a young age on than when study skills are taught at a later age as an additional loose-standing course (Cottrell, 2001; Drummond et al., 1998). Deng and Carless (2010) furthermore found that examinations can be an inhibiting factor between teaching and learning on the one hand and the demonstration of knowledge on the other hand. Examinations can cause fear and stress and inhibit performance, leaving the impression that the learner did not learn. Examination preparation can thus be regarded as an effective type of learning support. Cerini, Murray, and Reiss (2003) found with regards to the use of practical work in science lessons in a study with 1400 learners in the UK that 71% of the learners indicated that they found experiments in class one of the most enjoyable ways of learning. In contrast, Hodson (1991) claims that the learning value of practical demonstrations during a lesson is ill-conceived, confused and unproductive and contributes little to learning. The researcher is of

the opinion that as long as learners enjoy a class activity, there is a good chance that they are learning.

5.2.1.5 Organisation of learning support services

Findings indicated that teachers organised learning support services as in-class support organised for individual or groups of learners in their classes, or as afternoon extra classes, which were organised for groups of learners, the entire class, or by grouping two classes together. These findings concurred with the Ministry of Education Learning Support Manual (MoE, 2014) which claims that learning support should be done as part of everyday lessons and/or in the afternoons, and that learning support activities should be included in every lesson plan (in-class/on-the-spot support). Learner participants indicated that they would like to receive learning support in a classroom at school or elsewhere (Rössing Foundation) after school or even on Saturdays.

The learner participants in the current study indicated that they would like to receive learning support in small groups that should be formed by teachers. This could mean that teachers can organise support to learners in the format of a 'pull-out' of learners experiencing learning difficulties from the large group, such as the class, in order to give them small-group and individual support. In this regard, Adelman and Taylor (2008) also assert that activities for learning support may be implemented in regular or special education classrooms or as pull-out programs, and may be designed for an entire class, smaller group, or individuals. Learners in the current study also believe that an organisation like the nearby Rössing Foundation, which is well-equipped for learning (computers, internet access), should be utilised for learning

support. During 'pull-out' learners can be taken to the Rössing Foundation Centre in Ondangwa.

Teachers in the current study mentioned remedial classes and extra classes as forms of organising learning support. Teacher participants also mentioned that they occasionally ask "experts" to assist the teacher during learner support. This can be either a person with specialised knowledge about a taught subject topic, or a person with specialised knowledge about child learning and child emotional development. The researcher applauds the invitation of experts to assist with learning support. Carter and Francis (2001), for example, found that when teachers were guided by experts, teachers reported a more positive teaching experience, showed less intention to resign and had a better sense of their professional identity. Teacher participants also indicated that they recommend that individual teachers should be organising and handling learner support at a school, and not the entire staff. Learner participants, in contrast, indicated that they would prefer that all learners get extra support, with a more intense focus on struggling learners.

Learner participants also indicated that some teachers seem to employ a negative attitude with learners who are in need of learning support. Such teacher attitude can potentially cause harm to learners in that it enhances a negative view of learners who are in need of support. Bojuwoye et al. (2014) found in their study with learners in the Western Cape in South Africa that they reported being teased and ridiculed by teachers when asking for help with academic content. In their study, these researchers also found that learners had a fear of being identified as weak learners and teased by peers. With regard to the organisation of learner support in Namibian schools, the learner participants in the current study thus rightfully mentioned that all learners who receive learning support should be made to feel comfortable.

In summary, the researcher concurs with the Learning Support Teachers' Manual (MoE, 2014) which states that every school should have a capable learning support team, who organise learning support at a school. In this way, the learning support program at a school will be consistent with well-defined teaching and learning support materials, activities and time schedule. The researcher's opinion with regard to the structure of the learning support programs in the two participating schools in the current study is that it is necessary for the teachers to adopt and customise the structure of the Learning Support Team (as in Figure 2, p. 28), and adhere to the roles and responsibilities of the learning support team as stipulated in the document Learning Support Teachers' Manual (MoE, 2014, p. 5). The researcher found that in the two participating schools, a misconception existed between learning support and extra classes, which should be clarified. Furthermore, it is crucial that teachers in the two participating schools use the Learning Support Teachers' Manual to organize the learning support services in the two schools effectively.

5.2.1.6 Significance of learning support

Teacher participants in this study noted that learning support helps learners who experience learning difficulties in understanding how to interpret questions, and to improve learner academic performance. Both teacher and learner participants in this study regard the significance of learner support to be the improvement of the ability to learn. Learner participants also regard the significant contribution of learner support to be assisted by teachers to perform better academic results, to be better able to navigate websites and to be adequately prepared for the demands of tertiary studies. Likewise, the Learning Support Guidelines by the Government of Ireland (2000) stipulate that learning support helps learners to achieve academic success while improving their basic academic skills and learning

strategies to a level which enables them to participate fully in the prescribed curriculum. Habulezi (2012) also mentions that learning support enables learners' access to the curriculum and improves their confidence, skills of social interaction and academic independence. Nasen (2015) thus rightfully states that without the necessary support provided, learners with barriers to learning will struggle to access the curriculum and will most probably not cope with the learning material.

In summary, the findings on the significance of learning support to learners in this study suggest that both the teacher and learner participants noted the advantages of learning support to learners with barriers to learning in affecting their educational goals positively.

5.2.2 Teachers and learners' experience of learning support

5.2.2.1 Learning difficulties encountered

Participant responses regarding learning difficulties encountered centered on lack of literacy and numeracy skills in English and mathematics. Teachers in this study specifically noted that learners struggled with writing skills, reading, basic numeracy skills as well as with listening skills. Learner participants highlighted ineffective study skills and limited English ability as the learning difficulties that they encounter. Mavuso (2014) explained that learning difficulties can be conceptualized of as learners experiencing specific difficulties in acquiring basic literacy skills, learners who had significant language difficulties and learners whose general academic achievement is below their potential. According to Gulliford (1971) learning difficulties encompass, amongst others, severe difficulties in reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic, just like the participating teachers in the current study indicated. However, Gulliford (1971) regards the following also as part of learning difficulties: trouble to

distinguish left from right, up from down, front from back; perceptual and language weaknesses; uncoordinated and slower hand and eye tasks; visio-spatial difficulties in recognizing and distinguishing between written symbols, in reproducing letters or groups of letters correctly, confusing or reversing letters; speech-sound difficulties in synthesizing words from their component sounds, in relating words to meanings; association difficulties, for example when the learner has problems with associating speech sounds with their symbols in reading and writing; difficulty in spatial orientation and thus the learner bumps into things, and cannot efficiently estimate distances.

From Gulliford's (1971) extensive description of learning difficulties, it is curious how come the participating teachers reported a significantly narrow version of the learning difficulties they seem to encounter with learners.

5.2.2.2 Strategies employed to address learning difficulties encountered

The findings of this study revealed that teachers employed a variety of teaching and learning strategies to support learners with learning difficulties. Teachers mentioned that they teach at a slower pace when supporting learners academically. Rowe (1986) found in a study that she conducted in the United States of America that as soon as the pace of teaching was slower, the level and the quantity of learner participation in the lesson were greater. Rowe therefore concluded that slowing down in the classroom might be a way of speeding up positive learning.

Teachers in the current study also mentioned that they use simpler examples to explain work to learners with learning difficulties as a strategy of learning support. Teachers furthermore

encourage group work, pair work and peer-tutoring with challenged learners. Learners in the current study likewise promoted group work and peer-tutoring as an effective way of learner support. Studies on the effectiveness of peer-tutoring proved that peer tutoring delivers positive results with learners such as improved academic achievement, increased self-esteem and sees to the development of positive attitudes towards subject material that is taught in this way (Hussain, Anwar, & Majoka, 2011; Topping, Campbell, Douglas, & Smith, 2003). Save the Children (2016) also encourages the promotion of cooperative learning in heterogeneous groups as beneficial to both the learner-tutor and the one being tutored. McMillan (2008) found that peer support interventions are beneficial in helping students with severe disabilities to have access to the curriculum and develop meaningful peer relationships. This echoes Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism, which stressed that learners construct knowledge through interactions in a social setting in a group and/or through peer tutoring. Carter and Kennedy (2006) also argue that cooperative learning offers benefits to both mainstream learners and learners with learning disabilities.

Teachers reported that they also give extra exercises to learners who are struggling with academic content so that learners get ample of opportunity to get familiar with the content. However, Mavuso (2014) argued that giving extra work to a learner who is struggling with the content of a particular learning area can create anxiety as well as contribute to low self-esteem. The researcher takes note of Mavuso's warning, but is also of the opinion that "practice makes perfect".

Teachers in the current study also reported that they ensure to keep in frequent communication with the parents of learners with learning difficulties as a strategy to address learning difficulties. Educational researchers agree to a great extent that parental involvement is a

crucial factor when it comes to learner academic success (Graves & Wright, 2011; Mattingly, Prislín, McKenzie, Rodrigues, & Kayzar, 2002).

Teachers also re-teach already taught work to learners who did not grasp the work fully as a learning strategy. Re-teaching can be regarded as a second chance opportunity for both teachers and learners, as teachers can focus and refine the lesson and learners have another opportunity to learn the content, concept, skill or procedure. According to Bellert (2015), learners with learning difficulties are presented with an invaluable chance to master academic content through re-teaching.

According to McMillan (2008), when teachers incorporate different types of instructional strategies, they are improving the likelihood that the learners with disabilities report more learning success. It is worth noting that the practice of using different teaching strategies to address the learning difficulties that learners experience in class ascribes to inclusive education. The review of related literature in Chapter Two revealed that the teacher's most important role in an inclusive setting is to identify the right strategy for each child (Unianu, 2013). A study by Habulezi (2012) asserted that providing individual learners with tailor made support, facilitates access to the curriculum and improves learners' confidence, skills of social interaction and independence. As teachers in the current study reported that they use varying teaching strategies to meet the diversity of learners' needs, it is implied that teachers in the study considered the learners' zone of proximal development in their teaching strategies.

Learner participants in the current study regarded extra practical demonstrations as well as the giving of hints to questions as strategies to address learning difficulties. Wood et al. (1976) and Denhere et al. (2013) also found that the use of well-timed and well-phrased questions and prompts (hints) can guide and scaffold the learning process.

In summary, the researcher supports the words of Johnson (2006) as cited in Barnes (2011, p. 94) who said, “A child is a person first and their difficulties are an add-on which, although posing difficulties, can be overcome by a good teacher, appropriate support and a positive attitude”.

5.2.2.3 Challenges with the provision of learning support

Teachers and learners who participated in the current study perceived that there were challenges associated with the learning support system in their schools. Teacher participants mentioned challenges related to inadequate teacher training and skills in learning support practices, overcrowded classrooms, heavy workloads, time constraints, and parents not actively involved in the education affairs of their children, particularly for learners with barriers to learning. Inadequate teaching and learning resources was the only challenge mentioned by both groups of participants of this study. In addition, learner participants mentioned that negative teacher attitudes towards learning support and learners' poor command of the English language are further challenges in the provision of meaningful learning support.

Teachers in the current study indicated that they lack skills in inclusive education or special education needs and in learning support provision, because the training they received was inadequate in preparing them to deal with learners who experience learning difficulties in their classrooms. Hay, Smit, and Paulsen, (2001) as well as Kaur (2018) also found that, in general, teachers lack skills and knowledge on inclusive education to effectively teach learners with special education needs. Hannah (2015) also described a lack of special education teacher training as one of the factors that impact the quality of the special support teachers provide to learners with barriers to learning in schools. Akalin, Sazak-Pinar, and Sucuogluo (2010) also highlight lack of teacher training in learning support as a major set-back in the successful implementation of inclusive education in Turkey. Janney and Snell (2008) found that the depth and scope of the training of teachers is critical in determining the academic performance

of learners with learning disorders in a school. Meese (2002) also found that sufficient training in special needs education will provide teachers with the ability to adapt the curriculum to include the needs of the learner with a learning disorder.

Teachers in this study indicated that even though they were professionally qualified to teach the subjects they specialised in, they still felt unqualified to provide appropriate learning support services to learners with diverse learning support needs in one classroom. Hannah (2015) argues in this regard that not every teacher that is trained in education automatically has all the qualities needed to support all the learners facing barriers to learning. Teachers in this study also indicated that, they have not received any workshop in either inclusive education or learning support practices since their employment as teachers. Zimba, Mufune, Likando, and February (2013) also found that teachers lacked competence and the will to modify methodologies to adequately address the special academic needs of learners. Lessing and Van de Witt (2010) advocate that in order for teachers to be able to provide effective support to learners with learning difficulties, teachers need to have knowledge of the different learning disabilities, and possess underlying skills necessary to support learners.

Both teacher and learner participants in this study expressed their concern about the lack of teaching and learning resources. Teachers in this study reported that the teaching and learning resources were insufficient to enhance the provision of learning support to learners in the two schools. Teachers in this study explained that lack of teaching and learning resources affected the provision of learning support services in the two schools. Chimhenga (2016) and Hannah (2015) indicate that the lack of resources and facilities, particularly stationery and textbooks,

hampered the practical implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities in secondary schools in South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively.

Teacher participants in this study furthermore reported that large class sizes was another obstacle to the provision of appropriate learning support in the two schools. Large classes are considered difficult to manage. Having many learners in one class is problematic for a teacher when he/she has to provide support to a selected few whilst at the same time trying to keep the mainstream group of learners effectively occupied during the lesson. Studies conducted by Dreyer et al. (2012), Hannah (2015), and Ndinisa (2016) also identified over-crowdedness in classrooms a problem to learning support provision. The scholars cited overcrowded classes as a barrier to learning support provision, and that it made giving individual attention to learners difficult. As asserted by Mandina (2012) and cited in Chimhenga (2017) in a study conducted in Zimbabwe, overcrowded classes were also a reason for negative teacher attitudes towards children with disabilities in inclusive settings. These observations made in Chimhenga (2017) are similar to what one teacher in the current study stated, that “when you (the teacher) teach a class of 40 or 45 learners, it’s barely that the teacher would really be able to pick up all the kids who need help while at the same time the teacher needs to teach to complete the syllabus...one cannot just focus solely on one group of learners with learning difficulties...”

Several teacher participants in this study raised the concern that, due to high workload and time constraints, teachers were unable to provide appropriate learning support to learners. Teachers in the study mentioned that learning support means ‘more extra work for a teacher to mark’. One teacher participant who teaches two languages (English and Oshindonga) regarded providing support to learners with learning difficulties in-class, as well as after school, as a

challenge. This is due to the purported high number of teaching periods (lessons) and administrative work involved. These findings are consistent with research done by Hannah (2015), Mkhuma, et al. (2014) and Sichombe, et al. (2011) who stated that heavy workloads for teachers and increased responsibilities hindered the provision of effective learning support to learners in schools. The findings on time constraints in the current study revealed that teachers in the two schools did not have enough time to plan for individualised learning support to learners. The teacher participants in this study also said that apart from teaching during normal teaching hours (07h10 – 13h45), they were also expected to carry out or facilitate some extracurricular activities, which are offered concurrently with learning support sessions in the afternoons. These teachers said that due to lack of time, they were unable to provide adequate and well-organised support services to learners with barriers to learning in their schools. These findings are in line with those identified by Mkhuma et al. (2014), who asserted that teachers' lack of time to sit down as a team and design strategies that can best serve the needs of the learners, compromised the quality of support and learners' needs. Kyriacou (2001) states that teaching is one of the high stress professions. Workload both in terms of excessive demands under time pressure, and as a mismatch between the demands made upon a teacher and the teacher's ability to cope with those demands, has repeatedly been reported as one of the leading stress factors (Kyriacou, 2001).

Teacher participants in this study also reported that parents were not actively involved in their children's education. Teachers indicated that parents' involvement was mostly only when they were summonsed to school, due to their children's misbehaviour, poor academic performance, or when they were informed that the child was not committed to his/her schoolwork. Sapp

(2009) maintains that a lack of parental support for their children's education is an academic success barrier. Save the Children (2016) regards parental involvement in children's school affairs as vital. For this reason, one teacher participant in this study mentioned that she initiated communication with parents of learners with learning difficulties in her class in order to initiate collaboration on how to support their children at home.

The findings in this study on teacher attitudes revealed that some teachers in the two schools displayed negative attitudes towards inclusion of learners with learning difficulties. The researcher equally acknowledges the views of the learner participants in this study who reported that some teachers had negative attitudes towards learners with learning difficulties. The learner participants in this study maintained that teachers showed less interest in learners with learning difficulties. This is contrary to the guiding principle underpinning learning support in Namibian schools, that teachers should provide learning support to accommodate all learners regardless of their ability or disability (MoE, 2014). When the learners' sentiments were shared in the teachers' focus group discussions, one teacher participant remarked that some learners were too slow and regardless of the efforts of the teacher they still failed to catch up. The teacher then concluded by saying that, "teachers were not trained enough to teach such learners, maybe they should be taught in special schools, where there are teachers trained to deal with them". Haider (2008) accordingly postulates that teachers with experience in working with children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) held more positive attitudes towards the inclusion of such learners than their colleagues without relevant experience. In a study conducted by Bothma, Gravett, and Swart (2000:v) on the attitudes of primary school teachers towards inclusive education, it was found that teachers were generally holding a negative attitude towards the

South African policy of inclusive education, and that their attitudes could become a critical barrier to the successful implementation of the inclusive education policy.

It also emerged from the current study that learners with barriers to learning in the two schools experienced difficulties in expressing themselves fluently in English. Learners reported that when teachers rush through the content during the lesson, learners with a language barrier (English) feel left out and excluded from such a lesson. Learners also mentioned that learners with barriers to learning in the two schools faced humiliation from peers who were insensitive to their learning difficulty. In relation to this finding, *Zimba et al. (2007)* cautioned that when presenting a lesson, teachers should take the learners' English comprehension proficiency into account and attempt to present the subject matter using comprehensible and simple language. Learner participants in the current study also suggested that teachers should explain learning content to the level of the learner's English proficiency.

The overall findings on the challenges that are involved with the provision of learning support suggest that these challenges have an immense impact on the school's attempts to provide effective learning support services to learners with learning difficulties.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings that this study yielded, the following recommendations are suggested for effective provision of learning support services in the two secondary schools in the Oshana Education region of Namibia.

5.3.1 Compulsory in-service training of all teachers

It was established through this study that teachers in the two secondary schools were professionally qualified in specific school subjects. The teachers indicated that they continuously receive in-service training in those specific subjects. However, some teachers lack knowledge and skills in inclusive education and learning support provision. It is therefore recommended that *all* teachers, irrespective of the subject they teach or phase (junior phase Grade 8 – 9, or senior phase Grade 10 to 12) they teach in, be trained in inclusive education and learning support practices.

5.3.2 Review of learning support teachers' manual

The researcher is familiar with the content of the Learning Support Teachers' Manual (LSTM) (2014). As this study unfolded, the researcher observed that the content of the manual does not optimally reflect the special teaching and learning needs of secondary schools. The researcher also realised that teachers in the two participating schools were not ultimately familiar with the LSTM (2014), the very document that is supposed to guide them in learning support provision. It is thus recommended that the LSTM (2014) should be reviewed and adapted continuously in order to align its content to the needs of users. An immediate recommendation, based on information gained from teachers and learners who participated in this study, would be the inclusion of relevant worksheet annexures and content materials that would make the current LSTM (2014) more relevant to the curriculum of secondary schools. In addition, *all* teachers should be re-introduced to the LSTM (2014) and also provided with guidance in the use of the manual.

5.3.4 Monitoring of learning support programmes in schools

During data collection for the current study, it was also observed that there was no proper monitoring of the execution of learning support activities in the two schools. Therefore, this study recommends that the Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture in Oshana region, and the two school principals should ensure that learning support services offered to learners in the two schools are evaluated regularly. Such supervision of learning support activities can be rolled out to all the schools in Namibia. According to the researcher, supervision of learning support activities could strengthen effective implementation, and proactive measures to help struggling learners can be taken timely where necessary. It would remain imperative to regard this type of supervision of teachers who provide learning support as a guiding and/or mentoring process, rather than a process of “policing”. Policing might cause a negative attitude with teachers who provide learning support, which will again have a negative impact on learners (emotionally and academically).

5.3.5 Establishment of a functional learning support programme in schools

The researcher also observed that there was no functional learning support programme in either of the two schools. This simply means that there was no clear plan of action to facilitate learning support activities. The recommendation in this regard is that a functional learning support programme needs to be established at every school. In addition, each school (in Namibia) should appoint a learning support team (see 2.7) who would be responsible for planning, executing, and coordinating learning support activities in the two schools.

5.3.6 Employment of learning support teachers (LST)

Given the challenges established in this study, in particular teacher workload and time constraints, the study recommends that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) could consider employing Learning Support Teachers (LST) to alleviate teachers’ workload.

Alternatively, the MoEAC could consider training of competent and interested teachers from each school's existing staff establishment in learning support provision. These specifically trained teachers could help ease the teachers' workload and time constraints. This simply means, while one teacher is teaching the whole group, the other teacher provides learning support to the learners who need support (co-teaching).

5.4 Suggestions for future research

This study contributes to the field of inclusive education, in particular to the provision of learning support in secondary schools. Based on the findings of the current study regarding the experiences of teachers and learners on the nature of learning support services in secondary schools, the researcher makes the following suggestions for future studies:

1. A study is recommended to investigate the professional development of secondary school teachers in learning support practices in secondary schools in Oshana Education region.
2. A study is recommended to carry out a needs assessment on the nature of learning barriers to establish specific learner needs, expectations and aspirations for the design and development of relevant learning support programmes, materials, and for the delivery of quality learning support service to enhance the academic experience of secondary school learners.
3. A future study is recommended to investigate the provision of learning support services to secondary school learners employing interviews, document analysis, and observation schedules as data collection tools.
4. A study is recommended to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning support teachers' manual in secondary schools.

5. Another study is recommended to investigate the effect of learning support with grade repeaters in secondary schools.

5.5 Conclusions

This chapter discussed the key issues that emerged regarding the experiences of teachers and learners about the nature of learning support services in the two secondary schools in the Oshana Education region of Namibia.

It was evident that teachers did not possess the required training and expertise that would enable them to provide appropriate learning support to learners with learning difficulties in their classrooms, hence they resorted to offering extra classes to all learners instead. The results also indicate that the teachers in the two schools made efforts to ensure that learners with learning difficulties were catered for. However, lack of teaching and learning support resources, time constraints, teacher workload, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of parental involvement were but some of the challenges that limited their efforts. Landsberg (1999) postulated that teachers need more time to plan their teaching activities to include a diversity of learners. In addition, teachers need adequate learning support materials and assistive devices appropriate for the needs of learners with disabilities.

Another major conclusion from the findings in this study is that the classrooms were overcrowded and this factor made it very difficult for teachers to attend to individual learners with learning difficulties, hence hindering their performance academically. To this effect, it was clear that the teachers in the two selected secondary schools in Oshana region needed both human resource skills and appropriate teaching and learning resources to be able to meet

the learning support needs of diverse-ability learners in their classes effectively. In the same line of thinking, recommendations were suggested for the practice of learning support in Namibian schools as well as for future research.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNAM
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ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: FHSS/330/2017 **Date: 18 October, 2017**

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: Experiences Of Teachers And Learners On The Nature Of Learning Support Services In Two Selected Secondary Schools In The Oshana Region Of Namibia

Researcher: Catherine Situmbeko

Student Number: 9602666

Supervisor(s): Dr Manfred Janik (Main) Mr Job Hengari (Co)

Faculty: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

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

Ms. P. Claassen: UREC Secretary

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE PS: MOEAC



REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

The Director General
National Board for Technical Education
P.O. Box 1000, Lagos

Date: _____
Page: _____
Page: _____

Dear Sir,

Reference is made to your letter of the 10th February 2011, in which you requested for permission to conduct research in the area of _____

in the area of _____

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE AREA OF _____

The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture is pleased to inform you that your request for permission to conduct research in the area of _____ has been approved. The research should be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the National Board for Technical Education Act, 1998 and the regulations made thereunder.

The research should be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the National Board for Technical Education Act, 1998 and the regulations made thereunder. You are requested to provide a copy of the research report to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture upon completion of the research.

I wish to state that the permission is granted for a period of _____ months from the date of this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Permanent Secretary





REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

Tel: +264 61 -2933200/86
Fax: +264 61- 2933922
Enquiries: C. Muchila/ G Munene
Email: Cavin.Muchila@moe.gov.na/gm12munene@yahoo.co.uk

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

File no: 11/1/1

Ms. Catherine Situmbeko
Private Bag 16002, Pioneerspark
Windhoek
Cell: 081 811 5511
Email: situmbekoc@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Situmbeko

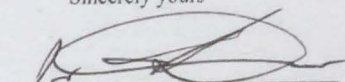
SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN OSHANA REGION

Kindly be informed that permission to conduct research for your Master's Degree in "*Experiences of Teachers and Learners in Oshana Region of Namibia*" is herewith granted. You are further requested to present the letter of approval to the Director of Adult Education 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/ Mr. G. Munene 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




SANET L. STEENKAMP
PERMANENT SECRETARY



Date _____

All official correspondences must be addressed to the Permanent Secretary

**APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR: MOEAC
OSHANA REGION**



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE
ADDRESS TO ALL SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS
No. 100, Independence Avenue
LUSAKA
Date: 15/05/2014


SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The undersigned is a student of the University of Zambia, Lusaka, who is conducting research on the topic of 'The Role of the Teacher in the Development of the Zambian Child'. The research is being conducted in the Oshana Region and will involve the collection of data from various schools and institutions. I am therefore requesting your permission to conduct this research in your area.

The research is being conducted for the purpose of a dissertation for the award of a Bachelor's Degree in Education. The research will be conducted over a period of six months, from May 2014 to November 2014. I am confident that the research will be of great value to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and will contribute to the development of the Zambian education system.

I am sure that your permission will be granted and I am grateful for your assistance. I am sure that your permission will be granted and I am grateful for your assistance.

Yours faithfully,
Name: [Name]
Address: [Address]
Phone: [Phone]


DIRECTOR, MOEAC
OSHANA REGION



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
 OSHANA REGIONAL COUNCIL

DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

ASPIRING TO EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION FOR ALL

Tel: 065 - 229800/25
 Fax: 065 - 229834

Private Bag 5518
 Oshakati

Enquiries: Hileni M Amukana
 Ref. 12/2/1

Ms. Situmbeko Catherine
 P.O. Box 15425
 Oshakati

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Your letter dated 18 October 2017 on the above caption bears reference.

Kindly be informed that permission is hereby granted to conduct research study at Iipumbu Secondary School in Oshakati Circuit and Iihenda Secondary School in Oluno Circuit, Oshana Region.

This permission is subject to the following strict conditions; (i) There should be minimal or no interruption on normal working schedule (ii) Ethical issues of confidentiality and anonymity should be respected and retained throughout this activity i.e. Voluntary participation, and consent from participant and (iii) the permission is valid for entire academic year 2017/18, due to the end of 2017 academic year.

Both Parties should understand that this permission could be revoked without explanation at any time.

Furthermore, we humbly request you to share with us your research findings with the Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture Oshana Region. You may contact Mr. GS Ndafenongo, the Deputy Director; Programs and Quality Assurance (PQA) for the provision of summary of your research findings.

We wish you the best in conducting your study.

Yours sincerely,

 25/10/17
 HILENI M. AMUKANA
 REGIONAL DIRECTOR

OSHANA REGIONAL COUNCIL
 DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, ARTS & CULTURE
 OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
 25 OCT 2017

Cc: Inspectors of Education, Oshana Circuit and Oshakati Circuit
 The Principals, Iihenda and Iipumbu SSS

All Official Correspondence must be addressed to the Regional Director

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FOR TEACHERS



UNAM
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

Name.....

I hereby give consent to participate in the research study conducted by Ms Catherine Situmbeko, a Masters of Education student at University of Namibia (UNAM), on Experiences of teachers and learners on the nature of learning support services in two selected secondary schools in the Oshana Region of Namibia.

I voluntarily agree to participate in the study. I also allow my voice to be digitally recorded during the focus group discussions, with the understanding that such recording will be kept safe and gets discarded of after a certain period of time.

I declare that:

- a) I have read or had read to me this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.

- b) I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- c) I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurized to take part.
- d) I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalized or prejudiced in any way.
- e) I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the study researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) On (*date*) 2017

Declaration by investigator

I, *Catherine Mutalifelile Situmbeko* declare that:

- a. I explained the information in this document to
- b. I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- c. I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- d. I did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) On (*date*) 2017

Signature of investigator..... Signature of witness.....

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FOR PARENTS OF LEARNERS



UNAM
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

Name.....

I hereby give consent for my child (or as the legal guardian of this child) to participate in the research study conducted by Ms. C.M Situmbeko, a Masters of Education student at University of Namibia (UNAM), on Experiences of teachers and learners on the nature of learning support services in two selected secondary schools in the Oshana Region of Namibia. I furthermore allow the researcher to make a digital recording of my child's voice during the focus group discussion, with the understanding that such recording will be kept safe and gets discarded of after a certain period of time.

I declare that:

- a) I have read or had read to me this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- b) I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.

- c) I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurized to take part.
- d) I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalized or prejudiced in any way.
- e) I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the study researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) On (date) 2017

Declaration by investigator I, *Catherine Mutalifelile Situmbeko* declare that:

- a. I explained the information in this document to
- b. I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- c. I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- d. I did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (place) on (date) 2017

Signature of investigator: Signature of witness:

Signed Parent/guardian

APPENDIX F: ASSENT FOR LEARNERS



UNAM
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

Name

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in a research study entitled Experiences of teachers and learners on the nature of learning support services in two selected secondary schools in the Oshana Region of Namibia

I declare that:

- a. I have read or had read to me this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- b. I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered very well.
- c. I understand that taking part in this study is my own choice and I have not been forced to take part.
- d. I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be punished penalized or treated in an unfair way.

- e. I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the study researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) On (date)..... 2017

Declaration by investigator

I, *Catherine Mutalifelile Situmbeko* declare that:

- a. I explained the information in this document to
- b. I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- c. I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- d. I did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (place) on (date) 2017

Signature of investigator: Signature of witness:

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



Researcher: Catherine Mutalifelile Situmbeko

Topic: Experiences of teachers and learners about the effectiveness (nature) of learning support services in two selected secondary schools in the Oshana Region of Namibia.

Main Supervisor: Dr Manfred Janik

Co-Supervisor: Dr Hengari Job

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Please answer the following questions in the spaces provided, circle or tick the most appropriate options.

1. Please tick (✓) your Gender

Male

Female

2. Please tick (✓) the Grade you teach.

Grade 8

Grade 9

- Grade 10
3. Please tick (✓) how many years you have been a teacher at this school.
 1-2 years 3-4 years More
4. Please tick (✓) your teaching experience
 Less than 1 year 1 - 2 years 3 - 4 years More
5. Please tick (✓) your age group
 20 - 30 31 - 40 41 - 50 Over 50
6. Please tick (✓) your teaching qualification
 BETD
 BED
 BED Honours
 Other

SECTION B: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What does the term learning support mean to you?
2. In your view, who are the learners eligible for learning support in this school?
3. What criteria is used to identify or select learners who are eligible for learning support in your school?
4. What are the types of learning support offered to learners in this school?
5. How are learning support services organised in this school?
6. In your view, is learning support necessary? If so, how is it necessary or significant to secondary school learners?

7. What kind of learning difficulties (LD) do learners encounter in your class or in the subject you teach?
8. How do you address the learning difficulties that learners encounter in your class/subject?
9. What kind of challenges do you face with learning support?
10. Are you a trained teacher? What kind of training did you receive? Do you need training? If yes, what kind of training do you need?
11. Your final words to conclude: in what ways should learning support services be enhanced in secondary schools in the Oshana Region of Namibia?

Researcher: *[Faint text]*

Topic: Experiences of teachers and headteachers in the usage of learning support services in rural secondary schools in the Oshana Region of Namibia.

Main Supervisor: Dr. *[Faint name]*

Co-Supervisor: Dr. *[Faint name]*

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Please answer the following questions in the spaces provided, circle or tick the most appropriate options.

1. Please tick (✓) your Gender
 Male
 Female
2. Please tick (✓) your Grade

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LEARNERS



Researcher: Catherine Mutalifelile Situmbeko

Student Number: 9602666

Topic: Experiences of teachers and learners on the nature of learning support services in two selected secondary schools in the Oshana Region of Namibia.

Main Supervisor: Dr Manfred Janik

Co-Supervisor: Dr Hengari Job

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Please answer the following questions in the spaces provided, circle or tick the most appropriate options.

1. Please tick (✓) your Gender
Male
Female
2. Please tick (✓) your Grade

Grade 8

Grade 9

Grade 10

3. Please tick (✓) how many years have you been a learner at this school.

1-2 years

3-4 years

Over

4. Please tick (✓) your age group

13 – 14

14 – 15

15 – 16

Over 16

SECTION B: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How would you describe learning support?
2. Who is eligible for the learning support services?
3. What criteria is used to select learners who are eligible for learning support in this school?
4. What type of learning support services is available to learners in this school?
5. How are learning support services in your school organised?
6. In your view, do you think learning support services are necessary in secondary schools? (Yes/No? Give reasons for your answer).
7. What is your personal experience with the learning support services in this school? (Any examples: in what subject; for how long; when and where?).

8. Do you think teachers need training? (If yes/no give reasons for your answer).
9. What kind of challenges do you face with learning support?
10. In conclusion, of all the things we have discussed today, and in view of the learning support services in your schools, how can the learning support services be improved in the Oshana Region of Namibia.

CONTACT

PO Box 1000
 Windhoek
 Namibia
 Education and Psychology
 Dept. of Education
 State of Namibia
 Publications, etc.

LAMBERTUS W. ROOPE-LEWIS CERTIFICATE

BY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Mr. Lambertus W. Roope-Lewis, holder of a B.A. (Hons.) in Education and Psychology, University of Namibia, Windhoek, is hereby certified as a qualified professional in the field of Education and Psychology.

The holder of this certificate is entitled to apply for and hold the position of Lecturer in Education and Psychology in any institution of higher learning in Namibia.

I declare that I am a Namibian citizen and have attained the minimum age for holding the position of Lecturer in Education and Psychology in any institution of higher learning in Namibia.

I am a trained language teacher and have held posts in the Department of Education and Training, Windhoek, and in the Department of Education and Training, Oshana Region, Windhoek, and in the Department of Education and Training, Oshana Region, Windhoek.

Signature: _____
 The Hon. Dr. H. G. Hamanongo



Dr.GM

The Rev. Dr. Greenfield Mwakipesile

ThD, MBA, HBS | mwakipg@outlook.com

CONTACT

PO Box 99539,
UNAM,
Namibia

education and psychology.
(3rd Ed. ed.). United
States of America: SAGE
Publications, Inc.

LANGUAGE & COPY-EDITING CERTIFICATE

3rd November 2019 Mertens, D. M. (2010). *Research and evaluation in*

RE: LANGUAGE, COPYEDITING AND PROOFREADING OF CATHERINE MUTALIFELLE SITUMBEKO'S THESIS FOR THE MASTER OF EDUCATION DEGREE IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

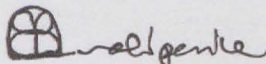
This certificate serves to confirm that I copyedited and proofread CATHERINE MUTALIFELLE SITUMBEKO'S Thesis for the MASTER OF EDUCATION DEGREE IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION entitled: **EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS AND LEARNERS ABOUT THE NATURE OF LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES IN TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE OSHANA REGION OF NAMIBIA**

I declare that I professionally copyedited and proofread the thesis and removed mistakes and errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. In some cases, I improved sentence construction without changing the content provided by the student. I also removed some typographical errors from the thesis and formatted the thesis so that it complies with the University of Namibia's guidelines.

I am a trained language and copy editor and have edited many Postgraduate Diploma, Masters' Thesis, Dissertations and Doctoral Dissertations for students studying with universities in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, South Africa and abroad. I have also copy-edited company documents for companies in the region and abroad.

Please feel free to contact me should the need arise.

Yours Sincerely,



The Rev. Dr. Greenfield Mwakipesile



greenfield.mwakipesile



@mwakipg



+264813901701



Dr. Greenfield
Mwakipesile